

Voice of Older People and Family

2020

Supporting older people and their family members to achieve a better life



Child Safeguarding Policy



Voice of Older People and Family (VOP Fam) is a humanitarian non-governmental developmental not-for-profit organization with legal personality working with and for family members to improve the quality of their life. VOP Fam is well-known for its social activities and have experienced staff in different fields such as advocacy, human rights, child protection, voluntary programs and community mobilization. VOP Fam aims at achieving a lasting development in the community.

Vision

VOP Fam and its staff is working to

- Coherent community in which family members are live in peace.
- Older people reached their rights and have the proper care.
- Children are in child-friendly and protected environment.

Mission

Supporting *Older People* and *Family Members* to Achieve a Better life.

Voice of Older People and Family (VOP Fam)

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Voice of Older People and Family (VOP FAM) is providing an intervention of services in the affected communities. The services are implemented through experienced staff in different projects that are targeting deferent age groups including children.

Although our staff are well trained, in all countries and societies exploitation, abuse, violence and negligence of children happen. This policy sets out common values, principles, and beliefs and describes the steps that will be taken in meeting our commitment to protect children and to cause no harm during the provision of the services.

Our values, principles and beliefs

- Child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights, which is unacceptable
- Protecting the children is a commitment when we work.
- 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.
- When we work with or through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children in their programs.

Our commitment

Members of the VOP FAM have a commitment to prevent child abuse or any type of violations against the children during their work in the office and the field and to provide what is needed for the protection of the children.

All staff must be aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children. The awareness and good practices must minimize the risks to children. In addition, our staff must be aware of how to report CP concerns. Furthermore, all VOP FAM staff will sign up to and abide by the attached code of conduct.

Policy Pillars

VOP FAM's Child Safeguarding policy is based on several pillars and resources including

- Iraq Child Protection Sub Cluster Inter-agency Child Safeguarding Policy.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.
- Keeping Children Safe. Child Safeguarding Standards and how to implement them. 2014.
- Secretary General's Bulletin Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse 2003 ST/SGB/2003/13.
- In particular, Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that child must be protected from all "physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child".

Child Safeguarding Policy

A. PURPOSE – The purpose of this Child Safeguarding Policy is to ensure the safety and well-being of all children coming into contact with VOP FAM. It aims to ensure that children are protected from direct or indirect harm caused by an organization's staff, programs or operations. It also aims to ensure that any potential or suspected harm to a child, internal or external, is reported and followed-up on in an appropriate and timely manner, and that any child or children affected are provided with the support they need.

B. SCOPE – This Policy shall apply across all geographical locations of the organizations' work across Federal Iraq and Kurdistan, and across all types of projects.

this Policy shall apply equally to all:

- Board Members and Board of Trustees members.
- staff – permanent or temporary.
- Associates of the organization – including community workers, volunteers, interns, consultants, contractors/suppliers, and others working under the auspices of your organization.
- To the organizations' projects – including donors.
- Partner organizations

C. Definitions

Child: anyone under the age of 18 (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.).

Adult: anyone aged 18+.

Child Safeguarding: Child safeguarding is an accountability system made up of policies, procedures and actions that we take to ensure our organization are safe for children. It is a responsibility that we have to make sure our staff, programs and operations do not directly or indirectly harm children, and do not expose them to the risk of harm and abuse (Keeping Children Safe). The policies and procedures that we put in place aim to both prevent and respond to any harm caused to children as a result of their interaction with VOP FAM.

The behaviors committed toward children are classified under four main categories according to the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), as agreed by the group, CP is "**the prevention of and response to abuse, negligence, exploitation and violence against children**".

D. POLICY STATEMENTS

We recognize that all organizations coming into contact with children have a fundamental duty of care towards them and that we are obliged to put a child safeguarding accountability system in place. We are committed to protecting all children from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation and to promoting their well-being and development. We are also committed to protecting children from injury or other harm caused by the way we organize, fundraise, design, plan, implement, monitor and handover our activities.

We take a **zero-tolerance approach** to all abuse and exploitation against children and all VOP FAM's representatives are prohibited from taking part in any exploitation or abuse of children.

E. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

We acknowledge the risk to children across our organizations' staff, activities and operational procedures. We will progressively implement this Policy through taking action in the following areas and we accept these areas as our minimum standards.

