

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Gender Equality Research Institute (IPES) is a platform of experts that aims to deepen the understanding of GE. Its vision is based on the establishment and promotion of a wide range of activities that would help build a society that completely overcomes the barriers of gender dimensions and thus offers equal opportunities and rights to all. IPES' main goal is to provoke and transgress the existing social stereotypes, ideas and patterns that dictate restrictions and subjugations to us – both women and men – through socially constructed gender roles.

IPES child protection policy is grounded on:

UN Child Rights Convention (Art. 19);
General Comment No. 13 (2011) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child – the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence;
Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (Art. 56);
The Code of Ethical Principles in Social Protection (Social Chamber of Slovenia);
Domestic Violence Prevention Act;
Keeping Children Safe Coalition Child Safeguarding Standards.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Gender Equality Research Institute (*Inštitut za proučevanje enakosti spolov* – IPES) has developed and approved a Child protection policy to ensure the highest standards of professional behaviour and prevent any possible harm to children during their involvement in any of IPES activities and programmes.

Everyone working with children has a basic duty of attention toward them. IPES as an institution and all those working with IPES must recognize the risks to children and assume responsibility for keeping them safe.

In order to protect children from abuse and exploitation, IPES' staff and its partners must at all times behave themselves with the highest levels of professionalism and integrity and always act in line with the best interest of the child.

It is IPES' responsibility to ensure that everyone is informed about the existence and content of this child protection policy.

1.1 Validity

The contents of the Policy apply to all employees of IPES, but the purpose of this Policy is to be considered as an employee also by all other persons who, on the basis of other contractual relations with the institution, are involved in the work or educational process of the institution.

Child protection policy applies to:

- all staff; Management Board members; interns and volunteers;
- all those acting on behalf of IPES, such as teachers, consultants, researchers, other experts or trainers;
- all those adults accompanying children to events and activities organised by IPES;
- all those who participate in IPES' events and meetings involving children, including journalists, sponsors, donors, policy makers, etc.

All the individuals cited above will be expected to read IPES' Child Protection Policy and sign a commitment to adhere to its principles and procedures. The persons cited above will be obliged to respect the content of the document and to comply with it in the performance of their work, in their relations with other employees of the institution, in relation to the pupil's parents, business partners of the institution and all other persons, authorities, institutions and in all other situations where they act as an employees of the institution or conclude or should conclude that in the given circumstances they represent the institution.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to set minimum ethical standards for the conduct and operation of the institution, with the aim of establishing and uphold the core values of the institution, high professional and ethical standards that will serve pupils and teachers, and provide other employees with adequate work and learning environment at the institution, ensure personal progress and the well-being of all participants in work and educational processes in the institution and strengthened the social reputation of IPES.

1.3. Our values, principles and beliefs

- All child abuse involves the abuse of children’s rights.
- 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. This includes the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation.
- Child abuse is never acceptable.
- We have a commitment to protecting children with/for whom we work.
- When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children in their programmes.

2. DEFINITIONS UNDER THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

CHILD

For the purposes of this document, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

CHILD ABUSE¹

According to the World Health Organisation, “child abuse” or “maltreatment” 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 PARTICIPATION²

Anyone below the age of 18 taking part in a process or playing a role in a process at his/her level, according to their evolving capacities – children and young people thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, and interacting in a positive way with other people; involving children in the decisions which affect their lives, the lives of the community and the larger society in which they live.

CHILD PROTECTION

A broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of organisations – and individuals associated with those organisations – towards children in their care.

DIRECT CONTACT WITH CHILDREN

Being in the physical presence of a child or children in the context of the organisation’s work, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long term.

INDIRECT CONTACT WITH CHILDREN

Having both – access to information on children in the context of the organisation’s work, such as children’s names, locations (addresses of individuals or projects), photographs and case studies, and

¹ The WHO definition of Child Abuse as defined by the Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention WHO – 1999.

² Adapted from Save the Children UK training materials for West Africa.

also providing funding for organisations that work 'directly' with children. Albeit indirectly, this nonetheless has an impact on children, and therefore confers upon the donor organisation responsibility for child protection issues.

3. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

'A statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organisation is taking its duty and responsibility of care seriously.'³

3.1 Policy statement: Preventing abuse

IPES commits to a set of principles that derive from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols:

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- Everyone has a responsibility to protect and support children and to always act in the best interest of the child.
- Organizations have a duty to protect the children they encounter when implementing their activities. They must take all necessary steps to provide the children with the care and support they need and contribute towards a protective environment.
- Children are actors in their own protection and development, which does not exempt parents and educators from their responsibilities.

IPES is committed to the protection and promotion of children's rights and reaffirms its policy of zero tolerance of any form of child abuse.

We will meet our commitment to protect children from abuse through the following means:

Awareness: we will ensure that all staff and others are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.

Prevention: we will ensure, through awareness raising and good practice, that staff and others minimise the risks to children.

Reporting: we will ensure that staff and others are clear what steps to take where concerns regarding the safety of children arise.

