

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Introduction

Children are at risk of abuse and exploitation not only from individuals in the communities in which they live but also from aid workers and volunteers. Children in emergencies are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Alliance believes that:

- Children have the right to a happy, healthy and secure childhood
- The abuse of children is an abuse of their rights as set out in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child
- Child abuse is never acceptable

Children in emergencies are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Protection systems in Ukraine are adequate, Alliance ensures that it comply with relevant laws in its activities.

2. Definitions

Child: A child, as defined under the Ukrainian laws is anyone till the age of 18. A person aged 14 to 18 is considered a minor. A person under the age of 14 is considered a underage.

Child abuse: As per the definition given by World Health Organization (W.H.O.), “child abuse” includes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Child abuse is categorized under four main forms – physical, sexual, emotional and neglect and is a global phenomenon.

Child Protection is a term that describes policies, standards, systems, programs, guidelines and procedures that seek to protect children from harm which can be physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual or any form of neglect. Harm can be caused by primary or secondary caretakers, aid workers and others who come into contact with children in their line of work.

Signs of Child Abuse

Before any form of behavior or act is reported as child abuse, it is important that people get familiar with basic signs of child abuse. However, it is crucial to note that child abuse is not an easy act to identify and care should be taken to put facts together and understand the context as well as talk to the child where possible before making conclusions at face value. The HR Team will spread awareness in the staff regarding the signs of child abuse.

The list below can act as a guide that can be useful in identifying child abuse.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is actual or likely physical injury to a child, such as hitting, kicking or shaking, where there is definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

Possible signs of physical abuse:

- Bruises, burns, bites, cuts and dislocations
- Excuses given to explain injuries
- Refusal to discuss injuries
- Aggressive behavior towards others
- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Fear of returning home or of having parents contacted
- Self-destructive tendencies
- Afraid to go home
- Inappropriate clothing e.g. long sleeved coverage on hot days

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is harm done by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection, such as degrading punishments, threats, not giving care and affection and bullying, resulting in adverse effects on the behavior and emotional development of a child.

Possible signs of emotional abuse:

- Delayed physical, mental & emotional development
- Increased anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Inappropriate emotional response to painful situations
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Fear of new situations
- Aggressive behavior

Neglect

Neglect occurs when basic needs such as food, warmth and medical care are not met, or when there is failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, resulting in serious impairment of a child's health or development.

Possible signs of neglect:

- Poor social relations
- Low self-esteem
- Frequent hunger
- Non-attendance at school
- Unattended physical problems or medical needs
- Poor personal hygiene
- Stealing

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is any kind of sexual activity involving a child, whether or not the child is aware of or consents to what is happening, or if the child initiates the activity. Sexual abuse includes incest, rape, penetration and fondling. It may also include non-contact activities such as showing pornography or internet-based activity. Sexual abuse may involve siblings or other family members, or persons outside the family.

Possible signs of sexual abuse:

- Physical indicators on a child's genital areas
- Sexualized behavior inappropriate to a child's age
- Sexually-transmitted infections
- Pregnancy (depending on child's age)
- Sleep disorders
- Serious difficulties relating to peers and/or adults
- Constant complaints of headache and/or abdominal pains
- Change in level of performance at school

Exploitation

Exploitation of a child refers to the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labor and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.

Child Labour

Child labour as defined by International Labour Organization (<https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/what-child-labour>) is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or

- interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

3. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to provide a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and to make clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organization is exercising its duty of care seriously.

Alliance acknowledges the need to protect children and minimize the risk of them being abused. Alliance expects the highest standards of professional conduct in all work involving contact with children in the projects in which it works.

Therefore, the policy is meant for staff members, volunteers, consultants of Alliance as well as staff of NGOs supported by Alliance, whose positions bring them into regular contact with children. The above people are expected to show commitment to the policy and follow laid down guidelines and procedures of the child protection policy when working with, for and on behalf of Alliance.

The broad objective of the policy is to set minimum standards and procedures on child protection, to ensure that that Alliance and its partners work towards the creation of a safe environment for children.

4. Policy

The right to protection is a core principle that constitutes the foundation for the child protection policy. Using child protection as a core principle, the organization strives to ensure that measures and systems are in place at Alliance to protect children from all forms of abuse and maltreatment by staff members and anyone affiliated to or who may be required to work at Alliance.

While the main purpose of the policy is to protect children from all forms of harm and exploitation, it is expected that the policy also works as a tool to protect staff and the organization from risk associated with being in contact with children.