1. Job advertisement, recruitment and selection:

1.1 Job advertisements, job descriptions and terms of references clearly state the level of contact with/responsibility for children that the position requires. Safe recruitment procedures are put in place based on the level assigned.

1.2 Include child safeguarding commitment and responsibility statements in job advertisements, job descriptions, terms of reference, employment contracts and include child safeguarding questions in interviews.

1.3 Conduct reference checks before making employment offers. Include child safeguarding questions in these reference checks based on the level of contact with children.

1.4 Job advertisements highlight the need for successful candidates to undertake a formal criminal record check or to complete a self-declaration on any criminal convictions.

1.5 Where feasible, conduct checks of formal criminal records based on the position and level of contact with children and use it to inform decisions, based on the type of offense, if any are revealed. Ask candidates to complete a criminal self-declaration form if formal criminal checks are not possible.

2. Child Safeguarding Induction and Training:

2.1 Obtain signature to state commitment to the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct (annex 3). This must be included as part of the employment contract.

2.2 Induct all new staff on child safeguarding when they join the organization. New staff to sign (see annex 1) to state receiving, understanding and commitment to the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct (see annex 3). The length and comprehensiveness of the induction will vary according to the level of contact with children.

2.3 Train new staff with a key child safeguarding position (e.g., management, Child Safeguarding Focal Points), provide a refresher training after one year of the completion of training.

2.4 Support partners to implement child safeguarding measures and require them to follow our Policy if they do not have their own.

2.5 Train our partners and their Child Safeguarding Focal Points on our Child Safeguarding Policy and their responsibilities.

Child Safeguarding Awareness Raising:

- 3.1** Display the Child Safeguarding Policy in all of our offices and any infrastructure in the communities where children and their families come into contact with our organization. Display the Policy in the relevant language and in child friendly language.
- 3.2** Use child friendly materials to ensure that children and their families are aware of and understand the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.
- 3.3** Ensure children and their families are informed about how to report if they are concerned that violations have taken place. Ensure that reporting mechanisms are in the appropriate language and are safe and accessible.
- 3.4** Include child safeguarding as a permanent agenda point in management meetings.

4. Media and Communications:

- 4.1** Obtain informed consent (from the child's caregiver) and/or informed assent (from the child) before creating or using any visual, audio or written information about them for official communications.
- 4.2** Protect children's privacy by never disclosing their real name or location in official communications. Do not share any details about them that may make them traceable.
- 4.3** Do not share or use children's or their family's information (visual, audio, written) obtained through work activities on any personal social media accounts (for example, this includes Instagram, Facebook, Snap Chat). This includes their names, photos, location or any details about them.
- 4.4** When contracting media partners to work with us ensure they have read, understood and signed the Child Safeguarding Policy.

5. Safe programs design and implementation:

- 5.1** Consider child safeguarding through every step of the program cycle, from designing a project, to implementing it and monitoring and evaluating it.
- 5.2** Ensure there are trained and qualified staff in positions working directly with children. Ensure that children are adequately supervised at all times.
- 5.3** Conduct risk assessments for projects directly involving children before the project starts. Ensure that mitigated risk levels are at a safe level before an activity goes ahead.
- 5.4** Include child safeguarding measures as an activity in projects where relevant, e.g., education and school projects.
- 5.5** Ensure that child safeguarding training needs/targets are explicitly accounted for in project proposals.
- 5.6** Advocate for the resources needed to implement child safeguarding measures to be outlined explicitly in projects proposals and budgets.

Reporting

- 6.1** VOP FAM assigned a Child Safeguarding Focal Points for reporting purposes in each project location.
- 6.2** Alternative safe, accessible and child-friendly reporting mechanisms are established.
- 6.3** Suspected harm caused to children by an organizations' staff or programs is reported. Harm suspected to have been caused by someone or something external to the organization is also reported.
- 6.4** All staff are mandated to report child safeguarding concerns and incidents through VOP FAM's internal child safeguarding reporting procedures.
- 6.5** VOP FAM must report serious child safeguarding concerns and incidents to donors as required in their partnership agreements. If a confirmed incident violates local law, survivor wishes and best interests of the child must be the primary consideration in decisions to report to authorities.

