

Child Protection Policy

Research Center for Inclusion
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. ABOUT RESEARCH CENTER FOR INCLUSION

The Research Center for Inclusion (RCI) is legally registered in 2018 with the Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology in Vietnam as a Vietnamese non-governmental organization (NGO). RCI is under coordination and management of the government focal point of Southeast Asian Research Association of Vietnam (SEARAV).

RCI aims to improve quality of life of persons with disability, in particular children and persons affected by leprosy, through research and advocacy on disability, inclusive education, inclusive health, social inclusion and community-based rehabilitation. By focusing on these areas, RCI gathers evidence for advocating stronger implementation of disability policies; improves access to quality inclusive education for children with disability; improves quality of health care and rehabilitation services for persons with disability; and enhances participation and involvement of persons with disability in community activities.

2. VISION & MISSIONS

Vision: RCI envisions a world in which people with disability, including children and persons affected by leprosy enjoy equal rights and full inclusion in society.

Mission: RCI mobilizes resources and implements interventions with specific attention to research, innovation and technology to enhance independence and social inclusion of people with disability, including children and persons affected by leprosy.

II. PURPOSE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy aims to protect children from intentional and unintentional harm or abuse and to actively promote the welfare of children, staff and any others who come into contact with children participating in RCI programs. RCI claims its responsibility for RCI personnel and those who associated with RCI' work is informed of the existence and content of this child protection policy.

This policy applies to:

- (1) Research Center for Inclusion's team: staff, volunteers and interns
- (2) Associates:
 - Consultants and researchers
 - External professionals working with Research Center for Inclusion
 - Local and international partner organizations that have an official contractual relationship with Research Center for Inclusion
- (3) Other people related with Research Center for Inclusion who have contact with children:
 - Donors
 - Collaborators and sponsors
 - Suppliers
 - Journalists, photographers, media agency, visitors.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

RCI works to the following key principles to protect children:

Protection of the rights of the child: RCI is committed to upholding the rights of the child in accordance with Vietnamese Law on Children and the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

Non- discrimination: All children are entitled to the same rights without discrimination of all kinds.

Best interests of the child: The child's safety, wellbeing and the best interests of the child shall be the most important consideration in any decision.

Zero tolerance of violence against children: RCI has a zero tolerance approach to the violence against children. RCI will not knowingly engage – directly or indirectly – anyone who poses a risk to children. RCI works to minimize the risks of child exploitation and abuse associated with its functions and programs and trains its staff and partners on their obligation under this policy.

III. DEFINITION AND RECOGNITION OF CHILD ABUSE

1. DEFINITION

1.1 *A Child:*

A human being below the age of 20

1.2 *Child Caregiver:*

One who performs the task of taking care of a child. A child's caregiver may be his/her guardian, an alternative caregiver or another person assigned to assist, take care of and protect a child together with his/her parents.

1.3 *Child Protection:*

The implementation of appropriate measures for ensuring safe and healthy life for children, the prevention and response to child abuse and the support for disadvantaged children.

1.4 *Violence against children:*

Acts of maltreating, persecuting or beating a child; taking physical abuse or causing harm to the child's health; reviling or offending honor or dignity of the child; segregating, driving the child away and other deliberate acts that cause physical and mental harm to the child.

1.5 *Child Abuse* means acts that cause harm to the physical strength, emotion, psychology, honor and dignity of a child in forms of violence, exploitation, sexual abuse, trafficking, abandonment, neglect or other harmful forms.

1.6 *Child physical abuse* involves hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents that happen over time.

1.7 *Child emotional abuse:* A pattern of behavior by adults or others that seriously interferes with a child's cognitive, emotional, psychological or social development. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

1.8 *Child sexual abuse* means the use of violence, threat to use violence, coercion, dragging, or enticement of a child into sex-related acts, including raping, coercive intercourse, sexual intercourse, debauchery with a child or employing a child for prostitution or pornographic purposes in any form.

1.9 *Child Exploitation* means the acts of persecuting, maltreating, beating, infringing upon the body and health, insulting or hurting the honor or dignity, isolating, driving away and other intentional acts that cause physical and mental harms to a child.

