



# **HOMESTAY VOLUNTEER TEACHERS ORGANIZATION (HVTO)**

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

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# **HVTO Child Protection Policy**

## **Statement**

We have a duty of care to safeguard all children we support. All children have a right to protection. HVTO is a child Safe and Child Friendly Organization and we have adopted a Child Protection Policy in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which HVTO adopts with entity, as far as is applicable.

### **Definitions: Throughout this document:**

1. **Child:** refers to any young person in the care, supervision or contact of an employee, volunteer, supporter, donor and sponsor of HVTO under the age of 18.
2. **HVTO MEMBER:** refers to employee, volunteer, supporter, donor and sponsor.
3. **HVTO:** refers to a non-governmental organization mentioned under the Cambodian Constitution in unity 42.

### **Child Protection Policy**

Children around the world are at risk from exploitation, sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect and other forms of inappropriate interactions perpetrated by adults and older children. Children are especially at risk in Global South as they adapt to rapid changes, movements of people, a lack of robustness in the legal process and a booming inbound tourism industry.

### **HVTO is committed to protecting children from any form of exploitation or abuse.**

We are especially aware of the constant risks and remain vigilant to threats arising towards children. HVTO members will be informed and/or trained in child protection issues such as awareness, identification and where to seek additional help and HVTO members will be informed of relevant child protection issues set out below:

1. States Parties (signatories to the document of which Cambodia is one) shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any person who has the care of the child.
2. Such protective measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms of prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment described heretofore, and, as appropriate, for judicial involvement.

### **Aims of the Child Protection Policy**

The Major aim of the HVTO child Protection Policy is to convey that:

- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, **have the right to protection from abuse and exploitation.**
- We are committed to ensuring children are provided with a safe and protective environment at all HVTO locations.
- All HVTO members are equipped to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.
- All HVTO members have a responsibility to uphold the Child Protection Policy and report any concerns to the deputy director or director and ensure the concerns are reported to the appropriate authorities
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, appropriately and formally recorded.

### **Forms of child exploitation/abuse**

Exploitation of children and young people can take place in many forms. These include:

- **Sexual Abuse:** Forcing or coercing a child into any unlawful sexual act, or sexual abuse including physical contact; partaking or watching of pornographic material/sexual acts; encouraging children to behave in a sexually inappropriate way.
- **Physical Abuse:** Includes any act that physically harms a child including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Any negative emotional ill treatment of a child causing them to feel inadequate, unloved, unworthy, frightened or in danger. This can include verbal abuse, imposing developmentally inappropriate expectations on the child or restricting their participation in age appropriate activities/normal social interaction.
- **Neglect:** Is the persistent failure/denial to meet a child's physical and psychological needs. This can take the form of failing to provide food and water, shelter, supervision and medical care and/or failing to protect a child from physical, sexual or emotional harm or danger. In the Global South, poverty is persistent and all consuming, rendering many families unable to provide many of these necessities for their children. This inability is not deliberate and of course is different in nature to deliberate neglect. HVTO and members must ensure all their actions are directed towards elimination neglect, and that they themselves do not perpetrate any neglectful acts while children are in their care. If members are particularly concerned for certain children they must speak with the HVTO manager or director.

**Remember:** Abuse and exploitation of children can be perpetrated by many different people: HVTO members, senior students, tourists and volunteers/staff of various organizations working with children; parents and other family members; community members, teachers etc...

### **Child Protection Responsibility for HVTO members**

HVTO members should:

- Compare their own practice against established good practice, and ensure their practice is up to standard and is likely to protect them from false allegations.
- Ask for advice/help from the relevant HVTO officials if they are unsure of any aspects of the Child Protection Policy.
- Recognize their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice or possible abuse.
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child.

### **Good practice guidelines for all HVTO members**

All HVTO members should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behavior in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

#### **Good practice means:**

- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations with children.
- Treating all children and young people equally with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each child first.
- Maintaining a safe, appropriate and respectful distance with children.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making and communication.
- Striving to make all contact with children fun, enjoyable and fair.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support or play is required, it should be provided openly and according to the general guidelines in this document.
- Being an excellent role model- this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people and wearing appropriate dress.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive communication, play and feedback.
- Recognizing the developmental needs and capacity of children – avoiding any instructions beyond their capability.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of the cause of the injury and any treatment given.