7. Response

- 7.1** All child safeguarding reports, whoever they come from (children, adults, VOP FAM's staff etc.) will be taken seriously and all information related to the report treated confidentially.
- 7.2** The safety and best interests of the child will be the immediate and fundamental consideration in all Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct concerns or incidents.
- 7.3** Any child or children affected will be provided with the care they need in line with best practice child protection case management, supported by trained case management professionals.

Annex 1: Statement of Receiving, Understanding and Commitment

I confirm that I have received and read VOP Fam's Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct (Annex 3), and I understand that I can refer to Implementation Guide for detailed guidance on how to implement this Policy.

I confirm that I understand my personal responsibility for child safeguarding to help ensure that VOP FAM is safe for children. I commit that if I am unclear about my responsibilities at any time that I will seek advice and guidance.

Name:

Job title:

Job location:

Signature:

Date:

Witness name:

Signature of witness:

Relationship to the above:

Date:

Annex 2: Example Roles and Responsibilities

Building and maintaining a child safe organization is everyone's responsibility. All staff must:

- Uphold the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct at all times.
- Never act in a way that may constitute or contribute to abuse or exploitation of a child.
- Report any child safeguarding concerns or incidents immediately. **Failure to report is a breach of the Policy.**

In addition, some positions have additional child safeguarding responsibilities:

1. All Board Members or Board of Trustees, Directors and Head of the VOP FAM shall:

- Remain responsible and accountable for the Policy and its progressive implementation overall.
- Follow-up timely on implementation of the Policy and lead an annual child safeguarding work plan.
- Ensure the human and financial resources needed to implement the Policy are allocated.
- Lead on the monitoring and review of the implementation.

2. All Senior Management Staff shall:

- Ensure a safe working environment by developing systems and operations that promote the safety and well-being of children and the implementation of the Policy, including assigning willing Child Safeguarding Focal Points.
- Ensure risk assessment tools are in place and that those under direct line management know how to use them.
- Ensure awareness of the Policy with those under direct line management.
- Ensure budget is allocated for child safeguarding awareness raising (for staff and communities) and induction and training (for staff) and that inductions and trainings are routinely scheduled.
- Respond to reports of child sexual exploitation and abuse, and other safeguarding concerns, in-line with internal reporting guidelines and in line with the Iraq CPSC Inter-agency Child Safeguarding Implementation Guide.
- Ensure that when working through partners that they are supported to improve their child safeguarding measures and follow our Policy if required.

4. All Managers shall:

- Ensure that children and their families are aware of the Policy and how to report concerns and incidents.
- Conduct/ facilitate child safeguarding risk assessments wherever needed.
- Ensure that safe and accessible reporting mechanisms are in place and functional in the communities where activities take place.
- Ensure that staff receive child safeguarding induction and training in line with the requirements of their role.

5. All Child Safeguarding Focal Points shall:

- Ensure child safeguarding measures are integrated and that staff have access to the appropriate tools to carry out child safeguarding measures.
- Facilitate child safeguarding induction and training sessions for staff.
- Facilitate child safeguarding awareness sessions for communities.
- Act as a child safeguarding reporting entry point and ensure all staff know how to contact him or her.
- Respond to reports of child sexual exploitation and abuse, and other safeguarding concerns, in-line with internal reporting guidelines and in line with the Iraq CPSC Inter-agency Child Safeguarding Implementation Guide.

6. All Staff and Associates of VOP FAM shall:

- Ensure they understand and comply with the Policy and Code of Conduct (annex 3) at all times.
- Ensure they speak with a manager immediately if their ability to abide by the Policy and/or Code of Conduct changes at any time after signature.

7. All visitors shall:

- Ensure they understand and comply with this Child Safeguarding Policy and the Code of Conduct (annex 3) at all times.

Annex 3: Behavior with Children Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct is part of the Child Safeguarding Policy. **It is a mandatory requirement that all staff sign to commit to abiding by the expected behavior set out below.** We consider that these behaviors regulations are crucial to contributing to VOP FAM culture that respects and promotes the right for all children to be protected from abuse and harm. It also provides a culture where the well-being and development of all children is promoted.

Any behavior that breaches this Code of Conduct must be reported. If you are unsure whether a behavior breaches the Code of Conduct, or are concerned about another behavior not described here, **seek advice from VOP FAM's Child Safeguarding Focal Point or management team.** Always consider the best interests of the child.

