

# Riverkids Foundation



## CHILD POLICY PROTECTION



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Riverkids Foundation (“Riverkids”) was registered under the laws of Cambodia in 2007. Riverkids is a non-aligned, non-profit, and non-governmental organization working to reduce child trafficking in Cambodia.

The mission of Riverkids is to reduce child trafficking by providing education and vocational training to vulnerable children and women in the communities.

In order to help safeguard the security and well-being of the children supported by Riverkids, this Child Protection Policy (CPP) shall be provided to, acknowledged by, and followed by, each Riverkids member of Staff and each visitor, volunteer, sponsor, board member, trustee, staff in partnership agencies, and any other individual or group that has contact with a Riverkids Child.

Any allegation of Child Abuse against any of the foregoing individuals will be taken seriously by Riverkids and will be thoroughly investigated in accordance with the policies set forth herein and, if applicable, will be reported to the relevant local authority and foreign embassy.

### Awareness

- All representatives will be individually and collectively responsible for child protection and will be make aware of this policy and any related guidelines, codes of protocols
- A designated committee, Child Protection Committee (CPC) will be responsible for monitoring Child Protection issues and will facilitate policy implementation, staff training and awareness, and incident reporting
- Child-friendly information will be provided to ensure children understand about their safety and protection, and feel comfortable about speaking out if they have any concerns
- Children will be made aware of an independent adult to whom they can refer any concerns

### Recruitment & Representatives

- Procedures for the recruitment of staff will take into account and promote the CPP including, requesting background information and references. The RKF will discount on any reasonable ground any persons who might reduce child safety
- All successful candidates and existing representatives will be made fully aware of this policy and will sign the Code of conduct prior to commencing work
- Child Protection issues will be considered during staff appraisals and evaluations



## Communications & Information

- We will ensure that information or images about children are never used in a way which compromises the children's dignity, safety or places them at risk
- We will respect the confidentiality of information regarding children's health, family background and personal history; this private information will only be accessed by authorized staff on a "need to know" basis

## Guidelines for Prevention

- All representatives will behave with children in a way which fully respects their dignity and rights, and minimizes any possible situation of risk, consistent with RKF regulations and the Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Guidelines, rules and implementation procedures relating to Child Protection will be clearly available
- Children will be encouraged to say what they find acceptable and unacceptable in the way they are approached by adults or other young people

## Procedures for Reporting & Reaction

- When reacting to concerns or claims of harm or abuse the ultimate guiding principle will be the best interests and wellbeing of the child or children
- In the event of any incidents, comments, suspicions or concerns the case will be immediately reported to the CPC and any cases of abuse will be investigated thoroughly
- A child reporting concerns or claiming to be the subject of abuse will be protected, taken seriously and treated with respect; they will be reassured that they are not to blame; they are never to be treated with disbelief or in a way that might induce shame or embarrassment
- Adults will be clear about what will happen next, explaining that while the case will be kept as confidential as possible it cannot remain a secret
- Any adult reporting a concern will be treated seriously and with respect, and given support in dealing with the issue

## **2. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

- 2.1. Riverkids is committed to the safety and well being of all Children and aims at all times to provide the safest possible program and environment for each Riverkids Child.
- 2.2. Riverkids recognizes and supports the rights of each Child.
- 2.3. Riverkids is committed to the protection of each Child from any form of abuse and exploitation.
- 2.4. Riverkids has developed this code of conduct to protect Riverkids Children, Staff, Affiliated Persons and Riverkids by providing clear behavioral guidelines.



### 3. DEFINITIONS

Words used in the singular shall include the plural, and the plural the singular. Words used in the masculine gender shall include the feminine and the feminine the masculine.

**Affiliated Person** is any person who is a visitor, volunteer, sponsor, board member, trustee, staff in partnership agency, or any other individual that has Contact with a Riverkids Child.

**Bullying** is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior must be repeated, or have the potential to be repeated, over time. The behavior may include actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

**Child** is any person under the age of 18.

**Child Abuse** constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Child Abuse includes, but is not limited to, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect, Bullying, Child Labor, and Trafficking, inflicted upon a child.

**Child Labor** is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It includes work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- Interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Whether or not particular forms of "work" can be called "child labor" may depend on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued.

**Child Protection** includes the policies and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children from being abused or exploited.