Responding: we will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns regarding possible abuse arise.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, employees of IPES:

- take seriously any concerns raised;
- take positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns;
- support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation;
- are guided through the child protection process by the principle of 'best interests of the child'
- listen to and takes seriously the views and wishes of children
- work in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.

3.2 How we will ensure our commitments above are met

All employees of IPES will sign up to and abide by the attached Policy of conduct. Furthermore:

- All staff and volunteers will have access to a copy of the child protection policy.
- Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability for working with young people.
- Induction will include briefing on child protection issues.

³ Setting the Standard: A common approach to Child Protection for international NGOs, Standard 1 (Policy).

- Every workplace will display contact details for reporting possible child abuse and every member of staff will have contact details for reporting.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

4. CODE OF CONDUCT

All staff must sign up to and abide by this Code of Conduct.

Staff and others must never:

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children;
- develop physical/sexual relationships with children;
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive;
- act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse;
- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive;
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative;
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves;
- condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
- act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise;
- perpetrate any form of emotional abuse;
- discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others;
- touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way;
- take photographs, videos or request personal information if they are not required for specific activities;
- be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while working with children;
- ignore or fail to report any concern or violation to superiors.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to:

- be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these;
- plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks;
- as far as possible, be visible in working with children;
- ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed;
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged;
- talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns;
- empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

4. IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCEDURES

4.1 Recruitment, selection and induction

Before starting work with IPES, each candidate shall undertake a secured recruitment process and submit to background checks. Anyone having signed a permanent or fixed-term employment contract with IPES, accompanying family members, consultants, as well as interns, international volunteers and voluntary workers engaged by IPES shall be informed of this child protection policy.

4.2 Implementation strategy: Reporting Procedures

All staff, volunteers and interns should be alert to signs that may suggest a child is in need of help. In the event that suspicions or denunciation of abuse or neglect are reported, the following procedure applies:

- All witnessed, suspected or alleged violations of IPES Child Protection Policy must be immediately reported to Kaja Primorac, director of IPES.

IPES will immediately suspend any employee, volunteer, intern, board member, consultant, adviser who is alleged to have violated the Child Protection Policy, pending the outcome of the investigation. IPES reserves the right to take any disciplinary action against any of the above who have been proven guilty in an investigation, which may include reporting the incident to the police.

4.3 Confidentiality

In all matters relating to this policy, the obligation of confidentiality must be respected. Therefore, no information provided by children and/or other individuals about any form of child abuse shall be made public without the prior consent of the child, his/her parents or his/her legal guardian and/or the person reporting this abuse.

The children (and their families) must be kept fully informed at all times of the process underway for handling the incident and of its outcome. Concerns, allegations or disclosures shall be reported in writing. Reports shall be as precise as possible, giving an exact account of what happened, how it happened etc. and including the sequence of events and all subsequent actions taken. Director of IPES Kaja Primorac shall decide how to approach the issue with the organisation concerned before reporting it to a third party, and with due regard to local legislation.

5. MONITORING / EVALUATION

Policy and practices are monitored permanently.

Monitoring and evaluation will be done by checking whether the standards from the Child Protection Policy are implemented and whether safeguards are working.

The aim of monitoring and evaluating the Child Protection Policy is to learn from practical case experiences, which will contribute to inform policy reviews and changes to the Child Protection Policy.

Appendix 1: Generic Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

I, [insert name], acknowledge that I have read and understand [IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION] Child safeguarding Policy, and agree that in the course of my association with [IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION],

I must:

- treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
- not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts;
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
- not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible;
- use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- not use physical punishment on children.
- not hire 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;
- comply with all relevant Slovenian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;
- immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy noncompliance in accordance with appropriate procedures;
- immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with [IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION] that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes,

I must:

- assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child;
- obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used;
- ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts;
- 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.

I understand that the onus is on me, as a person associated with [IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATION], to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse.

Signed:

Appendix 2: Complaint procedure

IPES is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all children with whom we work and has put in place a complaint procedure to cover any situations which may arise, when service users (including children and their parents/guardians) are not satisfied with the way they were treated by IPES staff.

Complaint procedure:

In case, service beneficiaries are not happy with a programme or want to express their dissatisfaction with it, they can make a complaint, verbally or in writing a programme manager. They have two-stage complaint procedure available. They are also familiarised with the fact that programme implementers are obliged to respect the principles of the The Code of Ethical Principles in Social Protection and about the possibility to object as defined in the Article 94, of the Social Security Act. Possibilities and the ways of making a complaint are presented to service users by programme professional staff. The procedures are properly displayed in the premises where programmes and activities take place and available on the website of the Slovene Philanthropy too.

1. In the first stage, a beneficiary or his/her legal representative has a possibility to make a written complaint to the head of the Slovene Philanthropy i.e. to the executive director. The executive director is to make a written response proposing a solution or providing an explanation. If the beneficiary is not happy with the provided explanation or the proposed solution, in the second stage of the complaint procedure, he or she has the possibility, readdress his/her complaint and appeal to the Slovenian Philanthropy Managing Board, who pass it on to the Court of Honour to decide on the solution. The Court of Honour decides under the procedure laid down in Article 18 of the Statute of the Slovene Philanthropy.