By Signing the Code of Conduct I agree to abide by the behavior standards described below.

I will:

- a) Treat all children equally and with respect regardless of any individual characteristics.
- b) Do everything in my control to minimize the risk of children being harmed during the planning, implementation and evaluation of work activities, including carrying out risk assessments. I will contribute to a safe environment for children.

- c) Immediately report any concerns or incidents of sexual abuse, exploitation or violence against a child that I become aware of, whether it is related to VOP FAM or harm caused by someone or something external to my organization.
- d) Ask for support if I have concerns about, or do not fully understand the Child Safeguarding Policy.
- e) After I have signed the Code of Conduct, I will inform a Child Safeguarding Focal Point if there is any situation where I am unsure or it is not clear to me if it is potentially a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- f) Inform my organization of any charges or convictions relating to child abuse or exploitation that I am subject to that occur before or during my association with my organization. This includes charges or convictions that occur under traditional law.
- g) Use positive and non-violent methods at all times when interacting and working with children.
- h) Empower children and their families through providing them with information on their rights and how to report concerns or incidents of abuse.
- i) Whenever possible ensure that there is another adult with me when I am working with individual children, or that I can clearly be seen by other staff or adults.
- j) Obtain informed consent from children and their caregivers before taking their photograph, video or audio recording for professional reasons, and before using their photograph, video or audio file for professional reasons. Where possible I will obtain written consent.
- k) Promote children taking part in decisions that affect them, particularly concerning their safeguarding, and considering their age and maturity.
- l) Ensure that I treat confidential information about children and their families with respect, I will not share it with others either verbally, electronically, on paper or on social media, except if it is part of an approved organizational process or part of the case management service, and with informed consent from the child and their family.
- m) Remain aware of the power imbalance.

I will not:

- a) Engage in any sexual activity with a child below the age of 18, regardless of the age of sexual consent locally. Mistaking a child's age is not a defense.
- b) Report information that I know is false or spread malicious information about co-workers that I know is false.
- c) Physically discipline a child at any time, including hitting, kicking, scratching, punching, and biting.
- d) Get married to a child, regardless of the legal minimum age or any judicial consent that is given.
- e) Engage in traditional practices that may be harmful to a child's healthy development.
- f) Pay a child either money, or through food or other goods unless it is part of an agreed and approved activity.

- g) Withhold any basic care items from children such as water or food, as a way of disciplining them.
- h) Act in a way that may humiliate, degrade, belittle or disempower children and cause them emotional harm.
- i) Discriminate against or treat one child or a group of children favorably over another group that may result in exclusion or neglect of a child's or a group of children's needs.
- j) Take photos or videos of children that portray them as passive victims, or when they are not appropriately dressed.
- k) Take photos or videos of children that are for my personal use, or post pictures or videos of children on my personal social media channels.
- l) Use photos or videos of children in professional communication who are particularly vulnerable to be identified even if their identity has been changed, for example children associated with armed groups, unaccompanied children, or children that have been abused or exploited in any way.
- m) Use language or behavior in front of children that is inappropriate through being sexualized, abusive, derogatory or otherwise negative.
- n) Assist a child with any aspect of their personal care (for example, taking them to the toilet, helping them wash) if they are capable of doing this themselves.
- o) Invite a child or their family to my home unless it is an exceptional protection measure approved by my supervisor.
- p) Transport a child alone unless it is an exceptional protection measure approved by my supervisor.
- q) Sleep in the same bed or room as a child beneficiary unless it is an exceptional protection measure approved by my supervisor, and where another adult is present with me.
- r) Develop, publish, watch or share child pornography through any source, or show material of a pornographic nature to children.
- s) Develop relationships or display behavior with children that may be perceived to be, or become, exploitative, abusive or in-appropriate.
- t) Share my personal email address, phone number or social media account details with children or their families, or request these details from children or their families, unless it is strictly for service provision. If needed I will only share my email and/or phone number, I will never share my social media account details.
- u) Introduce or encourage a child to engage in harmful or dangerous activities.
- v) Work with children while I am under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Please note that the Code of Conduct is not exhaustive and therefore all signatories should apply the required good judgement in assessing behaviors and actions that may not be contributing to a safe environment for children.

Please note that the Code of Conduct applies both at work and outside of work in your personal life