**Child Protection Committee (CPC)** is an internal Riverkids committee comprised of the Human Resources manager in Cambodia, the Programs Director in Cambodia, the Deputy Director and the Volunteer and Project Manager in Singapore or any other persons who may be appointed to this committee from time to time by the Board of Riverkids.

**Contact** includes (a) being in the physical presence of a child or children in the context of Riverkids' work, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long term, and (b) having access to information regarding [Riverkids] children in the context of Riverkids' work, such as children's names, locations (addresses of individuals or projects), photographs and case studies.



**Emotional Abuse** occurs when a person is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from parent or caregiver; to the extent that it affects the person's physical growth or emotional wellbeing.

**Guardian** this may be a child's parent, legal guardian or the person who is the primary caregiver and provider of financial and emotional support of such child but, for the purposes of this CPP, shall in no case include a person suspected of abusing the Child.

**Neglect** is the persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide a person with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the person's health and development are placed at risk.

**Physical Abuse** occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure another person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures or may not result in any physical injury at all.

**Publishing** means the act of making something known, or available to be known, to the community at large, by exhibiting, displaying, disclosing, or revealing and includes the "publishing" of movies, documentaries, websites, emails, magazines, books, pamphlets, and research papers.

**Riverkids** means the Riverkids Foundation.

**Riverkids Child** means each Child presently or previously engaged in any Riverkids project or any other Child that has Contact with a member of Staff or an Affiliated Person through their work with Riverkids.

**Sexual Abuse** is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Sexual Abuse may be contact or non-contact acts, and includes threats and exposure to pornography.

**Sponsor** means a donor who is engaged in Riverkids' Mentoring Program.

**Staff** includes full-time, part-time, international and national and those who engage in short-term contracts such as: consultancies, research, multimedia, etc.

**Trafficking** means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of any Child for the purposes of sexual or labor exploitation, forced labor or slavery.

#### 4. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all Riverkids Staff and Affiliated Persons and by engaging in any capacity with Riverkids or any Riverkids Child, each such person agrees to be bound by the code set forth herein.



## **5. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

During the course of all and any activity related to Riverkids, each member of Staff and each Affiliated Person shall:

- establish and maintain clear professional boundaries that serve to protect all parties from misunderstandings or violation of the professional relationship
- conduct herself in a manner consistent with her role as a Riverkids representative and as a positive role model to children.



## 6. CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

6.1. Each member of Staff and each Affiliated Person agrees that she/he will:

- Treat each Child with respect.
- Conduct herself in a manner that is consistent with the values and principles of Riverkids.
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for each Riverkids Child and each other member of Staff and Affiliated Person.
- Respect cultural differences when engaged in any Riverkids related activity.
- Report any abuse, or suspected abuse, of any Riverkids Child or any other persons supported by Riverkids or any person related to Riverkids concerning behavior of a member of Staff or Affiliated Person.
- At all times be transparent in her actions and whereabouts.
- Take responsibility for ensuring she is accountable for her actions and self-assess her behavior, actions, language and relationships with each Riverkids Child.

6.2. Each member of Staff and each Affiliated Person agrees that she will not:

- Engage in Child Abuse
- Engage in behavior that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade any Riverkids Child.
- Use inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language when speaking to a Riverkids Child.
- Do things of a personal nature that a Riverkids Child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes.
- Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a Riverkids Child.
- Photograph or video a Riverkids Child without the consent of the Child and her Guardian and a member of Staff.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a Riverkids Child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way.
- Place herself, or allow herself to be placed, in any position where there is a risk of an allegation of Child Abuse being made.
- Seek to make contact and spend time with any Riverkids Child outside her role as a Riverkids Staff or Affiliated Person.



- Use Riverkids' property, including, but not limited to, computers, mobile phones, cameras for the purpose of exploiting or harassing a Child or for any other inappropriate purpose.

## 7. SPONSORSHIP GUIDELINES

7.1. Riverkids and each Sponsor recognize the need to implement specific guidelines to manage the child protection risks within its sponsor program.

7.2. Each Sponsor agrees to be bound by the sponsorship guidelines set forth in the Mentor policy and the terms of this policy, each as may be revised from time to time, and agree that if she fails to abide by the such guidelines and terms, Riverkids has the right to terminate the sponsorship immediately and take any further action it deems necessary.

