

# International Child Protection Policy



2020



# INTERNATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

A Chance In Life

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## Introduction

A Chance In Life is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in New York. We provide funding through partnerships with local organizations working with children and youth around the world. Our grants are offered to empower children and youth through the provision of quality education, gender equity and capacity building, offering “a chance in life” and promoting their full potential.

At A Chance In Life we are committed to safeguard the integrity of children and youth in all what we do, we expect the same from our all our board members, staff, partners, consultants, volunteers and interns, and all visitors to programs.

Although children and youth may be extremely resourceful and resilient,<sup>1</sup> they are also particularly vulnerable to abuse due to their lack of status and power, their stage of development, and their reliance on adults.

We believe that every child and youth have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, and maltreatment, irrespective of their nationality, race, religion, or socioeconomic status. We are also respectful for local laws and customs in order to follow the appropriate reporting and response procedures when working with our partners to keep children and youth safe in different contexts.

- All organizations, teams and individuals working or in contact with children and youth have a duty to ensure their safety and well-being, preventing the harm that may be done as a result of any activity.
- All children and youth have an equal right to protection, without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.<sup>2</sup>
- This International Child Protection Policy reflects our commitment to respect, promote, uphold, and protect the rights of the child as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in line with our mission.

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<sup>1</sup> Resilience in children and youth: A review, published in ELSEVIER, Dec, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.08.009>

<sup>2</sup> Article 2, Part II. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## A. Terms and Definitions



*In this section, main terms and definitions used in this International Child Protection Policy are found.*

### - **Child.**

A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. (Convention on the Rights of the Child.)<sup>3</sup>

### - **Youth.**

There is no universally agreed international definition of the youth age group. For statistical purposes, however, the United Nations—without prejudice to any other definitions made by Member States—defines ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. This definition, arose in the context of preparations for the International Youth Year (1985).<sup>4</sup>

*All references to children in this Policy should be read as a reference to children and youth.*

### - **Child Protection.**

Child protection is the ‘prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children’. (The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action)<sup>5</sup>

### - **Child Maltreatment.**

Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results 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. Exposure to intimate partner violence is also sometimes included as a form of child maltreatment. Child maltreatment has enormous immediate and long-term repercussions. Beyond death, physical injury and disability, violence can lead to stress that impairs brain development and damages the nervous and immune systems. This in turn is associated with delayed cognitive development, poor school performance and dropout, mental health problems, suicide attempts, increased health-risk behaviors, revictimization and the perpetration of violence.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Convention of the Rights of the Child. New York. 20 November 1989. [https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1990/09/19900902%2003-14%20AM/Ch\\_IV\\_11p.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1990/09/19900902%2003-14%20AM/Ch_IV_11p.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace. Report of the Secretary-General. <https://undocs.org/en/A/36/215>

<sup>5</sup> Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action by The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. [https://alliancecpa.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/cpms\\_2019\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://alliancecpa.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/cpms_2019_final_en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-children>

- **Neglect of Basic Needs.**

Denial of food, water, cleanliness, clothing, and sleep are not appropriate means of discipline.

- **Physical Abuse.**

Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth in a position of care or authority to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Physical force (hitting, spanking, shaking, shoving, etc.) is not to be used by leaders in our programs.

- **Sexual Abuse.**

Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child and an adult; any use of a child for the sexual stimulation of an adult, a third person, or the child; any jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult. Even if a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, out of ignorance, innocence, or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.

- **Emotional Abuse.**

Inappropriately belittling, hateful, or angry words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.

- **Spiritual Abuse.**

Using religious references to shame or guilt a child into a particular action or behavior.

## B. Scope of this policy



*This section provides an overview of who must comply with this International Child Protection Policy.*

At A Chance In Life, we do not run programs “towns” where children live, however we provide grants to local Partner organizations who own the programs. A Chance In Life’s staff is not directly involved with children.

The procedures and processes contained in this Policy apply to:

- All Partners
- All A Chance In Life Board Members.
- All staff.
- All consultants.
- All volunteers and interns.
- All visitors to programs, including journalists and media personnel, and any individual in any capacity at our request or instruction to perform a task on the field.