Children deserve to be respected in their own right and to be fully listened to, should they raise any issues related to abuse. Alliance will include in its induction and training of staff, provision of information on appropriate behavior with children.

Specifically the policy seeks to protect children from abuse and exploitation by encouraging good practice among staff members and preventing behavior that may be abusive to children.

Prevention: Alliance will take appropriate steps in minimizing the risks to children, through awareness and good practice, and taking positive steps to help protect children who are or may become the subject of any concerns.

Reporting: Ensuring that all Alliance members and Partners know what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

Responding: Engaging in action that supports and protects children when concerns arise regarding their safety; supporting and protecting those who raise such concerns; investigating or cooperating with any subsequent process of investigation; and taking appropriate responsive action.

Reviewing: Putting in place a process for discussing and resolving practical issues or questions arising under the policy – all issues should be referred to the HR Team, who will log them and ensure that they are followed up and dealt with.

Child labour is prohibited in the Alliance.

5. Policy Guidelines

Procedure for an employee with a concern

When an employee becomes aware, directly or indirectly, of a practice or incident which causes concern, there are two options available:

- report through the normal line management
- where this has already been done and no action has been taken, or where the employee feels unable to talk to the line manager, s/he may contact someone outside of line management, for example, the director or Senior Advisory Unit.

Thus, if a person is concerned about regular staff member actions, s/he may contact the relevant director. If the concern is about an SMT director, the member of staff may contact the Executive Director. If the concern is about the Executive Director, Senior Adviser on Internal Audit, Risk Management & Compliance should be contacted.

Where a Board Member has a concern, s/he should report it to the Chair of Governing Board or Supervisory Committee.

Procedure to be followed by the Alliance

- The matter of concern raised will be investigated by the Alliance.
- The investigation may be more appropriately carried out by a person other than the one the concerned employee has spoken to.
- The Alliance will respect the confidentiality of the person raising the concern insofar as it is possible to do so. It may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in all instances.
- The Alliance will brief the concerned employee about the outcome of the investigation and on any action proposed.
- The person(s) accused of the malpractice may be informed of the accusation and, if necessary (if there appears to be some validity to the allegation) will be given the opportunity to respond. If a decision is taken to move into disciplinary action, the normal provisions of the disciplinary procedure, including the right to a hearing and the right to appeal, will apply.
- If disciplinary action results from the investigation, the employee raising the concern may be asked to participate in the process. The Alliance will support concerned employees and take action to protect them from reprisals and victimisation. Victimising employees because they have raised a concern, or deterring them from doing so, is a serious disciplinary offence. If proven, it will be considered an act of gross misconduct and may result in summary dismissal.

- The Alliance may consider providing an independent external support person to the employee if the concern is of a complex nature, or if the investigation is likely to be protracted or of a very sensitive nature.
- Where the employee raising the concern is himself/herself involved in the practices, the fact that s/he has brought the matter to light will be taken into account in determining any subsequent disciplinary action.

Code of Conduct

All staff of Alliance, volunteers and partners must abide by this Code of Conduct.

Staff and others are prohibited from:

- Striking or touching inappropriately or otherwise physically assaulting or physically abusing children
- Developing physical/sexual relationships with children
- Developing relationships with children which could in the view of LEPRRA Society be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Acting in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse
- Using language, making suggestions or offering advice which is inappropriate, offensive, threatening or abusive to children
- Behaving physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative to children
- Having a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- Sleeping in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- Assisting children with carrying out physical bodily functions unnecessarily when they are capable of doing it themselves
- Condoning or participating in behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Acting in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Discriminating against, showing differential treatment to, or favoring particular children to the exclusion of others

Where possible and practical, Alliance staff and Partners should follow the 'two-adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where children are involved, and are present at all times.

Conclusion

The general principle is that staff should avoid actions or behavior which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behavior. It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage them;
- Plan and organize the work and the workplace so as to minimize risks;
- As far as possible, be visible in working with children;
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed;
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice of potentially abusive behavior does not go unchallenged.

Alliance and its Partners should conduct their work so as to avoid placing themselves in compromising or vulnerable positions. They need to be aware that they may be in a situation of

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working with children who, because of the circumstances and abuses to which they may have been subjected, may use a relationship to obtain 'special attention'. Alliance staff is always responsible for maintaining an appropriate relationship, even if a child behaves inappropriately.