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Responsible Person	The Board

## CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

For the purpose of this policy, 'CRSF' means the Cambodia Rural Students Foundation

### 1. OBJECTIVE

This policy outlines the CRSF commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people involved in our services. It is designed to provide guidance to students, team members, volunteers and visitors on how to act in the best interest of children and young people and reflects our dedication to safeguarding their wellbeing.

### 2. POLICY

This policy is based on the following principals:

- The welfare of children and young people is our primary concern.
- All children and young people should be equally protected and assisted regardless of their gender, nationality, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, physical or mental health.
- We respect the rights and dignity of each child and young person.
- We have zero tolerance for any form of abuse.

CRSF expects its team members, volunteers, guests and visitors to be child-sensitive, act in the child's best interests, and uphold local legislative requirements pertaining to the safety and protection of children.

This policy outlines a risk management approach to providing safety and protection across all programs, protecting not only the children but also those who work and volunteer with CRSF. This policy aims to clearly outline definitions of child abuse and other relevant terms, CRSF's commitment to children's rights and child protection, reporting procedures for child protection matters, recruitment and screening policies, overarching child protection legislation and conventions, and other relevant risk management approaches for ensuring child protection.

This policy applies to those who assist or have a relationship with CRSF and all children in the NGO and children CRSF and NGO members interact with. These people include:

- the CRSF Board, its team members, advisors and mentors;
- the NGO management team and leadership team;
- all teachers;
- all CRSF and NGO volunteers, guests and visitors;
- NGO students; and

- all children and young people.

Team members, volunteers and visitors are expected to uphold these principles and standards at all times during service with CRSF. All team members, volunteers and visitors working with CRSF must read and understand this policy and agree to comply with the principles and standards outlined herein.

All team members and volunteers who may work with children will receive training as part of their onboarding process. Team members and volunteers who work with children are to periodically receive refresher training on this policy, this may be done via video workshop or other means as required.

### **3. GUIDING PRINCIPALS**

#### **3.1 Zero tolerance of child abuse**

CRSF does not tolerate any form of abuse. All allegations will be taken seriously and investigated whilst respecting all parties and maintaining confidentiality throughout the investigation process.

#### **3.2 Ensuring the safety and protection of all children at all times in the care of CRSF**

CRSF is committed to ensuring the safety and protection of all children and therefore has risk management measures outlined in this policy. This is achieved by ensuring all children in its care are safe from harm or abuse, regardless of the child's gender, age, race, disability, religion, political persuasion, social status, pregnancy, sexuality or cultural background.

#### **3.3 Acting in the best interest of the child while maintaining child sensitivity**

CRSF will always act in the best interest of the child when making decisions and advocating on their behalf. In all decisions impacting children, the child's individual needs and perspectives will be considered and incorporated. Whenever applicable and appropriate, cooperation with external agencies and the community will be pursued, always ensuring that the best interests of the child are upheld.

#### **3.4 Every child is valued, protected and treated with dignity**

CRSF believes that every child is created uniquely, is valued and thus has the right to protection and dignity.

#### **3.5 The protection of vulnerable people**

CRSF recognizes its responsibility to protect vulnerable persons. While typically persons in CRSF's care are children and youth, there will be times when we may interact with vulnerable persons. Where CRSF team members, volunteers and visitors interacts with a vulnerable person, this policy is to apply to its fullest extent in such cases where it should reasonably apply.

### **4. CRSF'S COMMITMENT**

CRSF is committed to executing the following child protection measures and upholding children's rights by:

- (a) Supporting legislation on children's rights in order to provide what is in the best interest of the child.
- (b) Recognising the importance of cooperation between the child, his or her parents or guardians and relevant staff.
- (c) Recognising the responsibility in protecting the safety, welfare, rights and wellbeing of all children, based on these guiding principles.