#### **Practices never sanctioned by HVTO**

The following are never sanctioned. Under no circumstances must you:

- Engage in any inappropriate conduct with children.
- Be alone with less than three children at any time
- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including over the top horseplay.
- Spend time alone with children away from others.
- Escort less than three children at a time in any vehicle (unless in any emergency situation)
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child.

- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Invite or allow children to enter your accommodation.

### **Incidents that must be reported/recorded**

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate HVTO officials and record the incident.

- If you accidentally hurt a child.
- If he/she seems unusually distressed in any manner.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done with the result that the situation could be construed to be in contravention of this Child protection Policy.
- If you suspect any form of child exploitation is occurring, regardless of the suspected perpetrator.

### **Abuse and exploitation**

There is evidence that some people may use opportunities where they are in close contact with children as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage. All HVTO members should seek prior permission from the relevant HVTO officials if they intend to take photos/video at the school and the resulting images or videos must be made available for review by the HVTO official on request.

### **Inappropriate activity**

Sensitivity is encouraged with regard to taking individual or close up photos or videos of any children, both with respect to the intrusiveness of the action and the duration. Shorter duration volunteers especially should remember that while this may be a unique opportunity for them to record images it is unhelpful for the children to be photographed time and again on a regular basis.

HVTO members should be vigilant while at any HVTO locations and any concerns should be reported to the relevant representative.

### **Responding to allegations or suspicions**

It is not the responsibility of anyone working/volunteering with HVTO to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. The responsibility extends only to acting on any reasonable concerns and communicating these to the relevant authority.

### **Whistleblower Protection**

HVTO assures all members that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports his/her concern that abuse or exploitation has or may be taking place.

### **Accused person protection**

HVTO assures that all details of any accusation will be kept strictly confidential and relayed only on a need to know basis to the relevant authorities. Further, that whilst respecting the need to protect children, full regard for the rights of the individual and the possibility of error in the reporting of concerns will be assured.

### **If a disclosure is made to you, the following procedure should be followed:**

- Remain calm and try to assume a non-judgmental attitude.

- Do not question children directly/further beyond that which they have (or third party has) told you.
- Do not make any promises but do tell the child or third party what your responsibility is and what you will do.
- Even if encouraged by the child or third party to ‘not tell anyone’ you have a duty to report concerns to the relevant authority. You must explain to the informer what your responsibility is and what you have to do, as stated in this policy.
- Make detailed notes about any allegation/suspicion and;
- Report your concerns as soon as possible to the relevant representative who will then contact the appropriate authorities or;
- Contact the authorities yourself if concerns need immediate/alternative attention or you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue with the HVTO representative.
- Seek a formal debriefing for yourself through the HVTO representative.

**Information needed by the authorities and the police about suspected abuse:**

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made as close to the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following if known:

- The child’s name, age and date of birth.
- The child’s home address and telephone number if available.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioral changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents including names and addresses.
- The child’s account, if it was given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so, by whom and what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to the police or Child Safe services should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

**Where there is a misconduct complaint against or a disregard for HVTO Child Protection Policy involving anyone within the organization the following actions may take place:**

- Immediate removal of the suspected person from the relevant HVTO premises pending further investigation
- A report to the appropriate authorities.
- a criminal investigation and prosecution with the support of HVTO

### **Confidentiality**

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned regardless of the outcome of the situation. Information will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

### **Criminal Record Declaration**

AS STATED IN THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY, BECAUSE OF THE SENSITIVE NATURE OF WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO DISCLOSE DETAILS OF ANY CRIMINAL RECORD IN ANY JURISDICTION. ONLY RELEVANT CONVICTIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION WILL BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT SO DISCLOSURE NEED NOT NECESSARILY BE A BAR TO VOLUNTEERING OR INVOLVING WITH HVTO. YOU MUST ALSO DECLARE THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF HVTO AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY AND UPHOLD THE POLICY THROUGHOUT THE DURATION OF YOUR INVOLVEMENT.

**Made in HVTO center, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Sim Piseth,  
HVTO Founder**