7.3. Letters:

- Letters which contain any comment which could cause offense or be deemed inappropriate are not permitted and this includes any obscenity or sexual, political or religious comment or reference.
- Children should never be invited to leave or be taken away from their communities.
- All gifts and correspondence must be sent to the Child via Riverkids.
- Sponsors will not make contact with the Child or family outside of letter correspondence and not without first obtaining clearance from Riverkids.
- Sponsors and sponsored family should not exchange their full names, addresses or contact details.

7.4. Visits

- Should a Sponsor wish to visit either a Riverkids site or with a Riverkids Child, she shall inform Riverkids at least two weeks in advance and such visit shall be arranged by the Riverkids' office.
- Any and all procedures and conditions imposed by Riverkids regarding such visit shall be respected and adhered to, including, but not limited to, the execution of this Child Protection Policy by the Sponsor and all accompanying visitors. Please refer to the Mentor Policy.
- All visits will be monitored by a member of Riverkids Staff.

7.5. Photographs of a Riverkids Child taken by Sponsors shall comply with the terms of this Child Protection Policy.

7.6. Sponsors shall not share any identifying information or photographs of the Riverkids Child with anyone outside their family.



## **8. PHOTOGRAPHY**

- 8.1. Each member of Staff and each Affiliated Person agrees that she will only capture or share images of a Riverkids Child that are respectful, appropriate and consensual and will at no time capture an image of a Riverkids Child that portrays such Child in a vulnerable or submissive manner.
- 8.2. Any image of a Riverkids Child captured or shared by a Staff member or an Affiliated Person must show the Child to be appropriately clothed and not in a pose that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- 8.3. Images of any Riverkids Child should be an honest representation of the context and the facts.
- 8.4. At no time may any image of a Riverkids Child be accompanied or otherwise linked to identifying information. Identifying information may be information identifying either a Child's name, location, close contacts or any other information which is reasonably likely to enable a person to access such Child.
- 8.5. Consent of each Child and her Guardian must always be obtained prior to any Publication or sharing of an image of such Child. When seeking such consent, the Child and Guardian must be provided accurate details as to whom the image will be shared with, and how and where it might be used.
- 8.6. With the written consent of any member of the CPC, images of 3 or more Riverkids Children may be used without their consent.
- 8.7. All photographers taking photographs or videos for Publication will be screened by Riverkids for their suitability and shall have read and agreed to the terms of Riverkids Media Guidelines.

## **9. MEDIA - INTERVIEWS**

- 9.1. Prior to any contact with a Riverkids Child, each interviewer shall have read and agreed to the terms of Riverkids Media Guidelines.
- 9.2. Prior to an interview, the interviewer (directly or through a translator) must explain verbally to the Riverkids Child and her Guardian, in the presence of a member of Riverkids staff, their media rights in a language they understand and the purpose of the interview must be explained, including the scope of the piece and the identity and nature of the ultimate publication. The Guardian and a member of Riverkids staff must sign a statement agreeing that this has been done.
- 9.3. Personal details (eg contact details, and intimate details of abuse) of, and direct quotes by, a Riverkids Child, must not be published alongside identifiable or individual photographs or stories of such Child without the written consent of such Child, her Guardian and a member of the CPC.



- 9.4. Prior to publication, a copy of any work to be Published shall be reviewed and approved by the CPC and the Legal Guardian of each applicable Riverkids Child and permission to publish any identifiable content related to Riverkids (such as photos, quotes, names) shall be at Riverkids' sole discretion.

## 10. EMPLOYMENT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Riverkids Foundation is committed to thorough recruitment and training practices, including screening and selection practices that aim to recruit the most suitable people to work in our programs. Our child safe recruitment and human resource practices are set out more fully in Riverkids Staff Policy and include the following:

- 10.1. All Staff and volunteer applicants will be required to submit a detailed application form when applying for a position. This form will ask for extensive information about the applicant's background such as dates and places of employment, education and other activities and applicant will be required to provide proof of identify including original birth certificate and/or passport, and original or notarized copies of qualifications.
- 10.2. A formal interview will be conducted for all positions, ideally face-to-face, but telephone interviews may be necessary in the international context and will only be acceptable in the international context.
- 10.3. Police reports plus a minimum of two letters of reference will be required for all candidates. This includes short and long-term positions, volunteers on placement and consultants. The candidates' most recent employer/supervisors must be one of these referees.