To guarantee the effectiveness of this Policy, we will ensure that:

- There is a designated Child Protection Officer in A Chance In Life.
- Quarter safeguarding reports are provided by the designated Child Protection Officer to the President, or anytime there is an incident or concern about safeguarding.
- A safeguarding report is presented to the board on an annual basis, or anytime there is an incident or concern about safeguarding.
- This Policy is reviewed annually by the Child Protection Officer and the Policy is updated annually based on findings and/or whenever there is a relevant change in the law, or life circumstances.

A Chance In Life will treat any breach of this Policy seriously. Failure to comply with this Policy may incur in sanctions ranging from disciplinary action (including possible dismissal) to termination of contracts or partnerships, and where appropriate, may result in referral to the police or other relevant authorities, locally.

## C. Policy Statement



*This section outlines the core of our policy:  
why we believe in the protection of children and youth.*

We are fully committed to safeguarding all children and young people from all forms of violence. We take very seriously our responsibility and duty to ensure that we, as an organization, and our Partners do not, in any way, harm, abuse or commit any act of violence against children and young people or place them at risk of the same.

We take immediate action to prevent anyone who might be risk to children and young people from becoming involved with us and we take measures against any Partner Organization, Board Member, Staff, Consultants, Contractors and Service Providers, Volunteer and Intern, or Visitor who perpetrates an act of violence against a child or young people.

A Chance In Life has a legal and moral obligation to take all reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm for children and youth in any activity or interaction it is responsible for. This includes a responsibility to ensure that Partners, Board Members, Staff, Consultants, Contractors and Service Providers, Volunteers and Interns, and Visitors comply with this policy.

## D. Safeguarding Responsibilities



*This section outlines the specific responsibilities of A Chance In Life stakeholders.*

### Our Partners

A Chance In Life is accountable for ensuring that the organization's funds are used properly and that due diligence checks are conducted to identify and verify who our partners are, to ascertain that they have the capacity and skills to deliver initiatives safely, and to monitor their activities and conduct. All partners must have the competence to fulfill their obligations safely and have the policies and procedures in place to prevent harm or abuse to children and youth.

This responsibility is delegated to the Director of Programs and the President of A Chance In Life.

The inherent power dynamic between funder and partner is recognized. We want to create relationships that enable organizations to discuss with us, without fear of recrimination or of their funding being suspended, any safeguarding concerns they have, whether within their organization or about other organizations (including foundations and other donors). We aim to support our partners in developing robust safeguarding practices and help them navigate their safeguarding challenges.

To ensure that our grants are provided to organizations that offer a safe environment for children and youth, the following measures are followed:

- Due diligence checks of all prospective partners are completed, including a review of their policies, procedures, and processes that are in place to safeguard children and youth.
- Partners must fulfill the terms of Partnership Contract, which includes having a safeguarding policy in place by the sixth month of the first full year of funding and committing to comply with this International Child Protection Policy in the interim.
- Where necessary, A Chance In Life provides additional capacity development to ensure the appropriate practices and policies are in place to ensure children and youth are safeguarded.

Our Partners work with children around the world, therefore they must:

- Sign and abide by the A Chance In Life's Child Protection Agreement, at the same time the Partnership Contract is signed.
- Have their own Child Protection Policy.
- If the partner does not have a Child Protection Policy, they must develop one in line with the Child Protection Minimum Standards (CPMS) by The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, within three months of the commencement of the partnership with

A Chance In Life, and in the meantime, commit to comply with this International Child Protection Policy whilst their own safeguarding policies and procedures are under development.

- All Partner organizations and their personnel working or in contact with children and youth have a duty to ensure safety and well-being.
- The well-being of the child is a paramount consideration, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## Our Board Members

This International Child Protection Policy is included as part of the orientation manual package for all new Board Members. An acknowledgement of receipt of this Policy should be signed.

- A background check is required, and it is determined by the type of activity the individual will be engaged in at A Chance In Life and the level of potential risk this poses to children and youth, as well as the frequency of unsupervised contact with children and youth.

## Recruitment Process of Staff

A Chance In Life seeks to recruit staff who are committed to the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. This goes beyond simply complying with protocols and extends to ensuring that individuals have an appropriate set of personal and professional values and are committed to promoting the safety and well-being of children and youth.

- A background check is required, and it is determined by the type of activity the individual will be engaged in at A Chance In Life and the level of potential risk this poses to children and youth, as well as the frequency of unsupervised contact with children and youth.
- To the extent available (taking into account cost and other factors), FBI check Identity History Summary shall be obtained, or appropriate authority in each country.
- All staff are required to provide two references (phone and email references), as well as a copy of an official photo ID as proof of identity, and these items are stored securely in personnel files.
- Compliance with the International Child Protection Policy is a contractual requirement for each staff member.

## Consultants, Contractors and Service Providers

All A Chance In Life consultants, contractors and service providers (legal entities or individuals) whose work involve direct or indirect contact with children and youth are:

- Provided with a copy of this Policy prior to work commencing, which they must read and sign a commitment to adhere to.
- Expectations with regard to safeguarding are explained prior to undertaking assignments that involve direct or indirect contact with children and youth.
- Contracts include a clause requiring compliance with this Policy and the consequences of a breach.

## Volunteers and Interns

- Volunteers and interns follow the same safe recruitment process as staff.

## E. Visits to Programs of Partners

*This section outlines the mandatory behavior of visitors during a field visit to a partner's program.*



When visiting A Chance In Life partner organizations, our personnel and guests must adhere to the partner's own safeguarding and child protection policies and processes for the entire duration of the visit, as well as this Policy.

Should our partners be concerned about the behavior of A Chance In Life staff or others guests, they can report their concerns by emailing our Child Protection Officer directly. A Chance In Life will investigate all reports, and the fact of notifying A Chance In Life of concerns will not impact the funding relationship between A Chance In Life and the partner organization.

When guests participate in program visits with our staff, we will ensure that:

- There is a clear purpose and reason for their visit (e.g., donor visiting a program, volunteer from a corporate partner offering a brief training session, etc.).
- We provide a review of relevant local context and customs.
- We provide them with a copy of this International Child Protection Policy, and they are briefed on any additional safeguarding measures required by the partner organization owner of the program, and they commit in writing to comply with the Policy and partner specific safeguarding measures.
- They are not left unsupervised at any time with children and youth.

## F. Staff Training and Support

*This section outlines the training and support needed for all personnel directly or indirectly dealing with children.*



A Chance In Life will provide training and support designed to ensure that all staff and others required to comply with this Policy, understand their responsibilities and have the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill their obligations.

- Compliance with this International Child Protection Policy is a requirement in all employees' contracts.
- All staff receive an induction on safeguarding within the first month of work. If they are regional staff, they also receive context-specific induction.
- Training on safeguarding is provided across the organization on an annual basis, including refresher training within six months of the International Child Protection Policy being updated.
- The Child Protection Officer receives regular specialist training and have access to the resources and tools necessary to execute his/her responsibilities.
- Supervision of staff and volunteers shall be provided where appropriate.

## G. Our Communications and Child Protection



*This section offers an overview of how A Chance In Life, respects the dignity of children and complies with child protection regulations when using multimedia material for our communications.*

We are aware of local and international data protection laws and regulations and we take them into account in our marketing and communications.

We believe that in the first place is the best interests of the child/youth. Therefore, we acknowledge that:

1. **Images.** The public use of images of children and youth inevitably poses potential risks. Where there is a risk of potential negative consequences for children and youth, we make decisions that favor their safety and protection. We do not use images that stereotype, degrade, or shame children and youth.
2. **Language.** In our communications, we uphold the rights and dignity of the child or youth, their family, and the wider community, therefore, we do not use stories or language that stereotype, degrade, or shame children and youth.
3. **Privacy.** We uphold every child and youth's right to privacy. The sharing of information is kept to the minimal necessary to achieve wider goals, and we never share information that could put a child or youth at risk.
4. **Accuracy.** The portrayal of individuals or groups of our organization or our partners must not be manipulated or sensationalized in any way, but instead should provide a balanced depiction of their life and circumstances.

## H. Our Storytelling Guidelines



*This section offers an overview of how A Chance In Life respects the dignity of children and complies with child protection regulations when sharing stories and communicating our messages.*

We keep children and youth safe in our storytelling by following these guidelines:

- Where children or youth are survivors of violence or human rights violations, both the child/youth (and their parent/guardian) and our partners must give informed consent to their story being told. Where consent is given, photos may be taken of the child or youth.
- Consent must be obtained before taking photographs of children and for images to be used on social media, in recognition of the specific risks associated with posting imagery on the internet. Consent via partner is acceptable if the partner has consent for images to be taken from participants and/or their parents/guardians.
- All content, publications, and presentations featuring children or youth are reviewed by the Child Protection Officer, and other member of the staff of A Chance In Life besides the Director of Communications, to ensure that no child or youth is put at risk. Where doubts exist, content decisions will be discussed with the President.
- Images that could be considered sexually provocative or where children or youth are not fully clothed are not used.
- A Chance In Life obtains a written consent from partners when using their own imagery, and the partner must confirm that it has obtained appropriate consent from the children and youth pictured.
- Consent documentation is stored by the Director of Communications.
- If we receive a request to remove a photo from our archives, we will do this promptly.
- At all times, children and youth are given the opportunity to provide their own accounts and personal narratives, rather than having people speak on their behalf. When using content created by children and youth, we share the right to use it with the partner involved provided we have received any necessary consents to do so.
- Our partners can refuse to participate in marketing activity if this has a safeguarding consequence for their organization. This will not impact the funding relationship with A Chance In Life, nor will it prevent the partner from being involved in marketing at a later date.

## I. Reporting and Response Procedures



*This section outlines how to report and the specific procedures to be used when there is a concern related to child protection.*

We take seriously any concerns, complaints, allegations, suspicions, or incidents involving children and youth. Reporting these concerns to the Child Protection Officer is a mandatory requirement of all A Chance In Life's Partner organizations, Board Member, staff, consultants, volunteers and interns, visitors to programs, including journalists and media personnel, and any individual in any capacity at our request or instruction to perform a task on the field.

Failure to report will be considered a serious breach of our International Child Protection Policy and could result in termination of relationship with the organization or individual.

### Reporting Procedure

Report immediately if you observe concerning behavior or abuse to a child or youth, where the alleged perpetrator is:

- A Chance In Life's Board member, staff, consultant, volunteer, intern or visitor.
- Related to our partner organizations.
- A member of the child's family or community or is unknown to the child.
- Another child. (In this case, the protection and safety of both the child victim and the alleged child abuser should be considered).

In some cases, where the abuse is historical (if it occurred some or many years ago) and if the risks of harm to children or youth may persist, it should be reported immediately.

Anonymous reports may indicate fear of reprisal, shame or other barriers to disclosure. Anonymous reports do not automatically mean that bear less substance.

### Response Procedure

A Chance In Life has a legal and moral obligation to respond to cases of harm and abuse when these are identified through our engagement with children and youth.

We must not, however, initiate interventions or offer advice that requires specialist child protection expertise, as this is outside our area of competence and could inadvertently result in further harm to the child.

Details of concerns are treated with the highest degree of confidentiality and only shared with the minimum number of people necessary to ensure the safety of the child and consistent with our legal obligations.

The responsibility for decisions and actions rests with A Chance In Life as an organization and not with any individual: Board members, Staff, consultants, volunteers and interns, and visitors must not act in isolation but must consult with A Chance In Life Child Protection Officer and/or their direct supervisor before taking any action in response to child protection concerns, except in the case where a child or youth is in immediate danger, in which case call the police and/or relevant authorities immediately.

We understand the need to make decisions that are appropriate and effective in the local context and take into account local laws, culture, etc. Generally, the local partner organization will take the lead in decision-making, following their safeguarding procedures, unless it is a concern about the partner, in which case local expertise/advice may be sought via A Chance In Life's contacts.

## J. Sponsorship Program

*This section contains guidelines about our Sponsorship Program, in which all Partner Organizations are invited to participate.*



The Sponsorship Program is a fund-raising activity where photographs and brief information of children are posted and donors (individuals or organizations) can sponsor them in a monthly basis or an annual basis. Children participating in the Sponsorship Program do not get direct cash benefits.

All funds raised through the Sponsorship Program are combined with other funds to make our grants.

The Sponsorship Program is a web-based platform where basic information about children from our Partners can be found. The available information displayed in the Sponsorship Platform does not go against any local or international privacy and use of personal data regulation.

All children's parents, caregivers or organizations responsible, have provided written consent before their information is displayed.

### About the sponsors

Before accepting the Sponsorship, the sponsor is screened to meet the following requirements:

- The sponsor is not be a sex offender.
- The sponsor is not in jail or custody.
- The sponsor has not had allegations against him or her regarding children.
- The sponsor will not, in any way, try to contact or make contact with the child, by any means.
- Any direct communication among children and donor is forbidden.
- The sponsor may discontinue a child sponsorship at any time by calling our office at 212-980-8770.

# Child Protection Officer responsibilities

## APPENDIX A

- To be the point of contact within A Chance In Life and partner organizations, for any issues related to safeguarding.
- To support the A Chance In Life in managing any safeguarding concerns/investigations that may affect the reputation and standing of the organization.
- To report any serious safeguarding incidents to the regulatory authorities and/or police, as appropriate or required by applicable law.
- To promote awareness of this International Safeguarding Policy and monitor its implementation.
- To act as a source of support and information for staff and partners who are required to comply with this Policy, and where appropriate, on safeguarding issues.
- To identify training needs, receive and provide capacity development where needed.
- To maintain clear records of any child protection concerns that are reported and the actions taken to address these concerns.
- To analyze data on safeguarding incidents and to generate learning and improve practices.
- To develop tools and training to support the implementation of the International Child Protection Policy in the organization and for all partners.
- To conduct an annual review of safeguarding implementation and effectiveness.
- To coordinate an annual report on safeguarding for the President and Board.

### Contact Details of Child Protection Officer

**Name:** Elser Llanos

**E-mail:** [elser@achanceinlife.org](mailto:elser@achanceinlife.org)

# Code of Conduct in interactions with children and youth

## APPENDIX B

This code of conduct outlines the behavior we expect of all our Partners, Board members, staff, consultants, contractors and service providers, volunteers and interns, visitors and others when in contact with children and youth.

A Chance In Life strives to maintain an environment where everyone is treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. Any breach of this code will be taken seriously and investigated. This may result in disciplinary action (including termination) and/or referrals to relevant authorities such as the police or social services.

### Prohibited behavior with children and youth

- It is unacceptable to engage in any action that harms or exploits children or youth.
- It is unacceptable to engage in illegal activities or use illegal substances.
- It is unacceptable to smoke or consume alcohol while on a field visit of a funded partner organization.
- It is unacceptable not to respect differences and discriminate on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability, and religious belief systems.
- It is unacceptable to act in a way that could be perceived as threatening, including the use of physical punishment or physical force to manage children or youth.
- It is unacceptable to make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory, or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and youth.
- It is unacceptable to disrespect child or youth's right to personal privacy and use caution when discussing sensitive topics.
- It must be ensured that there is more than one adult present during interactions with children and youth.
- It is unacceptable to spend excessive time with any one child or youth or otherwise showing favoritism.
- It is unacceptable to give money or a gift of any kind to individual children, youth or their families. If you wish to give a gift to a child or youth, this must be agreed upon with the program staff in advance.
- It is unacceptable to give children or youth your personal contact details (cell number, email, or address) or have contact with them via a personal email, phone or social media accounts.
- It is unacceptable to take a child or youth to your home, hotel, or any other private space.

- It is unacceptable to engage in any form of sexual contact with a child or youth. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child or youth is not a defense.<sup>7</sup>
- It is unacceptable to directly post images or stories about children or youth of our partner's programs on your personal social media accounts. Consent, when obtained, is given to A Chance In Life as an organization and not to the individual for personal use.
- It is unacceptable to accept contact requests or engage via personal social media with children or youth you have met through our partners' programs, and please report and forward requests to our Child Protection Officer.
- Always think twice about what you post/share and what implications this may have for the organization.
- Never upload or post any racist, defamatory, obscene, or abusive content to any platform.

If you become aware of any breaches of this code, please follow the procedure below:

- Report to your direct supervisor.
- Confidential reports can be made to the Child Protection Officer.
- If the breach is not promptly addressed, escalate to the President (Director or main person responsible of organization).

A person may report on an anonymous basis, although that may impede the Child Protection Officer's ability to thoroughly investigate the allegations. No person who makes a report in good faith will be subject to retaliation of any sort.

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<sup>7</sup> ST/SGB/2003/13 UN Secretary-General's bulletin: Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. (Section3, page 2)  
<https://undocs.org/ST/SGB/2003/13>