2. If the beneficiary or his legal representative's complaint fails, or he or she is still not satisfied with the service or with the work and procedures by programme implementers, based on Article 105 of the Social Security Act, he or she can make a request or initiate an extraordinary inspection. The request shall be submitted to the following address: Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia – Inspection for Social Affairs, Verovškova 64a, 1000 Ljubljana.

3. In case of dissatisfaction with the offered services, service beneficiary or their legal representatives have also possibility to share comments, opinions and suggestions also with the Social Chamber of Slovenia, Ukmarjeva ulica 2, 1000 Ljubljana and inquiry about possible programme implementers noncompliance with the Ethical Codex principles of Social Security.

4. Whenever a complaint by a service beneficiary or his legal representative is decided upon by an administrative decision, the beneficiary or his/her legal representative can make a complaint or objection in accordance with the remedies that are stated therein. Same procedures can be applied in the case the competent authority of the application does not make its decision within the legally defined deadline.

There is an ethics commission available to beneficiaries who take part in the programme as volunteers. The ethics commission is an independent body, composed of representatives of various volunteer organizations; its work is autonomous and it is not a part of the association. Complaints and requests for commission's opinions and views can be addressed to the ethics commission directly; all beneficiaries are informed of this possibility.

Appendix 3: IPES Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

I, _____ fully agree to abide by the following behavioural guidelines with regards to children I come into contact with through my work.

I will:

- Treat all children with respect, regardless of race, colour, sex, sexual identity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent with the values of the LUC.
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children.
- Respect cultural differences which do not harm the child.
- Encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers and enhance and promote the participation of children in the decisions that affect them.
- Be transparent in my actions and whereabouts.
- Take responsibility for ensuring I am accountable and transparent, and that I do not place myself in positions where there is a risk of allegations being made. Wherever possible, I will ensure that another adult is present when I am working in the proximity of children. I will discuss other measures as necessary with my agency's Child Safeguarding Focal Point.
- Report any concerns of child abuse or policy non-compliance in accordance with my agency's reporting procedures.
- Keep confidential all information that I am party to regarding child protection cases, disclosing and discussing information only with the relevant parties including my agency's Child Safeguarding Focal Point.
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding abuse or policy non-compliance by a fellow worker, volunteer, contractor or visitor, in line with my agency's reporting procedures.
- Comply with all relevant national legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour .
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other exploitation and abuse and policy noncompliance in accordance with appropriate procedures.

I will not:

- Engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children.
- Use inappropriate, offensive, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, culturally inappropriate or discriminatory language when speaking with a child.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes. If this is necessary, for example for a child with a disability, I will inform my supervisor first and be as open as possible in my behaviour, which includes explaining to a child what I can do to assist them.
- Invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- Sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible.
- Hit or physically assault children.
- Use physical punishment on children.
- Develop sexual relationships with children or relationships with children that may be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Engage in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts, with anyone under the age of 18.
- Encourage or condone behaviour on the part of others which constitutes abuse or exploitation of a child.
- Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child. Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way.
- Seek to make contact, in person, by phone, or electronically, and/or spend time with any child that I come into contact within my role as a representative of my agency, outside of designated work and activity times of my role.

- Discriminate against any children for any reason or show special favour towards any child or group of children.
- Release or discuss any personal confidential information about suspected or proven child abuse or protection cases other than with the relevant persons, including my agency's Child Safeguarding focal point.
- Use any computer, mobile phone, or video and digital camera to exploit or harass children. I will not access child pornography through any medium (see also 'Use of Children's Images' below).
- Hire children to perform domestic labour or any 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 or any other harm.

Use of Children's Images

When photographing or filming a child/children for work purposes, **I must:**

- Assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images.
- Obtain consent from the child and a parent/guardian of the child. As part of this I must explain how and where the photograph or film will be used. I must follow my agency's guidance on obtaining consent for taking photos of groups of children.
- Ensure photographs or films present children in a dignified and respectful manner, not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- Ensure children are portrayed as part of their community.
- Ensure file images do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.
- Ensure there is no identifying information of the child used in the publication of images with their location. I will ensure all recorded identifying details are stored confidentially.
- Ensure all photographers I am supervising are screened for their suitability, including police checks where appropriate.
- Not post images or details of children associated with IPES' work on personal social media sites.
- I understand that the onus is on me, as a person engaged or associated with IPES, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child abuse when engaging in activities or visiting projects of my agency or other.

I have read IPES Child Protection Policy and Child Protection Code of Conduct and discussed its contents with IPES' Child Protection Focal Point. IPES expects me to uphold at all times the standards of behaviour described in the Child Protection Code of Conduct above. I also understand that disciplinary measures and/or legal steps will be taken if I am found to be in breach of the Child Protection Code of Conduct.

_____ (Name)

_____ (Job title/role)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)