



## Child Protection Policy

**Compliance with this policy is mandatory**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The need to protect children is an issue for all communities. Children across the world are subjected to exploitation and abuse and experience sexual, physical and psychological violation. Many are forced into exploitative work, including commercial sexual exploitation.

Children who are exploited and abused experience a greater likelihood of long-term consequences, including mental health issues, reduced educational outcomes, drug and alcohol abuse and increased likelihood of coming into contact with the law. At its core, child exploitation and abuse undermine a child's right to grow up safely.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children
- The duty bearers are accountable to eradicate child abuse

Based on the above guiding context and principles, Human and Hope Association Incorporated (**HHA Australia**) is committed to ensuring that all children involved in its projects are protected from any form of abuse.

#### 1.1 DEFINITIONS

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years.

A young adult means every human being between the age of eighteen and twenty-one years.

Child abuse means sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, neglect or child labour.

Child Protection Policy is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children.

### 2. POLICY

#### 2.1 STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT



As an association working with children, HHA Australia is committed to a strict child protection policy to ensure the children participating in its projects are not exposed to abuse, exploitation, violence or neglect.

The guidelines in this Child Protection Policy protect both children from abuse and adults from false accusation.

HHA Australia will, at all times:

- Respect the rights and dignity of the children, families and communities with whom we work.
- Demonstrate commitment to actively preventing child abuse.
- Take positive action to prevent child abusers becoming involved with HHA Australia in any way and take stringent measures against any HHA Australia associate who commits child abuse.
- Protect the names of the children in all publications

To ensure the above commitment HHA Australia will follow the:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Cambodian Constitution
- Cambodian laws on child rights
- DFAT child protection policy

## 2.2 PERSONS INVOLVED

This policy applies to all associates of HHA Australia:

- Board members
- Interns
- Volunteers
- Employees
- Prospective employees
- Consultants
- Contractors
- Partner association members and
- Visitors.

The term 'HHA Australia associates' will be used throughout this policy.

The HHA Australia CEO is responsible for

- the effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy
- ensuring the policy is understood by HHA Australia associates



- monitoring risks pertaining to children
- reviewing the policy in January each year and if needed make any necessary changes to the policy.

## 2.3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The policy is guided by the following principles:

### Zero tolerance of child exploitation and abuse

HHA Australia does not tolerate child exploitation and abuse. Such action attracts criminal, civil and disciplinary sanctions. HHA Australia will not knowingly engage—directly or indirectly—anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children. HHA Australia will not fund any individual or organisation that does not meet HHA Australia’s child protection compliance standards in their operations and activities.

### Recognition of the best interests of the child

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and HHA Australia is committed to upholding the rights and obligations under this convention. HHA Australia recognises that some children, such as those with disability and children living in areas impacted by disasters, are particularly vulnerable.

### Sharing responsibility for child protection

To effectively manage risks to children, HHA Australia requires the commitment, support and cooperation of contractors and civil society organisations. They must meet the terms of this policy and will be held accountable, through contracts, audits and spot checks, for complying with it.

### Risk management approach

While it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child exploitation and abuse, careful management can reduce the risks to children that may be associated with aid activities. These are identified during initial risk assessments and are managed for the duration of the activity. **IMPLEMENTATION**

## 3.1 RECRUITMENT

- Advertisements for job vacancies will make clear that HHA Australia is committed to child protection and that prospective employees’ commitment to child protection is a condition of employment.



- All prospective HHA Australia associates will be informed of the Child Protection Policy at the start of any recruiting process.
- HHA Australia reserves the right to not offer or to terminate a contract if reference checks reveal that the person is not suitable to work with children for any reason that may put children at risk.
- The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed during new staff or long-term volunteer orientation.

### 3.2 CODE OF CONDUCT

This code of conduct gives guidelines for appropriate and proper behaviour for HHA Australia associates when interacting with children (and young adults).

- No child is to be taken away from HHA Australia by an associate without the knowledge and permission of the management team.
- No child is to be taken to any of HHA Australia associates' home, guesthouse, hotel or accommodation.
- No HHA Australia associate is permitted to socialise with the children outside the HHA Australia premises apart from a friendly conversation (Young adults can be met in a public place with the knowledge and permission of the management team).
- No presents of any kind are to be bought for the children without prior arrangement with the management team.
- HHA Australia associates are to not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children.
- HHA Australia associates must display appropriate language, actions and relationships with children at all times. HHA Australia associates must ensure that language and behaviour at all times reflect appropriate adult-child relationships, which are respectful of and in line with Cambodian culture and customs.
- HHA Australia associates must not exert inappropriate physical force when dealing with children. This includes, but is not limited to, pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping or any other action that could cause fear, intimidation or distress.
- All activities with children must be conducted in locations where there is visual contact with outside. In cases where it is necessary to close a door for privacy, two adults must be present.
- Inappropriate conduct towards children, including failure to follow the behaviour standards stated above, is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment, police notification and legal action.
- No students under the age of 18 can be added to a staff member's social media account, and the staff member must notify management if a student over the age of 18 is on their social media account under full disclosure.

### 4. COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT CHILDREN



- All communications regarding children involved in HHA Cambodia's projects will ensure that the protection, privacy, dignity and best interests of the child are maintained.
- Children should be adequately clothed in photographs and not in poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive.
- Real names of vulnerable children should be changed and it should be indicated that they have been changed.
- All students must have their parent or guardian sign the 'HHA Photo Permission Form'.

## 5. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING ABUSE OR SUSPECTED ABUSE

- Any HHA Australia associate who has knowledge of, suspects, or has witnessed a potential child protection issue should immediately report to the CEO or Managing Director.
- Failure to report suspected child abuse or misconduct may result in disciplinary action.
- On receipt of the report, the CEO and/or Managing Director will begin an internal investigation and where appropriate file a complaint with the relevant authorities.
- At the discretion of the CEO and/or Managing Director, a HHA Australia associate will be suspended during investigation. The associate will be informed that an allegation has been made against him/her and they will be given the opportunity to respond.
- The rights and welfare of the child is of prime importance to HHA Australia and therefore any investigation will respect the privacy and safety of the child and efforts will be made to make the investigation as child-friendly as possible.

## 6. RESPONSE TO INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

In the event an allegation is proven to be untrue, or even fabricated, appropriate steps will be taken for follow-up with the person who has been accused, the child, and the person who reported the incident. Efforts will be made to provide assistance to an associate accused of abuse including counselling or other appropriate forms of support

If abuse is proven by the investigation, every effort will be made to assist the child in coping with any physical or emotional trauma he or she may be experiencing. This may include medical treatment, psychological counselling or any other form of assistance deemed necessary and appropriate.

- If the investigation concludes that child abuse has occurred, HHA Australia staff will be subject to disciplinary action within HHA Australia, up to and including dismissal. Other HHA Australia associates will be removed with immediate effect.
- If the investigation concludes that abuse has occurred which is subject to criminal prosecution according to national laws, all findings will be reported to the relevant



national police authorities and full cooperation afforded to them during an external investigation. If the accused is an expatriate or visitor, the relevant law enforcement authorities will also be informed with due regard given to the potential for extraterritorial proceedings by the expatriate's country of origin.

- In the event an associate is discharged for proven child abuse, HHA Australia will disclose such information as requested.

### **Revision History**

- Policy adopted 1st May 2019
- Policy updated on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020