

Schools for Children of Cambodia Child Protection Policy

Policy Statement and Introduction

Schools for Children of Cambodia ("SCC") believes the welfare of the child is paramount and that all children without exception have the right to protection from harm or abuse. Many of the children involved in SCC programmes come from poor, impoverished communities with inadequate food, sanitation and/or shelter. Their socio-economic conditions often result in emotional, health and physical pressures, making the young and thus already vulnerable, exceptionally so. We place the highest importance on ensuring the safety, protection and welfare of the vulnerable children with whom we work.

SCC is committed to taking all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and to protect children from harm, abuse and exploitation. There are a number of safe guards which SCC takes, including: rigorous recruitment and selection processes for trustees, staff and volunteers who work directly with children, and clear reporting procedures for incidents and suspicions.

SCC firmly upholds a 'zero tolerance' approach to any forms of abuse, exploitation or other misconduct which poses potential risk to any child. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken with the highest degree of seriousness, investigated to the fullest extent, and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

This policy applies:

- SCC-appointed trustees and staff
- Consultants and volunteers
- SCC-contracted teachers and administrators, whether they are appointed by SCC, Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport, or another party
- Visitors, such as donors, corporate sponsors, journalists and supporters, to SCC projects

This policy is based on, and reflects the principles of, UK legislation, British Charity Commission guidelines, and SCC's Code of Practice.

Code of Conduct

1. Responsibilities of all acting on behalf of SCC

- i. Work towards promoting and ensuring child protection in all work activities and contacts.
- ii. Promote a positive, supportive and secure environment where all children are treated with dignity and respect.
- iii. Be conscious of how activities, actions and situations may be perceived and are intended and thus avoid situations where abuse might be alleged, without impacting work duties.
- iv. Promote and encourage a safe, confidential and accessible environment where opportunities are created for children to communicate openly, taking into account language barriers where appropriate.
- v. Constantly assess and evaluate situations and activities involving children for the risk of potential abuse or harm and make the child's environment as safe as possible.
- vi. Avoid being alone with a child. Ensure that at least two adults are present on school grounds when working at the school.
- vii. Meet children in open environments, including keeping classroom doors and windows open whilst working at the school.
- viii. Minimise or avoid physical contact with children except for reasons of health and safety or under supervision.
- ix. Minimise contact with children outside school hours & grounds and avoid travelling with children except for reasons of health and safety. Seek approval from a line manager before having any contact with children outside school hours or before any travel with children.
- x. Avoid any situation which will put a child at risk of any form of harm, abuse or exploitation.
- xi. Report any suspected cases of abuse, harm or exploitation as per charity procedures.
- xii. Uphold sanctions never to be practised, including sexual, emotional and/or physical harm, abuse, exploitation or misconduct in any form, as documented and signed by all staff, volunteers and others acting on behalf of SCC in the Code of Conduct and Declaration Form. This includes misconduct relating to the use of the internet and photography.

2. Responsibilities of the General Manager

- i. Ensure all Cambodia-based SCC staff, contracted teachers / administrators and volunteers understand their responsibilities for being alert to signs of abuse and for referring concerns to the General Manager as per the reporting procedures below.
- ii. Ensure any visitors to SCC schools are accompanied by an SCC staff member or a teacher / administrator trained in child protection.
- iii. Ensure parents, leaders and elders in the SCC-supported community have an understanding of the responsibility placed on SCC staff, contracted teachers / administrators and volunteers for Child Protection and its policy and procedures.
- iv. Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed for Cambodia-based staff.
- v. Monitor and evaluate activities and staff practices on a regular basis.
- vi. Follow procedures for reporting and dealing with incidents when any allegation, concern or suspicion is raised
- vii. Undertake annual reviews of the Child Protection Policy & its procedures.

3. Responsibilities of the Trustees

- i. Ensure all UK-based SCC staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in relation to child protection.
- ii. Ensure safe recruitment practices are always followed for SCC staff, managers and volunteers recruited, screened and appointed through the UK.

Photographs and Images

Schools for Children of Cambodia protects the privacy of its programmes' beneficiaries. SCC visitors, volunteers and staff are expected to adhere to the following:

- Photographers must fully disclose how any photographs of children associated with SCC-supported schools and communities will be used.
- No photographs of children associated with SCC-supported schools or communities shall be taken without their consent.
- Photographers must be supervised by SCC staff or teachers at SCC-supported schools.
- All photographs of children used to promote SCC must show children fully clothed, must not portray vulnerability, and must not reveal identifying information.

Definitions and Signs of Abuse

Child abuse can be physical, emotional and/or sexual and can also include neglect. The table below summarises each form of abuse and the possible signs that a child may show if he/she has been abused. Should a child exhibit these indicators, it should not automatically be assumed that abuse is occurring; however, any concerning behaviours and/or signs should be reported to the General Manager as per SCC reporting procedures (below).