## 11. CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

The abuse or exploitation of any Child by any person is unacceptable. Riverkids will take all reports of Child Abuse seriously and will act on these reports immediately.

- 11.1. **Who Should Report?** Each member of Staff and Affiliated Person has a reporting obligation under this policy.
- 11.2. **What Should be Reported?**
- Any observation or allegation by any person of any act, actual or suspected, of Child Abuse of a Riverkids Child.
  - Any observation of behavior, actual or suspected, by a member of Staff or Affiliated Person that breaches this Policy.
  - Any instance of activity, suspected or actual, that breaches this Policy, including, but not limited to, inappropriate publication of materials relating to a Riverkids Child.

- 11.3. **Information Gathering.** If a child approaches a Staff or Affiliated Person alleging Child Abuse, that person should follow the guidelines set forth in the staff and in any event should record the conversation as soon as possible in the child's own words and should not promise to keep the information confidential or promise what the next steps will be.

This is the process to follow: When approached by a child alleging Child Abuse the Staff member should

- Find a private, quiet place to listen, then listen in a calm, non-judgmental manner, reassuring the child that it is right to tell,
- Use open-ended, rather than leading, questions,
- Not probe for details but just listen to the information provided
- Record it as soon as possible in the child's own words,
- Keep their notes and information confidential and secure.
- Not interrupt the child's story, promise to keep disclosure confidential, ask leading questions, or show horror or anger, conduct your own investigation, provide opinions or judgments, promise the child what the next steps will be, or promise that things will get better.

11.4. **Reporting Procedures**

- Child Abuse reports should be made to any member of the CPC.
- Preferably all reports should be made by completing Riverkids' Child Abuse incident reporting sheet available from any member of Staff but may also be submitted in any written or verbal form.
- Reports should not be anonymous but may be.
- If the report is not anonymous, the CPC is required to share the name of reporter with the Disciplinary Board but may refuse to disclose the name to anyone else if there is any perceived risk of recrimination.

11.5. **When to report?**

- Child Abuse concerns should be raised immediately that a Staff member or Affiliated Person becomes suspicious or otherwise aware of the abuse.

11.6. **What Will Happen Next?**

- Unless the Child's Guardian is the abuser, the CPC shall notify the Child's Guardian immediately (ie the same day if possible); *provided* that such notification will not expose the Child to any further risk.
- The CPC shall also comply with any reporting or other requirement of Cambodian or other applicable laws or conventions.
- Within 72 hours of receipt of any allegation, the CPC shall also prepare a written report outlining the allegations and the proposal for investigation and next steps.

11.7. **Investigation Procedures**

- Riverkids will conduct the investigation pursuant to the procedures developed by the CPC as in effect from time to time.



- At no time shall any person interview or photograph the victim of the abuse without their consent and the consent of their Guardian, or, in the event the Guardian or another member of the family is suspected of being the perpetrator, a member of the CPC.

## **12. TRAINING ON CHILD ABUSE AND THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

12.1. In order to create a safe environment for Children, Riverkids is committed to educating Staff, Affiliated Persons, each Riverkids Child and their Guardians regarding this Policy. For Riverkids Children and their Guardians, this training is carried out by social workers and teaching staff in accordance with Riverkids guidelines.

12.2. Riverkids will also promote practices that aim to keep Children safe in the wider community, and will provide information about child protection to the Children and communities in which Riverkids operates.

## **13. REVIEWING THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

This Policy will be reviewed every two years by the CPC, and such review shall consider experiences and views of Riverkids Children, Staff and Affiliated Persons as well as all applicable laws.



## 14. DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

Each member of Staff and each Affiliated Person is required to sign this declaration prior to having contact with any Riverkids Child.

### I DECLARE THAT:

1. I have read and understood The Riverkids Foundation's Child Protection Policy.
2. I will follow all procedures and protocols set forth in the Child Protection Policy.
3. I will immediately report any actual or suspected act of Child Abuse to a member of the Child Protection Committee.
4. I have neither committed nor been accused of committing an act of Child Abuse and have not been convicted under the laws of any jurisdiction of Child Abuse or any other violent crime.
5. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of a Child, Riverkids shall take all and any action it deems appropriate, including, but not limited to, termination of employment or other contractual relationship, a thorough internal investigation by Riverkids and, if deemed appropriate, filing a report with the appropriate local authority and, if applicable, foreign embassy.

Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Passport/Identification Card No: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_