- (d) Ensuring all team members and volunteers comply with mandatory training on child protection when they join the organization.
- (e) Ensuring all team members and volunteers are provided with opportunities to learn about how to recognize and respond to concerns regarding child abuse.
- (f) The protection of vulnerable persons.

CRSF's commitment will be observed by the following:

**Awareness** – Children will be taught their human and legal rights. At the same time, team members and volunteers will be trained in child protection, types of abuse, and this policy's requirements.

**Protection** – All team members, volunteers and visitors are to read and sign the policy, agreeing to abide by the necessary protocols and procedures outlined in the policy. All team members and volunteers will be processed through a screening and interview process, including a criminal background check, before they are accepted to work for CRSF. This policy will be discussed with all team members and volunteers during their orientation.

**Reporting** – Team members are to inform relevant and trusted law enforcement or investigating agencies that are known to be involved in the exploitation of children. All child protection matters that occur within the projects will be reported to the CRSF Board for further investigation in accordance with the national legislation, and to the authorities where legally required.

**Implementing** – When reasonable to do so, team members and volunteers will determine and terminate any activity or operation that may cause harm to the child.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure that the processes and protocols as outlined in this policy are adhered to, CRSF team members, volunteers and visitors need to:

- (a) Take seriously any reports of harm a child has disclosed to them.
- (b) Investigate and act on all child protection matters or allegations without harming the involved child.
- (c) Support the child, partners, team members, volunteers and visitors who are party to the matter.
- (d) Take action on the matter or allegation immediately.
- (e) Ensure that the best interests of the child are upheld.
- (f) Whenever appropriate and applicable, cooperate with parents and other professionals in protecting a child from harm.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

### 6.1 Acts of Violence by Society

In addition to the harm that an individual person can deliberately inflict upon a child, acts of violence against children can also be caused by social systems. Instruments of these acts of violence include, but are not limited to, governments, legislation, religions, and societal prejudices. Examples of the harmful actions of these systems of society are legal disparities that do not comply with international law standards, lack of local resources, children affected by local political conflicts, economic crisis, and lack of social status.

The indications of children who have received violence by society are:

- (a) Homeless, stateless, displaced because of war or natural disasters.
- (b) Forced to marry at a young age due to wrong acts of tradition or parts of their culture.
- (c) Refused medical treatment because they are stateless or have no money to pay for medical bills.
- (d) Lives that are seen as less valuable than an adult's life.
- (e) Social standing that is inappropriate for their ages and not addressed by the government.
- (f) Denied government education due to non-citizenship.

**Beneficiary** Within CRSF and in the context of this policy, a beneficiary means a person in care who receives physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual support from CRSF.

**Bullying** is aggressive behaviour that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying occurs when a person is subjected to negative behaviour, repeated over a period of time, by another person. Bullying can take many forms:

- **Direct Bullying:** teasing, verbal attacks, shoving, assaults, extortion, and destruction of property.
- **Indirect Bullying:** shunning, spreading rumours, malicious practical jokes, and similar verbal behaviour.
- **Cyber-Bullying:** use of Internet technology, including websites, text messaging and emails social" that results in aggressive behaviour as defined above.

**Child** means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child.

**Child Emotional Abuse** refers to inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child and/or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Emotional abuse includes rejecting, isolating, terrorising, ignoring and corrupting.

**Child Exploitation** shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

**Child Physical Abuse** is the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physical abuse includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. Fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent/carer is also considered physically abusive behaviour.

**Child Sensitive** means an approach that balances the child's right to protection and that takes into account a child's individual needs and views.

**Child Sexual Abuse** includes:

- engaging in sexual activities with a child who, according to the relevant provisions of national law, has not reached the legal age of sexual activities; and
- engaging in sexual activities with a child where: abuse is made of a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child, including within the family; abuse is made of a particular vulnerable situation of the child, notably because of a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependence.

**Child Trafficking** is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. It is a violation of their rights, their well-being and denies them the opportunity to

reach their full potential.