1.10 *Child neglect and abandonment* means the failure to perform or fulfill the obligation and responsibilities to take care of, and nurture a child by his/her parents or caregivers.

2. RECOGNISING CHILD ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Perpetrator can be anyone: a family member, a friend, a stranger, a service provider or a neighbor...Therefore, it is important to understand and recognize the warning signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation in order to have immediate actions responding to that.

In this policy, staff and associates will be provided with definitions of abuse (see 3.1), signs of child abuse and exploitation (see Annex 2) and how to report child concerns (see 6.2).

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCH CENTER FOR INCLUSION STAFF

1. DESIGNATED OFFICER

RCI has appointed Ms. Nguyen Thi Phuong Lan to be a Designated Safeguarding Officer to deal with any complaints or issues arising which concern the safety or welfare of any child. This person is appropriately trained and familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation, concern or disclosure of child abuse.

Designated Safeguarding Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring the Child Protection Policy is implemented throughout the organization and child protection training given
- Ensuring referrals to the relevant authorities without delay
- Updating child protection training for all staff
- Monitoring and recording child protection concerns
- Ensuring the Child Protection Policy is reviewed every 2 years or earlier if necessary
- Ensuring monitoring and recording procedures are implemented

2. REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

In case RCI staff and members have reasonable grounds for concerns that a child may have been, is experiencing or is at risk of being abused or neglected, that staff must report to the Designated Officer (see 4.3 Designated Officer) for further instructions of reporting.

Grounds for Concern include:

- A disclosure from a child indicates that she/he is being abused or neglected
- Consistence evidences that a child is experiencing abuse or neglect
- Information from someone who witness or heard about the child being abused

A suspicion that is not supported by any objectives indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

V. PREVENTION

1. RISKS ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Given that it is challenging to eliminate risks of child exploitation and abuse, RCI will identify, mitigate, manage or reduce the risks of any child being harmed as a result of operations or activities funded by RCI. The risk management exercise will be conducted before any team members commence a program or conducts a new activity or event which may involve, target or affect children, the public or communities. Principles for assessing and managing the risks that may expose to children including 5 steps:

- Identify risks
- Analyze and evaluate risks
- Control or respond to risks
- Monitor and review risks

Designated Officer will review the risks assessment and management report and provide recommendation accordingly.

2. CHILD-SAFE RECRUITMENT MEASURES

Before starting to work with RCI, each candidate shall undertake a secured recruitment process and submit for background checks.

Additionally, anyone having signed a permanent or fixed-term employment contract with RCI, including consultants, as well as interns, international volunteers and voluntary workers engaged by RCI shall sign and abide the Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy.

RCI will not employ, contract or involve anyone who has a criminal conviction for violent crime, sexual crime, drugs related offences, or any other offences deemed inappropriate in relation to work with children.

3. KNOWLEDGE AND TRAINING ON CHILD PROTECTION

In order to build a 'child-safe' organization, it is important that all employees and personal associated with RCI are fully aware of the child protection policy and procedures. Thus, staff members are expected to participate in an internal child protection training and an annual update in order to have a sufficient level of knowledge on how to identify, prevent and respond to child protection concerns.

Trainings on child safeguarding and protection will provide:

- Guidance on how to recognize child abuse;
- Guidance on responding appropriately to child protection or welfare concerns;
- Information on the importance of working toward children/young people protection
- Information on guiding principle and child protection procedures.

VI. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS

1. DUTY TO REPORT

RCI considers any form of child protection violation unacceptable in all circumstance. The employee or volunteer of RCI who has received a disclosure of child abuse or who has concerns about a child should bring them to the attention of Designated Liaison Person immediately. We committed to investigating and act upon the disclosure. The following procedure shall be followed for raising and reporting concerns of child abuse.

2. REPORTING MECHANISM FOR RCI STAFF

Incident reporting: Any incident or suspicion of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect and abandonment, past or present, by RCI staff, volunteers, sponsors, donors, board members, partners or others must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer. The reporter needs to compile a reporting form and provide relevant details (see Annex 3). Not all disclosure will lead to a formal investigation or being taken to the authorities, but all disclosure will be taken seriously.

