

## Global Village Housing Child Protection Policy

Global Village Housing (GVH) is a registered charity in Cambodia and Australia.

### Definitions

**Child:** GVH uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) definition of a child, which is any person under the age of 18.

**Child Abuse:** Child abuse includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect, bullying, child labour, domestic violence and exploitation. Both boys and girls can be the victims of abuse, and abuse can be inflicted on a child by both men and women, as well as by young people themselves. In some cases, professionals and other adults working with children in a position of trust also abuse children.

**Child Protection:** The responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being abused or maltreated.

### **1.1 Our Commitment to Child Protection**

GVH is committed to the safety and well being of all children. We support the rights of children and will act without hesitation to ensure a child safe environment is maintained.

GVH recognises the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is committed to the protection of children from harm, abuse and exploitation. Children have a right to survival, development, protection and participation. GVH will uphold these rights.

GVH takes its duty of care seriously and will aim at all times to provide the safest possible environments for children. This will be achieved by identifying and managing risks that may lead to harm.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Child Protection Policy**

- a) The purpose of the Child Protection Policy is to minimise the risk of child abuse in GVH's programs.
- b) The policy will demonstrate GVH's commitment to protect children from harm and abuse.
- c) The Child Protection Policy aims to educate staff, interns, volunteers and others about child abuse, and promote a child-safe environment.
- d) The Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct will provide a practical guide to prevent child abuse from occurring within the organization and incorporate risk management strategies.

### **1.3 Guiding Principals**

- a) GVH believes that any form of child abuse and exploitation is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- b) Reporting is mandatory for all confirmed or suspected cases of child abuse.
- c) Children have their own indivisible rights.
- d) All children have a right to be safe at all times, and we have an obligation to provide safe and protective environments.
- e) GVH recognises its duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe from harm.
- f) Adherence to this Child Protection Policy is a mandatory requirement for all staff, interns, volunteers and others as defined in s1.4.
- g) GVH will ensure that all staff and relevant stakeholders are made aware of the Child Protection Policy and their responsibilities.
- h) GVH promotes the best interests of children at all times.

### **1.4 Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to:

- Staff
- Board Members
- Interns
- Volunteers
- Consultants and contractors
- Partner organisations
- Any people with unsupervised access to the project including journalists, photographers and donors

### **1.5 Child Protection Policy Implementation Strategy**

The Child Protection Policy will be implemented through:

- a) Child Protection Code of Conduct – this outlines acceptable behavior.

- b) Compliance – staff, interns, volunteers and other associated parties are required to sign that they have read, understand and will adhere to the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.
- c) Mandatory reporting for suspected cases of child abuse. These reports will be dealt with confidentially, professionally and quickly and meet location-specific legislative requirements.
- d) The inclusion of child abuse prevention strategies in risk management assessments.
- e) Recruitment and staff management – Potential and existing staff will be screened and monitored to ensure that they do not pose a risk to children.

### **1.6 Visitors to the project**

A member of staff will supervise visitors to GVH’s facilities and projects at all times. Any visitor that will have any unsupervised access must adhere to this Child Protection Policy and sign the Code of Conduct.

### **1.7 Child abuse reporting process**

GVH considers the abuse and exploitation of the children to be completely unacceptable. We will take all concerns and reports of child abuse seriously and act on these reports immediately.

It is mandatory for all GVH staff, volunteers and others to report concerns or allegations of child abuse. These concerns may relate to a child or a staff member involved in the organisation or a concern about a child or person/s outside of the organization’s programs. If you have a concern you should immediately follow GVH’s abuse reporting procedures.

- a) Who should report?

All GVH staff, volunteer and others, including people in the community and partner organisations.

- b) What should be reported?

- Any disclosure or allegation from a child/community member or staff regarding the safety/abuse exploitation of a child.
- Any observation or concerning behavior exhibited by a GVH staff, intern, volunteer or other relevant stakeholder that breaches that GVH Child Protection Code of Conduct.
- Inappropriate use of the organization’s photographic equipment or computers including evidence of child pornography.

- Staff engaging in suspicious behavior that could be associated with sexual exploitation or trafficking.

c) Who to report to?

- In Cambodia child abuse reports should be made to the In Country Manager. Where it is not possible, reports should be made to the Chair of GVH or a member of the board.
- The situation and information will be assessed/ investigated and a confidential report will be made in compliance with this Policy and/or within the context of local, state and country legislation.
- If the incident has occurred outside of the program the matter will be referred to an external body or agency dealing with child protection matters in Cambodia.

f) When to report

- Child abuse concerns should be raised immediately.

g) What will happen next?