**Exposure to Domestic Violence** is broadly defined as a child being present (hearing or seeing) while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment, or is visually exposed to the damage caused to persons or property by a family member's violence.

**Neglect** refers to the failure by a parent/carer to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing. Neglectful behaviours include physical neglect, emotional neglect, educational neglect and environmental neglect.

**Other forms of abuse include:** spiritual abuse, financial abuse, peer abuse, sibling abuse, witnessing community violence, institutional abuse and state-sanctioned abuse.

**Sexual Assault** is any type of sexual contact or behaviour that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient.

**Team Members** includes all paid employees, national or international and volunteers.

**Vulnerable Persons:** a child and/or an individual aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason.

## 7. CHILD PROTECTION AND RISK MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

### 7.1 Child Protection Practices

CRSF will ensure that all team members, volunteers and visitors understand their responsibilities and requirements in reporting child protection matters as outlined below. Mandatory reporting is required by team members and volunteers whenever evidence of harm and abuse is observed or perceived or there is a threat of potential harm to another person. Team members and volunteers must report any allegations or matters of concern to the Child Protection Officer who in turn will immediately notify the CRSF board. Children can report abuse to any of the CRSF team members or volunteers.

Team members and volunteers will be expected to exemplify appropriate conduct while maintaining safety and effectiveness when working with children. Any team member and/or volunteer who fails to comply with the guidelines for reporting a child protection matter or allegation will be open to disciplinary action.

CRSF will evaluate the progress of the policy, thereby guaranteeing that they are meeting the policy objectives and remaining accountable. Team members, volunteers, and children will be educated and encouraged to disclose any forms of abuse within the organisation. At no time will anyone be penalised in any way for reporting abuse. Team members and/or volunteers who are found to have breached the policy are to be issued with either a warning notice or termination.

Children will be able to express opinions, suggestions, and log complaints to any of the CRSF team members or volunteers they feel comfortable with. If a child wants to express opinions, suggestions, or log complaints confidentially, it may refer same to CRSF.

### 7.2 Recruitment and Screening

CRSF carefully screens all potential team members, volunteers and visitors who may come in contact with children. The screening process is comprised of the following standards and procedures:

- (a) All potential team members and volunteers must have a completed criminal history check and/or documentation in accordance with their countries of residence giving approval for direct work with children (as per each Nation's legislative requirements and regulations). This must be done prior to commencing employment or volunteer work with CRSF.

- (b) All references must be checked verbally in order to ensure that there is no known history of child abuse or improper conduct in relation to children.
- (c) The job applicant must provide CRSF with all previous employment details and at least three references. The applicant's references must verify the applicant's suitability for the role, including appropriate workplace conduct, specifically in regards to interaction with children. Interviews with relevant CRSF team members and/or volunteers who have knowledge of the applicant's qualifications and reputation must also be conducted.
- (d) The job applicant must be able to answer child protection related questions. Examples include whether they've had experience navigating situations where the safety of the child was compromised, or how they would handle specific child protection issues.
- (e) Employment contracts must include a provision preventing any person who poses an unacceptable risk to children from working, or continuing work with children; offending team members and volunteers may be dismissed, suspended, or transferred to other duties.
- (f) During orientation team members and volunteers are required to have read and understood this policy and any other relevant CRSF policies. Team members and volunteers will have access to a copy of this policy.

**Visitors;** including family (namely any brother, sister, father, mother, son or daughter), and external stakeholders who may be in contact with children in the care of CRSF, are required to have read and understood this policy.

## **8. REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Child Protection Officer (CPO): Aviv Palti or Jessica Palti (CRSF Directors).

### **8.1 Reporting Procedure**

In the case where a child discloses abuse by an adult, another child, or any other person, the team member or volunteer must:

- (a) Listen to the child and observe the child's demeanour and behaviour closely.
- (b) Demonstrate sincere interest and appropriate concern in the information relayed by the child.
- (c) Avoid questioning or investigating the child inappropriately or prompting the child's answers.
- (d) Tell the child that you need to notify a trustworthy and relevant team member who can help the child. Do not tell the child that you will keep the matter a secret.
- (e) Record all details of the matter. The report must be clear and accurate, detailing and recording the date, time, conversation, relevant observations, who was involved in the incident, how the incident occurred, and if the child has told his or her parents or anyone else, and what he or she told these individuals. Do not add personal opinions to the report. The team member who wrote the report must certify the report with his or her name, signature and date.
- (f) Whenever relevant and possible, collect any additional information regarding the matter, such as photos of lacerations or statements from any witnesses.
- (g) The reporting team member must notify the Child Protection Officer.
- (h) Team members must protect the child immediately and ensure that the same incident will not happen again, always considering the best interests of the child while investigating the matter or allegation. Team members must explain to the child the importance of reporting abuse and the process for notifying relevant officers about the abuse.

If the accused is a team member or volunteer, the CRSF Board may suspend them from their position temporarily pending the results of an investigation. The accused will not be considered a perpetrator unless and until they have been proven guilty. If the accused is found to be innocent of the allegations, they will be able to recommence work again. However, in circumstances where abuse or misconduct by a team member or volunteer is proven beyond a reasonable doubt, the CRSF board will take disciplinary action, which may include, but not limited to, legal action, and immediate termination.

If an investigation is being conducted into the actions of a team member or a volunteer, that person must be given a written notice of the reasons for their suspension from duties and will be advised of the results of the investigation as soon as it becomes available. During the course of the investigation, the team member or volunteer is not permitted to consult with other CRSF members or children or to be on CRSF property unless approved by the CRSF board. In the event that an allegation made against a team member is proven to be untrue, appropriate steps must be taken to follow up with the person who made the accusation, and disciplinary action will be taken if the person knowingly made a false report. If a child has made a false complaint, the seriousness of the matter must be discussed with the child, and counselling should be provided to the child and/or team member who was falsely accused.

If it has been determined beyond reasonable doubt that a visitor has breached the policy or law, CRSF will take appropriate legal action.

The facts concerning the matter or allegation will remain confidential. The reporting team member is required to send the report to the Child Protection Officer.

If the matter is of a criminal nature, CRSF will assess the situation and progress through all necessary steps as directed by law, a lawyer or a relevant organisation. If the matter has been forwarded to an outside organisation, a CRSF representative will cooperate with the organisation through all the necessary steps and information.

## **8.2 Disciplinary Actions**

If any team member or volunteer is found to be in breach of the policy and/or the law, the CRSF Board will decide whether or not that person will be subject to termination or re-commencement. The team member or volunteer in breach of the policy will be informed of the outcome in writing by the CRSF Board.

## **9. MANAGING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR**

Guidance is an important part of a child's development and provides appropriate boundaries, a good sense of security and good character. This must be done in a safe environment, with child sensitivity and where children understand the purpose of the guidance, knowing that it is done in their best interest.

All children must be treated in accordance with their ages at all times. Team members and volunteers must always guide children without using forceful physical contact or aggressive language. All discipline must be clearly explained to the child so that the child can understand the reason why the discipline is occurring.

## **10. COLLECTION AND USAGE OF IMAGES FOR PROMOTIONAL AND FUNDRAISING PURPOSES**

CRSF uses and collects many types of media including, videos, photos, and stories for the purpose of raising funds so that it may further its work. As the protection of children is a core value of CRSF, we give clear direction for the gathering and usage of media. All media gathered and used must comply with both this policy and subject to express consent (written or verbal) of each child comprising all or part of the intended video, photo and story.

## **11. OTHER RELATED COMPLIANCE**

It is expected that staff and volunteers located in Cambodia will be familiar with relevant child protection legislation associated with Cambodia.