If there is a serious danger to a child and you cannot contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer and Director, you must contact the local authorities.

National Child Protection Hotline: 111

Investigation: Within 24 hours of receiving the disclosure, the Designated Safeguarding Officer shall assess the concern, take next steps to inform and consult the Director. On behalf of the organization, the Director shall report to the local authorities if necessary. In case local authorities need to be involved in the investigation, they will have full access to documents and evidences relevant to the incident if required.

In the best interest of the child, it may be decided to demand the alleged persons to stand down during the investigation and distance from the child.

Support the victim and family: Child(ren) and their families are entitled to the rights to be informed about the outcome and the process of internal investigation. However, in unexceptional circumstance that telling the families shall put the child at further risks, it is not necessary to inform the family that the report is being processed.

During the process of assessment and investigation, child(ren) and parents share receive consultation and suitable support in case of needs.

Confidentiality: The identities of the informants and the child will be kept confidential while and after an allegation is being investigated or considered. However, staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about an allegation as this may not be in the best interests of the child.

Director and Designated Officer will consult with local authorities and relevant stakeholder to agree:

- Who needs to know about the allegation and what information can be shared
- How to manage speculation, leaks and gossip, including how to make parents or caregivers of a child/children involved aware of their obligations with respect to confidentiality
- What, if any, information can be reasonably given to the wider community to reduce speculation
- How to manage press interest if, and when, it arises.
- All written documents will be stored in secure locations.

3. PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

RCI ensures that children who participate in the programs, projects and activities of its partner organizations are covered by the safeguarding standards in this policy (as mentioned in section VII). As a result, all RCI's partners should comply with this policy.

RCI will not enter into a partnership agreement with organizations whose staff or member are liable to commit acts of abuse against children, which were defined in section 1 of this policy.

RCI's partners and associates should have clear and documented internal procedure to report witnessed, suspected or alleged cases. More specifically, reporting should be mandatory for all staff and associates and the procedures include immediately informing RCI off incidents occurring in RCI funded/supported programs and activities (not after investigation has taken place). The partners should also document procedures ensuring that cases are dealt with in a safe, confidential and fair manner.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Child protection is everyone's responsibility, from the Board of Advisor to all staff, consultants, volunteers, and partners of RCI. Once approved, this policy will be reviewed every two years. The review should be approved by Director, who will present any proposed modifications to person in charge for validation.

VIII. RESOURCES: ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: CODE OF CONDUCT

All Research Center for Inclusion staff, consultants and volunteers **must** sign up to and abide this Code of Conduct

Staff and others must never:

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- Develop physical or sexual relationships with children
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- Use language, make suggestion or give advice that is inappropriate
- Discriminate against, show different treatment toward, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others
- Involve children in harmful practice

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- Comply with all relevant Vietnamese legislation and policies concerning the rights of the child.
- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these => and mitigate the risks
- Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working near children
- Treat all children with respect and consider the best interests of the child.
- Listening to children and promoting positive behavior
- Encourage children to raise concerns and demonstrate motivation

Staff and others must react to the child abuse and neglect by:

- Reporting all concerns about inappropriate behavior, disclosures and allegations as soon as possible to the Designated Officer. If the concerns involve this person, report to the Director.
- Be sure that children know and understand the organization's policies and procedures
- Not attempting to investigate the case, confronting the accused person or questioning the child involved.

I, _____ agree to abide by all the term in this Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy of Research Center for Inclusion (RCI). I understand that any breach may result in immediate termination of my contract, position and/or involvement at RCI and its programs.