- The In Country Manager, Chair or board member will discuss the allegations and then decide upon the next step. This will involve either
  - Interviewing the person/persons who have made the allegations or witnesses to gather more information with which to make a decision
  - Report to local police and or child protection authority
  - Report to the Cambodian Federal Police
  - Concern handled internally if it is not a criminal matter
- GVH will treat all concerns raised seriously and ensure that all parties will be treated fairly and the principles of natural justice will be a prime consideration. All reports will be handled professionally, confidentially and expediently.
- All reports made in good faith will be viewed as being made in the best interests of the child regardless of the outcomes of any investigation. GVH will ensure that the interests of anyone reporting child abuse in good faith are protected. Any employee who intentionally makes false or malicious allegations will face disciplinary action.
- The In Country Manager, Chair or board member will follow up with affected parties where appropriate.

h) Responding to disclosure by a child.

- If a child discloses abuse, whatever the outcome, the child must be taken seriously.
  - It is important to remain calm and in control and to reassure the child/young person that something will be done to keep him or her safe.
  - When a child or young person discloses they are being harmed you can show your care and concern for the child/young person by:
    - Listening carefully
    - Telling the child/young person you believe him or her
    - Telling the child/young person it is not their fault and he/she is not responsible for the abuse.
    - Telling the child/young person you are pleased he/she told you.
  - You will not be helping the child/young person if you:
    - Make promises you cannot keep, such as promising you will not tell anyone
    - Push the child/young person into giving details of the abuse. Your role is to listen to what the child/young person wants to tell you and not to conduct an investigation (beware of asking any leading questions as this may prejudice any subsequent investigation)
    - Indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the child/young person with others not directly involved
  - Try and obtain some details such as where the abuse is taking place, is currently occurring or did occur in the past and the name of the perpetrator if possible (not necessary).
  - It is possible that some children or young people will make a disclosure and then ask you not to tell anyone. It is important you seek guidance discuss how the child or young person can be supported and the disclosure managed.
- i) Other actions to take:
- Protect the child – Once an allegation is made there should be an immediate response that protects the child from further potential abuse or victimisation. The child may require medical assistance or counseling support. Where possible the child should remain in the place of residence or relevant program. Exceptions may be made where the child is deemed to be at risk of victimisation by peers as a result of the allegation or because the alleged abuse has occurred in home-based care. If the child is in immediate danger you should make arrangements for the child to go to a safe place.

- Distance the alleged perpetrator – The best interest of the child may warrant the standing down of a staff member, intern or volunteer. Any staff stood down in this manner continues to receive full pay until a proper investigation has taken place– this measure recognises that the member is entitled to a just process that does not pre-judge guilt or innocence. Any interns or volunteers who are stood down should similarly receive any reasonable reimbursement costs.

- Confidentiality – All reports, the names of the people involved and the details will remain confidential. Details will be released on a “need to know” basis or when required by law or for the purpose of notifying the police or child protection authorities.

j) Educating the organisation on child abuse and the Child Protection Policy

GVH is committed to educating staff and others in the Child Protection Policy, in how to reduce risks and create child safe environments. We will promote child safe practices that keep children safe in the organisation and in their own work community, and provide information about child protection to the children and communities in which we work. This information will include reporting child abuse if they have concerns about a GVH member of staff or other representative.

k) Reviewing the Child Protection Policy

GVH’s Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every two years.

## **2.1 Child Protection Code of Conduct**

GVH staff, volunteers, interns, directors and all other visitors will:

- Treat all children and young people with respect.
- Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent with the values of GVH
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Dress suitably and in accordance with Cambodian cultural requirements.
- Encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, employees and volunteers and have children and young people participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Report any concerns of child abuse.
- Be transparent about my actions and whereabouts at all times.
- Not place myself in a position where there is a risk of allegations being made.

- Avoid situations where I am alone with a child.
- Advise my supervisor if I am involved in any situation that would be likely to bring the organisation into disrepute.
- Advise my supervisor if I am investigated for any crime or charged with any criminal offence.
- Advise my supervisor of my involvement in any situations where my actions could be misinterpreted.

GVH staff, volunteers, interns, directors and all other visitors will NOT:

- Use inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language when speaking with a child or young person.
- Engage in behavior that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes.
- Smack, hit or physically assault children.
- Develop sexual relationships with children or relationships with children that may be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Condone or participate in, behavior of involving children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children.
- Photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way.
- Spend time outside work requirements with any child or young person connected with GVH's programs.
- Hire children for domestic or any other labour, which is inappropriate for their age or development, interferes with their education or play, or places them at risk of injury.
- Sleep in close proximity to any children unless it is absolutely necessary, in which case I will keep my supervisor/manager informed and ensure another adult is present, wherever possible.

## Use of children's images

- A child is always to be portrayed in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children must be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- At a minimum, obtain verbal consent from children and/or GVH management staff and explain how the photograph or film will be used. Written consent should be obtained if possible.
- There should be no identifying information used in the publication of images with their location.
- Children should be portrayed as part of their community.
- Local cultural traditions should be assessed regarding restrictions for reproducing personal images.
- Images should be an honest representation of the context and the facts.
- When sending files electronically, file labels should not reveal identifying information.