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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Compliance Manager	Presidency	Executive Committee



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1. PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

The purpose of this policy is to provide recommendations and practical guidelines to ensure that EMERGENCY programmes, operations, personnel and partners do not put children at risk of harm, prevent any form of abuse against children, and enable them to respond appropriately when concerns and incidents arise.

EMERGENCY commits to protect children from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, as described by the UN Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC 1989).

EMERGENCY intends to fulfil its commitments through the following approach:

- **Awareness:** Ensuring that all EMERGENCY personnel as well as beneficiaries and target communities are aware of what child abuse is, the risks and the consequences related to it, and EMERGENCY's zero tolerance stance;
- **Prevention:** Promoting through awareness and good practices an environment where all EMERGENCY personnel and associates work to minimize the risk of child abuse;
- **Reporting:** Ensuring that a complaint mechanism for reporting child abuse is in place and accessible. All EMERGENCY personnel and associates must be aware of the procedures to be followed in case of concerns or suspicions regarding an incident;
- **Responding:** Ensuring that appropriate measures are taken where suspicions of child abuse are validated.

This policy applies globally to all EMERGENCY personnel, both at Main Office and field level, both during and outside normal working hours, to volunteers dealing with activities with children and schools, and to its partners.

Considering field projects, this policy applies in the event that it is more rigorous than local laws. In countries where this policy contravenes local legislation, this must be taken into account with guidance from EMERGENCY's Main Office.

Implementing partners, contractors and suppliers have to agree to a commitment to safeguard children that is appropriate to the partnership relationship.

To take decisions about how to respond to any complaint and concern raised, this policy must be used in conjunction with relevant employment/labour laws, duty of care and relevant criminal laws.

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2. INTERNAL REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Internal documentation:

- Code of Ethics;
- Organization, Management and Control Model;
- Reporting system policy;
- Whistleblowing policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions will serve as a guide for the purpose of the present Policy:

- **Child:** every human being under the age of eighteen (art. 1 UNCRC);
- **Abuse:** according to WHO, child abuse refers to all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results 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;
- **Physical abuse:** actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person;
- **Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to;
- **Child sexual exploitation:** a form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs;
- **Neglect and negligent treatment:** allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child’s healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development;
- **Emotional abuse:** persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child’s emotional development;
- **Commercial exploitation:** exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labour.

4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

EMERGENCY has a zero-tolerance policy towards child abuse.

In this regard, EMERGENCY personnel must:

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- Always maintain high moral and professional standards;
- Treat children with equality and dignity, irrespective of ability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, religion, culture, personal and social conditions;
- Develop child participation, to empower them;
- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage them;
- Plan and organize work and the workplace to minimize risks;
- Raise any concern or suspicion regarding possible violations of the present Policy and related standards of behaviour via EMERGENCY's established reporting procedures;
- Challenge poor practices and report potential risks that might lead to child abuse. EMERGENCY personnel must create and maintain a working environment that prevents child abuse and promotes the implementation of the present Policy. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems maintaining this environment.

EMERGENCY personnel must not:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children;
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive;
- Act in ways that may be inappropriate, abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse;
- Use language which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive;
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse;
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
- Discriminate, show differential treatment or favour particular children.

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.

Activities and events for children should be organized minimizing risks and ensuring that particular care is taken to put in place preventive measures.

In case images of or stories about children that are used to promote EMERGENCY's work, it is essential to minimize the risk of their inappropriate use.

To guarantee this result:

- Images of children must not show them undressed or in inappropriate poses;

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- Details or landmarks must not allow children to be traced;
- Photographers/journalists/interpreters should be properly vetted;
- Permission should be given by children and their parents/carers to take their image and use their information. Only in case of significant events may this permission be avoided.

Child abuse or suspicion of child abuse should be reported to formal authorities or to organizations able to deal with such cases even when it arises outside EMERGENCY's programmes.

5. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Please refer to the Reporting System Policy for more details about reporting procedure and channels available. EMERGENCY will respond in a professional and timely manner to all concerns or allegations of child abuse.

All concerns or allegations will always be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon where appropriate.

EMERGENCY ensures that those who have reported child-safeguarding concerns or are accused of child abuse are given appropriate care, support and protection in dealing with all aspects of the case including any safety concerns and potential reprisals which may arise from the incident or from the reporting of such concerns.

6. VISIBILITY

The present Policy is publicized in an appropriate manner, promoted and distributed widely.

7. TRAINING and BENEFICIARY ACCOUNTABILITY

For effective implementation, EMERGENCY's commitment to protecting children from abuse needs to be clearly and accurately understood by all EMERGENCY personnel, as well as beneficiaries and target communities.

During the staff induction for Main Office personnel and during the briefings for personnel being involved in a mission, staff are made aware of all relevant matters related to ethical values and responsibilities connected to the present Policy, the related standards of behaviour, and any risks related to each specific field project.

In particular, EMERGENCY is committed to conducting child safeguarding training relevant and appropriate to everyone's engagement with the Organization. In this respect, particular attention

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and specific training will be provided to staff and volunteers working directly with children, students and schools.

Specifically, volunteers are trained to speak with children and students, focusing on topics such as war, civilian victims, and the promotion of a culture of peace, solidarity and respect for human rights.

The training consists of an introductory meeting with EMERGENCY's officers or senior volunteers, also meant to assess soft skills, capacities and experiences of the aspiring volunteer, participation to meetings and activities held by senior volunteers, ad hoc meetings to analyse the proposed topics through case studies and simulations.

During the course of the training, attention is focused on the following:

- Communication and interaction with children and students;
- How to encourage discussion and confrontation;
- How to raise awareness and leave a positive message;
- Avoidance of ethnocentric attitudes and the adoption of an intercultural approach (respect for different languages, religions, cultural habits, genders and sexual orientation).

EMERGENCY commits to promoting accountability towards its beneficiaries and the communities where it works by actively seeking feedback on EMERGENCY's work, individual behaviours and complaints.

Good practices and preventive measures should be embedded throughout the project cycle, including project design, assessments, monitoring and evaluation: a child safe project must ensure that it takes account of the environment, context and impact (intended or unintended) on children and their communities.

All projects and programmes must be designed to minimise the risk of harm to the children they come into contact with or impact upon directly or indirectly by taking sufficient account of child safety, whatever the focus of the work.

8. DISCIPLINARY SYSTEM

Failure to comply with the principles and rules contained in this Policy represents a violation of the Code of Ethics and leads to the application of administrative/disciplinary sanctions.

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The type and size of the sanctions shall be applied taking into account the type of violation committed, the activity performed and the role of the person accused, together with all the other circumstances that may have characterized the fact.