Name and Signature:

Date:

ANNEX 2: SIGNS OF ABUSE

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect:

<p>Possible signs of physical abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites cuts - Improbable excuses given to explain injuries - Injuries that have not received medical attention - Injuries that occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, or play (for example, on the stomach, neck, back and genitals) - Refusal to discuss injuries - Withdrawal from physical contact - Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather - Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted - Showing wariness or distrust of adults - Self-destructive tendencies - Being aggressive toward others - Being very passive and compliant - Chronic running away 	<p>Possible signs of emotional abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delayed physical, mental or emotional development - High anxiety - Delayed speech or sudden speech disorder - Fear of new situations - Low self-esteem - Inappropriate emotional response to painful situations - Extremes of negativity or aggression - Drug or alcohol abuse - Chronic running away - Compulsive stealing - Obsessions or phobias - Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration - Attention-seeking behavior - Persistent tiredness - Lying
<p>Possible signs of neglect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frequent hunger - Failure to grow - Stealing or gorging on food - Poor personal hygiene - Constant tiredness - Inappropriate clothing (for example, wearing summer clothes in winter) - Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school - Untreated medical issues - Low self-esteem - Poor social relationship - Compulsive stealing - Drug or alcohol abuse 	<p>Possible signs of sexual abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age-inappropriate sexualized behavior - Physical trauma (general and in genital and anal areas) - Behavioral indicators (general and sexual), which must be interpreted with regard to the individual child's level of functioning and developmental stage - Signs that are similar to physical abuse signs

ANNEX 3: CHILD PROTECTION – REPORT FORM

If you have knowledge or suspect of any kind of abuse of a child or if a child's safety might be in danger, please complete this form to the best of your knowledge.

- 1. Concerning involving staff members:**
- 2. Concerns involving outside people**

Place and Date of filling the form:

About you:

Your name:

Your job title:

Workplace:

Your relationship to the child:

Contact details:

About the child:

Child's name:

Child's gender:

Child's age:

About the incident

How did you know about the incident?

Direct observation

Suspicion

Disclosure of child

Disclosure of other person(s). Name(s)

Other.....

Details:

Date and time of the alleged incident or period of the alleged accident

Location of the alleged incident:

Who was involved in the alleged incident?

Name of alleged perpetrator:

If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member, please specify Job title:

If the perpetrator is an outside person, please specify relationship to the child:

Nature of the allegation:

Your personal observations on the child (visible injured, emotional state...)

Any other information not previously covered:

Action taken:

Persons Informed

Within RCI

Name: Position:

Name: Position:

Authorities

Police

If yes, give details:

Others

Signature

Date

ANNEX 4: GUIDELINES FOR USING IMAGES OF CHILDREN

When photographing or filming a child or using children's image for work-related purposes, it is important to:

Obtain informed consent

- Prior to taking photos, informed consent must be always obtained. Informed consent means an individual must understand and acknowledge what they are giving consent for.
- If the child is under sixteen years old, parents or guardians of the child should be given the informed consent with detailed explanation.

Ensure images of children are dignified and respectful

- No scarcely clad, scruffily dressed or naked children. The child has to look 'dignified' in the photograph
- The photo should not cause a shock (a dead child, open face, serious wound)
- The photos should be accompanied by an explanatory caption where possible and should be relevant to any accompanying text. Avoid taking pictures out of context.

Conceal identities and locations

- The anonymity of children should be preserved. When sharing a child's story, names and locations should be changed to protect the identity of the child. Special cases should be addressed very carefully so as not to further accelerate the notoriety of the individual circumstance.

Data storage

- Pictures and personal information regarding children will be kept in a secure area under the management of the Designated Officer and Director. Access to the data of children will be only allowed for the work purposes with the granted permission of the Director.

ANNEX 5: INFORM CONSENT

Name of Child/Young Person:
Address of Child/ Young Person:

Date of Birth of Child/Young Person:
Contact Phone Number (parents or guardians) for Child/Young Person:

Gender: Male Female

Please tick one of the following boxes:

- I give Research Center for Inclusion permission to
 Take photos
 Make a video
 Speak to and record children story
 All the above
- I give Research Center for Inclusion permission to use the above for
Website/Social media
Donors/Reports/Proposals
Communication materials
All the above

Date
Name (of the parents/guardians):
Name (of the child):

Signature:
Signature:

ANNEX 6: DECLARATION FOR STAFF AND OF RESEARCH CENTER FOR INCLUSION

I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the Child Protection Policy of Research Center for Inclusion (RCI), being aware of my obligation and responsibilities in regard to safeguarding children and appropriate and professional conduct in all areas, both inside and outside of RCI's project sites.

Name:

Signature:

Date: