

Garden of Life

Child Protection Policy

1. Introduction

Many children in Cambodia are suffering from various kinds of abuse (e.g. emotional, neglect, physical, psychological, and sexual abuse), and many children are at risk of vulnerability and exploitation. Garden of Life (GoL) is committed to protect and treat all children with respect, and believes that all children are created in the image of God.

Child protection is one of the four themes which run throughout the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which went into effect in September 1990. All of the rights in the Convention apply to all children of all races and ethnicities. A fundamental philosophy behind the Convention is that children have the same inherent value as adults and are their equals. The four themes that define the Convention's general principles are:

- Protection
- Survival
- Development
- Participation

Cambodia is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and GoL works in Cambodia; therefore it is our duty to uphold the Convention as it applies to GoL in our work.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The GoL Child Protection Policy is a mean towards reducing child abuse and exploitation in Cambodia. The Policy applies to anyone working with or involved with GoL and its work. The Policy covers local and expatriate staff, local and expatriate volunteers, visitors and contractors (hereafter referred to as: GoL stakeholders/personnel). This Policy describes clear expectations of behaviour and good practice when dealing with children, as well as it tells what should be done if they have a concern about a child or suspect that a child is being harmed in some way.

The Policy is designed to:

- Prevent and protect children from abuse and exploitation
- Prevent and protect GoL stakeholders/personnel from false accusations and allegations
- Prevent and protect GoL's name and reputation as an organisation

3. Scope

The GoL Child Protection Policy applies to anyone working with or involved with GoL and its work. The Policy covers all level of GoL stakeholders/personnel during work and representation of GoL.

4. Policy issue

4.1 Statement of commitment

- 4.1.1 GoL has a zero tolerance stand towards any forms of abuse and exploitation of any child under the age of 18 years old.
- 4.1.2 GoL is committed to upholding the legislation on child right and welfare, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the Cambodian Government in 1992.

- 4.1.3 GoL believes that all children in Cambodia have a right to be prevented and protected from abuse irrespective of race, social background, age, gender, skin colour, disability, religion or beliefs.
- 4.1.4 GoL believes that child abuse and exploitation is wrong. Keeping silent is also wrong, because it is similar to the involvement with the abuse, and it allows the abuser to repeat the same abusive actions.
- 4.1.5 GoL believes that children have the right to speak and be heard. Therefore, where possible children will also be included as stakeholders.

4.2 The definition of child abuse

Child abuse is: non-accident physical injure or mistreatment caused by the acts or lack of care on the part of a child's parents, caregivers, GoL staff and any people around the child. This may be further defined as:

- 4.2.1 **Physical Abuse:** Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury, or suffering to a child, including deliberate hitting, beating, shaking, throwing, burning, drowning, suffocating or poisoning.
- 4.2.2 **Sexual Abuse:** Actual or likely exploitation of a child in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate social taboos or family norms. Is also defined by: touching a child's genitals, forcing child to watch or take part in pornography or coercing the child to have sex.
- 4.2.3 **Mental/Emotional Abuse:** Refers to inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child, or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical and emotional care. Such acts may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate and cause children to feel frightened, in danger and corrupted.
- 4.2.4 **Neglect:** The continuous or carelessness towards a child or the failure to prevent or protect a child from any danger that would result in harm to the child (physically, emotionally and well-being). This includes cold, heat and starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspect of care (i.e. food, clothing, shelter, education, love), resulting in the significant damage to the child's development.
- 4.2.5 **Spiritual Abuse:** Spiritual abuse occurs when a spiritual leader, or someone in a position of spiritual power or authority (whether organisation, institution, pagoda, church or family) misuses their power and authority, and the trust placed in them, with the intention of controlling, coercing, manipulating or dominating a child. Spiritual abuse is always about the misuse of power within a framework of spiritual belief and practice, in order to meet the needs of the abuser (or enhance his or her position) at the expense of the needs of the child. Spiritual abuse results in spiritual harm to the child and can be linked to other abuse, such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

4.3 Behavioural Protocols:

4.3.1 GoL expects all personnel:

- To give respect and dignity to all children associated with the work of GoL.
- Must sign a statement to say that they have read this policy, will respect and comply with it and understand that action will be taken in case of inappropriate behaviour (see 4.3.4 below).
- Can work at the program areas after they have signed the GoL Child Protection Policy.
- Will follow the GoL Code of Good Practice (see annex 2 below).
- Will not touch a child in a way that is against the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Will not discipline a child in a way that is against the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Will not exploit a child in any way.
- Will strongly avoid transporting or staying alone with a child.

4.3.2 All visitors will be made aware of the GoL Child Protection Policy, if they are to join any activities where children are involved. In such cases, the visitors will not be left unsupervised.

4.3.3 Adults will always be responsible for their behaviour and cannot blame the child, even if the child “provokes” or acts in a “seductive” way.

4.3.4 If the above behavioural protocols are broken, action will be taken, such as report to the police, dismissed, discipline action, etc. according to GoL’s policies and according to the law of Cambodia.

4.4 Recruitment and Screening

4.4.1 Reference check on GoL staff working with children is required during recruitment and screening process.

4.4.2 The GoL Child Protection Policy is connected to GoL employment contracts. This implies that, when GoL stakeholders/personnel sign their contract they also agree to follow the GoL Child Protection Policy. The Child Protection Policy must be read and signed before start to work with GoL.

4.4.3 GoL will only employ young adults or accept them as volunteers/interns in accordance with the Labour Law of Cambodia:

- Children under the age of 15 years old are not eligible for paid work.
- Children under the age of 18 years old cannot sign any contract without the consent from their parents or caregivers.
- Children must not work at night time.
- Children age from 12 to 15 years old can only work lighted tasks which:
 - Does not cause harm to their health or mental and physical development.
 - Does not prevent them from attending the school or training program.

4.5 Responses to Allegations

4.5.1 All level of GoL stakeholders/personnel may raise the discussion on the potential of abuse within the organisation.

4.5.2 All level of GoL stakeholders/personnel will not be in jeopardy if they have any suspicion or allegation against other GoL stakeholders/personnel.

4.5.3 Where an allegation has been made that a GoL stakeholders/personnel has abused a child, GoL will take the appropriate action to deal with the situation.

- 4.5.4 Allegation about child abuse should be made to the Program Director. If the Program Director is the subject of the allegation, the Chairperson of the GoL Interim Board must be informed instead.
- 4.5.5 The allegation will be kept confidential, with only those who have authority within the GoL Child Protection protocols.

4.6 Communication

- 4.6.1 GoL's communication about children will reflect images that are decent and respectful, not seeking to exploit their circumstances.
- 4.6.2 GoL will use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras of social media appropriately and never exploit or harass children or access children exploitation materials through any media.
- 4.6.3 GoL will never display pictures of children in vulnerable situations (e.g. naked children, child labour, children being counselled).
- 4.6.4 GoL will take special care to protect children's identities and their specific geographic locations in public relation materials.
- 4.6.5 An approval to take or post a picture of a child must be obtained from the child's parents or caregiver in advance.

4.7 Awareness Raising and Training

- 4.7.1 GoL obligates to make all level of GoL's stakeholders/personnel aware of child protection and the GoL Child Protection Policy. The Program Director will be responsible for that training is conducted on child protection to the current and new team members. The ExCom will be responsible for ensuring that, the Program Director has the available resources and training to be upfront on child protection and trends in Cambodia and Southeast Asia.
- 4.7.2 All level of GoL stakeholders/personnel should be provided with opportunities to learn about how to safeguard children, to recognise and respond to concerns about child abuse.
- 4.7.3 Appropriate literature, such as how to report an incident and child-safe information, will be available to all level of GoL stakeholders/personnel.
- 4.7.4 The GoL Child Protection Policy will be placed on the GoL website, as a means of publicly showing GoL's commitment to child protection.

4.8 Implementing the Child Protection Policy

- 4.8.1 All level of GoL stakeholders/personnel will have access to a copy of the GoL Child Protection Policy.
- 4.8.2 A Report Form is easily accessible to all staff for the reporting in case of misconduct (see annex 3 below).
- 4.8.3 Each individual staff must sign a statement saying that they have read and will comply with this Policy, will respect it and understand the actions to be taken in case of inappropriate behaviour.

4.9 Monitoring and Evaluation

GoL ExCom and Program Director are committed to regularly and routinely monitoring all staff conduct and activities to ensure the ongoing protection of children is maintained to the highest level possible. This is achieved through:

- 4.9.1 All level of GoL stakeholders/personnel are aware of that, their conduct will be monitored and reviewed regularly according to GoL Child Protection Policy and procedures.
- 4.9.2 Maintaining good communication between all level of GoL stakeholders/personnel to encourage timely and effective reporting of any concerns or incidents of misconduct involving child protection and safety.
- 4.9.3 In the event of an incident of misconduct, GoL will be immediately evaluated and reassessed on all levels, in order for necessary changes and extra safeguards to be added.
- 4.9.4 GoL will ensure this Policy remains relevant and effective. GoL will consistently monitor and assess all risks (e.g. program design and implementation) relating to the child, and when needed make any necessary changes to the Child Protection Policy, at minimum every 3 years.

