

Annex 14b. Code of conduct

International Save the Children Alliance Protocol 1 Child Protection

States Parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 19)

Introduction

Members of the International Save the Children Alliance have a common commitment to the prevention of child abuse and the protection of children.

The abuse and exploitation of children happens in all countries and societies across the world.

This policy sets out common values, principles¹, and beliefs and describes the steps that will be taken in meeting our commitment to protect children².

It applies particularly to how we protect children from abuse within our own organisations and within the partner organisations with which we work closely.

Applicability

This policy applies to all staff and other key groups as follows:

"Staff" refers to all staff – full time, part time, international and national – and also those engaged on short-term contracts such as consultants, researchers, etc.

"Others" refers to volunteers, board members, trustees, staff in partner agencies, and any other individuals or groups or organisations that have a formal/contractual (but not employment) relationship to Save The Children

OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECT CHILDREN

1. Our values, principles and beliefs

- All child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights.
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- The situation of all children must be improved through promotion of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation.
- Child abuse is never acceptable
- We have a commitment to protecting children with/ for whom we work

¹ The policy incorporates those core principles of the UN IASC Task Force on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse that relate to children - see Appendix I

² "Children" refers to anyone under the age of 18

- When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children in their programmes.

2. What we will do

We will meet our commitment to protect children from abuse through the following means:

Awareness: we will ensure that all Staff and Others are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.

Prevention: we will ensure, through awareness and good practice, that staff and others minimise the risks to children.

Reporting: we will ensure that staff and others are clear what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

Responding: we will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, Members of the International Save the Children Alliance will also ensure that they:

- take seriously any concerns raised
- take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation
- are guided through the child protection process by the principle of 'best interests of the child'
- listen to and takes seriously the views and wishes of children
- work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

3. How we will ensure our commitments above are met

- All International Save the Children Alliance Staff and Others will abide by the code of conduct
- All partners will agree to abide by the code of conduct
- All staff and others will have access to a copy of the child protection policy
- Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability for working with children
- Induction for Staff and Others will include briefing on child protection issues
- Every workplace will display contact details for reporting possible child abuse and every member of staff will have contact details for reporting.
- Systems will be established by every member to investigate possible abuse once reported and to deal with it. For countries with statutory reporting obligations this will include activating statutory procedures.
- Training, learning opportunities and support will be provided by Save the Children Members as appropriate to ensure commitments are met.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All Save the Children Staff and Others agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Staff and others must never:

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves
- condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- discriminate against, show unfair differential treatment or favour to particular children to the exclusion of others.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise 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 or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- empower children - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

In general it is inappropriate to:

- spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

Appendix I

The IASC Task Force on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Six Core Principles on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse³:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers⁴ constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment;
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence;
- Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
- Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
- Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, s/he must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.
- Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

³ extracted from “Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises”- obligatory for members to incorporate these core principles into their codes of conduct

⁴ In this context, the term “humanitarian worker” applies to all staff, volunteers, and other representatives including consultants, researchers, board members and trustees.