



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

V. Feb 2024

OVERVIEW

Ponheary Ly Foundation is committed to the safety and well-being of all children involved in PLF projects, including young adults (under age 25) who are still considered vulnerable. We recognize the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Cambodia acceded in 1992), and maintain a *zero-tolerance approach* to child abuse.

- Take a proactive approach to identifying and minimizing child protection risks
- Educate all staff, interns, volunteers, and visitors about child-safe practices
- Cooperate with and support the schools and other community systems in creating child-friendly schools and communities.
- Maintain an open and aware culture with equal commitment to the primacy of the interests of the child
- Uphold a structure for responding promptly and appropriately to reported abuse
- Establish child-safe practices as a guiding principle in all activities and management practices
- Promote a child-safe environment at all times

This policy outlines our commitment to providing all students who are involved with PLF programs with the safest possible environment. It is written in consultation with school officials and the relevant communities, fully approved and supported by PLF's Executive Board and Board of Directors, and applies to all employees (paid or unpaid), contractors, consultants, volunteers, visitors, donors, supporters, and any other partner of our organization.

DEFINITIONS

Child: A child is regarded to be any person under the age of 18 years.

Vulnerable Adult: A person between the ages of 18 and 25 years old.

Child Protection: The term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being abused or maltreated.

Child Protection Officer: Designated PLF staff member responsible for managing, investigating, and resolving child protection incident reports in line with our procedures and

values. They develop and maintain supportive relationships with staff, students, schools, and communities to foster a common goal of protecting children and vulnerable young adults. They guide the work of Child Protection Trainers and lead PLF's regular child protection assessment.

Child Protection Trainer: Designated PLF staff member responsible for developing and delivering relevant child protection training for staff, students, schools, and/or communities.

Child Abuse: Abuse happens to male and female children of all ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientations, religious beliefs, and political persuasion. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, bullying, child labor, and domestic violence.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young 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.

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name-calling, being disparaged, or continual coldness from parent or caregiver, to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent, or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification - regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including threats and exposure to pornography.

Child-Sex Tourism: End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children (ECPAT) International defines child-sex tourism as: "...the commercial sexual exploitation of children by men or women who travel from one place to another, usually from a richer country to one that is less developed, and there engage in sexual acts with children, defined as anyone aged under 18 years of age" (ECPAT International, 2006).

Bullying: Bullying is the inappropriate use of power by an individual or group with the intent to injure either physically or emotionally. It is usually deliberate and repetitive. The bullying may be physical or psychological (verbal and non-verbal).

- Physically, bullying includes pushing, hitting, punching, kicking, or any other action causing hurt or injury.
- Verbal bullying includes insults, taunts, threats, and ridicule.
- Psychological bullying includes physical intimidation and ostracism.

Exposure to Domestic Violence: Domestic violence occurs when children and young people witness or experience the chronic domination, coercion, intimidation, and victimization of one person by another by physical, sexual, or emotional means within intimate relationships.

RISK MANAGEMENT

We acknowledge a clear moral responsibility to the students involved in our programs and recognize that there are a number of potential risks to children and vulnerable adults in the delivery of our programs to them. We work to proactively assess and manage these risks to students in our programs (and in the communities in which we work) to reduce the risk of harm to the best of our ability. This is achieved by examining each program and its potential impact on students. This is an ongoing part of every activity, such that staff and all others involved with PLF should continually be aware of risks and actively minimize opportunities and situations where children can be harmed. We provide training at all levels (staff, partners, and students) to provide knowledge and skills on child protection matters. We also conduct a Child Protection Assessment Tool every other year to review and adjust our policies, practices, and training.

STAFF RECRUITMENT & TRAINING

Through proactive action to promote child-safe practices, we hope to attract positive role models for children and people who will embrace the same child protection principles as we do, but effectively screening prospective staff is an equally important tool for minimizing risk to children.

Every employee must be aware of the principles and procedures of child protection as well as how to recognize and respond to potential abuse. We have designated at least one Child Protection Officer who is responsible for the implementation of this policy, such as supervision, monitoring, and support of child protection within the organization. PLF will also have at least one Child Protection Trainer who is responsible for training relevant parties on child protection matters. All staff will receive training within the first two weeks of appointment and be encouraged to approach the Child Protection Officer with any questions on child protection issues. In addition to staff trainings, PLF will host workshops with all students involved with PLF programs regarding child safe practices and the rights of the child.

Visitors to PLF programs are accompanied by at least one member of PLF staff at all times and must adhere to our Child Protection Policy Code of Conduct at all times. No visit shall be made to any PLF program without prior arrangement or without a member of PLF staff present.

Any prospective member of staff, volunteer, or visitor who does not wish to comply with these requirements will not be permitted to visit our programs.

REPORTING & RESPONSE STRUCTURE

With the assistance of our Student Counselor, a student 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 and will never be treated with disbelief or in a manner that might cause shame or embarrassment. We will seek medical treatment for any injuries, make any necessary further referrals, and assist them to the best of our ability.

An Incident Report Form has been developed and staff have been made aware of its existence and the appropriate reporting process. The Child Protection Officer will be responsible for the dissemination and investigation of all initial complaints and, if needed, with the assistance of the President and Founder, will make an assessment on the allegation and take appropriate action

which can range from no-action, behavioral management, counseling, referring the complaint to local law enforcement/police, and dismissal.

In the event of an allegation made in good faith, which is shown to be unfounded or untrue, no action will be taken against the maker of the allegation. False and malicious allegations are unacceptable, and perpetrators will be subject to appropriate action. Failure of a PLF representative to report suspected child abuse will render the perpetrator liable to criminal sanction and/or termination of employment.

Who can report? Children, vulnerable young adults, staff, volunteers, or others involved with PLF.

What to report? All allegations, disclosures, or observations of child abuse or suspected breaches of the child protection policy and code of conduct.

How to report? All reports must include a signed and dated copy of the Incident Report Form. Reports may be made verbally by those unable to write, in which case a member of staff is responsible for completing the Incident Report Form on their behalf.

When to report? All concerns, allegations, or abuse must be reported within 24hrs or as soon as practically possible.

Who to report to? Concerns for the safety or well-being of a child or vulnerable young adult must be reported to the Child Protection Officer. Any abuse allegations against staff must be reported to the Child Protection Officer. Any abuse allegations against the CPO should be reported to the President and Founder.

What will happen? The situation and information will be immediately assessed. An investigation and a confidential report will be made in compliance with this policy or within the context of local/country legislation.

What are the possible outcomes? Criminal matter or child protection report made to police or child protection authority. Victims and alleged offenders safety need to be assessed and responded to. Breach of this policy and/or code of conduct can result in performance management or termination of employment. Feedback and consultation to be given where possible to those directly involved or affected protection confidentiality and privacy. Debriefing and counseling to be offered if needed.

Date Policy Approved: _____

Signed: _____  _____

Ponheary Ly, President