



# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY PAPER

Final version  
Adopted by ZOA's International Management Team  
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# 1 JUSTIFICATION OF A ZOA CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Children have suffered human rights violations for centuries; however the scale and impact of the violence against children, including infanticide, cruel and humiliating punishment, neglect and abandonment, sexual exploitation, abusive child labour, trafficking, female genital mutilation and forced military conscription has becoming increasingly visible in recent years, provoking international outrage.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, forms the legal international basis for ensuring the rights and protection of children. This Convention recognizes the human rights of children and establishes in international law that States Parties will ensure all children benefit from special protection measures and assistance. Currently 193 countries are State Parties of this Convention, more than to any other human rights treaty in history. Following this, a number of studies were undertaken with regard to specific human rights violations against children, and in 2006 the United Nations undertook the first comprehensive, global study on all forms of violence against children (UN World Report on Violence against Children (Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Independent Expert for the United Nations, Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children Published by the United Nations, <http://www.violencestudy.org>, ISBN-10 92-95057-51-1).

Despite the broad acceptance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the increasing global awareness of child rights and condemnation of human rights violations against children, children around the world continue to experience severe and regular human rights violations in their homes, schools, and communities. Being a faith-based organization, ZOA wants to ensure that the behaviour of its own staff and the staff behaviour of its partner organisations are irreproachable and exemplary.

## 2 PREAMBLE

This policy affirms ZOA's global commitment to the welfare of children and their protection from abuse and exploitation and is consistent with ZOA's vision, mission and core values of human dignity, faithfulness, stewardship and justice, as outlined in ZOA's overall strategic document "Signs of Hope". This policy is aimed at deterring, minimizing and removing opportunities for child abuse and exploitation to occur in our country programs; the policy applies to all staff, contractors, volunteers, interns and contracted partner organisations.

This policy is adopted by the ZOA Senior Management and ZOA International Management Team in October 2013.

### 2.1 DEFINITION

For the purpose of this policy:

- A child is considered to be a person under the age of 18 years;
- Child abuse is considered neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

### 2.2 ZOA'S BELIEFS REGARDING CHILD PROTECTION

- Child abuse and exploitation is never acceptable;
- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation;
- The situation of all children must be improved through promotion of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- We have a commitment to protecting children with/for whom we work; and
- When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children in their programs.

### 2.3 ZOA'S COMMITMENT TO THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

ZOA will meet its commitment to protect children through the following means:

- **Awareness:** ZOA will ensure that all staff, contractors, volunteers, interns, and partners are aware of the problem and issues of child abuse and exploitation.
- **Prevention:** ZOA will ensure, through awareness and good practice, that all staff, contractors, volunteers, interns, and partners minimize the risks to children.
- **Reporting:** ZOA will ensure that staff and others are clear in what steps to take where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.
- **Responding:** ZOA will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse and exploitation.

### 2.4 ENSURING ZOA'S COMMITMENTS ARE MET

- All staff, contractors, volunteers, interns and partners will sign and adhere to an agreement to abide by the attached Code of Conduct related to Child Protection;
- All staff, contractors, volunteers, interns and partners will have access to a copy of ZOA's Child Protection Policy;
- Every Country Office will have a country-specific Child Protection reporting procedure that takes into account the local context;
- For personnel in contact with children, documented criminal record checks will be conducted for each country in which the individual has lived for 12 months or longer for the last five years and for each of the individual's countries of citizenship. Individuals need to provide their consent to a criminal record check and should be informed of the purpose for which the resulting police clearance certificate should be used. In limited instance, if impossible to obtain a foreign police check, a statutory declaration outlining efforts made to obtain a foreign police check and disclosing any charges and spent convictions related to child exploitation may be accepted in lieu;

- Moreover, for personnel in contact with children, documented verbal referee checks will be conducted;
- For the recruitment for positions that involve working with children there will be specific behavioural-based interview questions that will be incorporated in the interview plan.
- All new employee orientation and new partner orientation will include a briefing on ZOA's Child Protection Policy and child protection issues;
- Every workplace will display details for reporting possible child abuse and exploitation and reporting policy non-compliance and code of conduct breaches;
- Systems will be established to investigate possible abuse and exploitation once reported;
- Misconduct will lead to disciplinary measures which could lead to dismissal. If a claim is substantial against a ZOA employee, the CEO at his discretion may: (i) issue a written warning and/or place the employee on probation, (ii) terminate the employment contract with immediate effect in accordance with the applicable staff regulations, (iii) take any other action as set out in the staff regulations. If the claim is deemed unfounded the staff member's record will be cleared.
- Training, learning opportunities and support will be provided by ZOA Netherlands to ZOA Country Offices as appropriate to ensure commitments are met.
- Duty to Report - It is the duty of all staff who become aware of any breaches of this Code and policy non-compliance to report this immediately to a line manager, either through the established reporting mechanism or, if not appropriate, to another senior member of staff. Failure to report concerns of sexual abuse and exploitation will constitute misconduct and be considered grounds for disciplinary measures. Management must ensure that all information about breaches of this Code and policy non-compliance is handled with the utmost discretion. Any concerns or suspicions about a suspected incident towards programme participants or colleagues, whether major or minor, should always be discussed with a line manager or other senior member of staff.
- No action will be taken against a staff member reporting concerns in good faith. Disciplinary measures will be taken against staff for retaliating against a colleague who reports concerns or otherwise cooperates with an investigation. As well as for maliciously and falsely reporting misconduct, and for not cooperating with an investigation.
- Staff can make use of the ZOA complaints procedure to report breaches to the Code of Conduct and policy non-compliance. This staff complaints procedure can be found in PMS.
- Beneficiaries, staff of partner organizations and other stakeholders can make use of the ZOA complaints procedure for them. This complaints procedure for beneficiaries, staff of partner organizations and other stakeholders can be found on PMS.