5. Declaration of Commitment

All level of GoL stakeholders/personnel and other people directly connected with the work of GoL is to sign and declare that they have read and understood the GoL Child Protection Policy and that they are willing to act according to the GoL Child Protection Policy.

A copy will be kept on file at the GoL office. When GoL stakeholders/personnel sign their working contract, they will thereby agree to follow the GoL Child Protection Policy.

Statement:

I, _____ (name), declare that:

- 1. I have read, understood and will comply with the GoL Child Protection Policy.
- 2. I will work within the procedures as they are specified in the GoL Child Protection Policy.
- 3. I have not been convicted of any offence involving abuse or exploitation of children.
- 4. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of children while engaged in GoL activities, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

6. Document History

Date	Author	Reason for new version	Version	Status
April 25, 2022	Draft by Program Director	New policy	0.1	Draft
May 4, 2022	Review by Counsellors			
May 13, 2022	Review by ExCom			
Jun. 17, 2022	Review by Interim Board			
Jul. 30, 2022	Endorse by NaCE Board		1.0	Approved

Annex 1

Glossary of Terms

- Adult - Any person aged 18 years old or over, as stated in the Cambodian Constitution.
- Child - Any person under the age of 18 years old, as stated in the Cambodian Constitution.
- Contractors - Someone who is employed by GoL (either expat or Cambodian) for a fee.
- Expat staff - Any person who has been properly recruited by GoL, a GoL partner, or local hired to work for a contracted period with GoL.
- National staff - Any Cambodian national who is legally recruited by GoL to work for a contracted period with GoL.
- Volunteer - Any person who has been properly recruited by GoL or a GoL partner to work for GoL for a short period.
- Visitor - Any person who has been approved by the Program Director as an official GoL visitor. If not approved, people cannot visit GoL's work.

GoL Code of Good Practice

Training in Professional Counselling, workshops and courses

1. GoL does not accept a person under 18 years old to join any training sessions provided by GoL, unless requested by their employer as part of their capacity building plan. Special permission must be gained from GoL's Counselling Training Director in advance.
2. No child should come along with their parent/caregiver, who attends a GoL training session. It is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to arrange for external care of their child during attending a training session with GoL. If child care cannot be arranged in time, the participant (parent/caregiver) may excuse themselves from the training for a few hours to arrange proper care for their child.
3. External/guest trainers and GoL staff are not allowed to bring their child, child of their relatives, or any other child to be present during GoL training sessions.

Clinical Counselling

1. In general, clients coming for counselling at the Life Enrichment Center should not bring their child along.
2. If a client has prior permission from the Program Director to bring a child along, the child is not allowed to be present in the counselling session. The child may be at the ground floor, if proper care is arranged.
3. GoL Counsellors are not allowed to bring their child, child of their relatives, or any other child to the Life Enrichment Center.
4. If a potential individual client under 18 years old seeks counselling from GoL, permission is needed from the parent/caregiver and the GoL Program Director. In general, GoL will accept young people down to 16 years old for counselling. A special Intake Form for clients under 18 years old must be completed prior to counselling.
5. If a potential client under 18 years old is recommended by their parent/caregiver/employer for counselling, permission is needed from the GoL Program Director. In general, GoL will accept young people down to 16 years old, who are recommended by their parent/caregiver/employer for counselling. A special Intake Form for clients under 18 years old must be completed prior to counselling.

NB: Any potential client younger than 16 years old, will by GoL be recommended to another counselling provider for professional counselling assistance, with the parent/caregiver's approval.

Other

1. GoL staff are not allowed to bring their child, child of their relatives, or any other child with them to work; neither for inside or outside work-related activities.
2. GoL staff are not allowed to give gifts to any children, whom they meet in connection with their work-related activities.
3. GoL staff will not take on a care-giving responsibility for any child in relations with work-related activities.

Annex 3

Report Form Child Protection Misconduct

NB: When reporting a child protection misconduct, do only share first-hand information you have gained directly by yourself. Do not report second-hand information or rumours.

No.	Information about a Child Protection Misconduct	Note
1	Your name: Anonymity: No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	The Program Director needs your name, but besides that you can request for anonymity to the extent possible.
2	When did the child protection misconduct happen?	
3	Describe what happened/is happening:	Please share as many details as possible.
4	Where did it happen?	
5	How many times has it happened, that you know of?	
6	Why do you consider it to be child protection misconduct?	
7	Who committed the child protection misconduct?	Optional to answer
8	Have you shared this information with someone else? If yes, whom?	
9	If shared; when, how, and result?	
10	Other information you will like to share about this case:	