## **2.5 REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

ZOA recognises that both internal and external environments change. Such change may have a bearing on the scope and content of this policy. Consequently, this policy will be reviewed every 5 years. The review process will be consultative and participatory in nature. The responsibility for initiating the policy review process rests with ZOA's International Management Team. A policy review report will be made available.

### 3 ZOA CODE OF CONDUCT REGARDING CHILD PROTECTION

ZOA's capacity to ensure the protection of and assistance to the children that we work with depends on the ability of its staff to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. We, the staff members of ZOA, are personally and collectively responsible for upholding these standards, setting a good example and creating a working environment that encourages our commitment and transparency to this ZOA Code of Conduct Regarding Child Protection.

It is recognized that ZOA's work can put staff, temporarily contracted consultants, volunteers, interns and NGO-partners in positions of power in relation to children in the communities ZOA works with. ZOA staff, contractors, volunteers, interns and partners have an obligation not to abuse this power.

This Code of Conduct is intended to serve as an illustrative guide for ZOA staff, contracted consultants, volunteers, interns and NGO-partners to make ethical decisions in their professional lives and at times in their private lives.

The Code applies to all ZOA staff members, contracted consultants, volunteers, interns and NGO-partners, who will be requested to read and understand the Code of Conduct and by way of signature agree to abide by it. Any breach of the Code of Conduct will be viewed seriously and may result in disciplinary action or dismissal, in accordance with ZOA's disciplinary procedures.

All ZOA staff are responsible for encouraging, advocating and promoting the dissemination of the Code of Conduct. They also have a role in implementing, monitoring and enforcing its standards.

***As a staff member / consultant / volunteer / intern / partner of ZOA, I commit myself to:***

***1. Treat all children equally: our staff members will not discriminate based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political convictions, religion, or for any other reason, in any way. Common forms of discrimination may include making employment or programming decisions based on family status, race, gender, religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, birth, sexual orientation, age, disability or political conviction.***

I will always seek to protect the rights of children and act in a manner that ensures that their best interests shall be the paramount consideration.

***2. Safeguard children by making responsible use of the information and resources to which I have access by reason of my employment with ZOA.***

- I will exercise due care in all matters of official business, and not divulge any confidential information about a child and other work-related matters in accordance with the staff regulations and rules and current guidelines;
- I will never use ZOA resources to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material;
- When photographing or filming a child for work-related purposes, I will:
  - Assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images;
  - Obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child; written consent or documented verbal consent. I will explain how the photograph or film will be used;
    - In case of children aged 13 years and older consent from the child is sufficient.

- In case of group pictures with more than three children no individual consent for publication is required.
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner;
- Ensure that the child/children are adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts; and
- Ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

### **3. Prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of the child.**

- I undertake not to abuse the power and influence that I have by virtue of my position over the life and well-being of a child.
- I will report any child abuse and exploitation and any other policy non-compliance, including breaches of this Code of Conduct, by a ZOA staff member, consultant, volunteer, intern or partner.
- I will immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with ZOA that relate to child exploitation and abuse.
- I will not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- I will never request any service or favour from a child in return for protection or assistance.
- I will never engage in any exploitative relationships – sexual, emotional, financial or employment-related – with a child.
- I will refrain from hiring children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- I will report in writing on the nature and conditions of this employment to my supervisor.
- I will ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children, wherever possible.
- I will not invite children with whom I am working into my home unaccompanied, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger
- I will not sleep close to unsupervised children with whom I am working unless absolutely necessary, in which case I will obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible.
- I will refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children.

### **4. Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the image and interests of ZOA.**

- I will neither support nor take part in any form of illegal, exploitative or abusive activities, including, for example, harmful child labour, child pornography and trafficking of human beings and commodities.
- I will not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts. This is regardless of the local age of consent, i.e., the local or national laws of the country in which I work. Ignorance or mistaken belief of the child's age is not a defence. Failure to report such a relationship may lead to disciplinary action pursuant to ZOA's policies and procedures.



## **Code of Conduct Regarding Child Protection**

I have received, read, understand, and accept the ZOA Code of Conduct Regarding Child Protection.

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(PRINT NAME)

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(SIGNATURE)

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(DATE)

## **4 CHILD PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS FOR ZOA COUNTRY OFFICES**

ZOA Country Offices will have the following:

- A country-based child protection policy that complies with ZOA standards;
- A child-safe recruitment and screening processes, including, where possible, criminal record checks prior to engagement, targeted interview questions, and rigorous reference checks, for all personnel regardless of whether they will or will not be specifically working with children;
- A documented child protection reporting procedure;
- A Code of Conduct regarding Child Protection that must be signed by all personnel;
- A provision in all employment contracts that the organization has the right to dismiss the employee if he/she breaches the Code of Conduct regarding Child Protection;
- A reporting mechanism where the Chief Executive Officer is informed promptly in writing if any personnel are alleged to have committed, or been arrested for, or convicted of criminal offences relating to child abuse and exploitation.