<p>Physical Abuse occurs when a person purposely injures or threatens to injure a child.</p> <p>Possible signs of physical abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts • Improbable excuses given to explain injuries • Refusal to discuss injuries • Withdrawal from physical contact • Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather • Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted • Showing wariness or distrust of adults • Self-destructive tendencies • Aggression towards others • Being very passive and compliant • Chronic running away 	<p>Sexual Abuse occurs when a child is used by an older person for his/her own sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual abuse may be contact or non-contact.</p> <p>Possible signs of sexual abuse:</p> <p><i>Physical indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises, scratches or other injuries to breasts, buttocks, lower abdomen or genital areas • Painful or frequent urination • Difficulty walking or sitting • Unexplained pain, itching, discharge or bleeding in genital or anal areas <p><i>Behavioural indicators (to be interpreted with regard to the child's development stage)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over attention to adults of a particular sex • Open displays of sexuality and unusual interest in the genitals of others • Precocious knowledge of sexual matters • Sudden changes in mood or behaviour • Difficulty sleeping and nightmares • Regressed behaviour, such as bed wetting, separation anxiety, insecurity • Change in eating patterns • Lack of trust in familiar adults, fear of strangers, fear of men • Acting-out behaviour (aggression, lying, running away, suicide attempts) • Withdrawn behaviour • Learning problems at school, loss of concentration • Excessive bathing
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<p>Emotional Abuse involves chronic attacks on a child's self-esteem and may involve name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child.</p> <p>Possible signs of emotional abuse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed • Highly anxious • Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder • Fear of new situations • Low self-esteem • Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations • Extremes of passivity or aggression • Drug or alcohol abuse • Chronic running away • Compulsive stealing 	<p>Neglect is the failure to provide a child with basic necessities, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision, to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk. Children participating in SCC programmes may demonstrate physical signs of neglect due to their families' socio-economic conditions.</p> <p>Possible signs of neglect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent hunger • Poor personal hygiene • Constant tiredness • Inappropriate clothing • Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school • Untreated medical problems • Low self-esteem • Poor social relationships • Compulsive stealing • Drug or alcohol abuse
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Procedures

1. Managing Disclosures

In the event of a child disclosing information containing evidence of, or potential for, harm, abuse or exploitation, SCC staff members or others acting on behalf of the charity are to:

- i. Listen carefully and not make judgements or false promises about keeping secrets
- ii. Not reject anything as untrue and reassure the child that they believe him/her
- iii. Keep questions to an absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said
- iv. Tell the child that it is not his/her fault and he/she is not responsible for the abuse
- v. Let the child know that a report will be made so that the authorities can help to stop the abuse. Reassure the child that his/her safety and needs are of primary importance.
- vi. Tell the child they are pleased he/she told them

2. Reporting Suspicions, Concerns or Incidents

In the case of suspicion, concern or witness to incidence of misconduct, SCC staff members and others acting on behalf of the charity are required to follow the following procedures:

- i. Immediately report the incident to SCC's General Manager. SCC's Project Coordinator may assist with translation.
- ii. The person who received the disclosure must fully document the allegation, including time and place of the alleged incident, who was present and what allegedly occurred. This written report must be submitted to the SCC General Manager within 24 hours of the disclosure
- iii. The General Manager shall report any allegation of physical or sexual abuse to local authorities through Cambodia's National Police Hotline for child abuse and trafficking (023 997 919) as well as the Siem Reap Police AHTJP Unit (012 181 7280). Other allegations will be reported to the local authorities at the discretion of the General Manager in consultation with the Board of Trustees. The General Manager will document his/her actions
- iv. The General Manager shall report the incident to the Board of Trustees and the relevant School Director

Failure to report a suspicion, concern or witness to incidence of misconduct will result in disciplinary action.

Following the report of suspected or witnessed child abuse, harm or exploitation:

- i. The General Manager, in conjunction with the School Director, is responsible for informing the child's family of the allegation and any action proposed and for ensuring that every effort is made to remove or reduce immediate or future danger or risk of harm to the child
- ii. In the event of a serious allegation there will be an emergency meeting of the Board of Trustees called within 48 hours of the report being made. The Board of Trustees will agree on the extent of action taken overseas. Overseas police forces will be informed according to legal requirements and obligations
- iii. For reports relating to SCC appointed field staff members, volunteers, trustees or others acting on behalf of the charity, all contact and activities with or near children will be suspended whilst an investigation is conducted
- iv. For non-SCC appointed staff (e.g. teachers appointed by the local government or members of the public), the School Director and local authorities will be informed and involved in investigations if necessary
- v. Any SCC field staff member, volunteer, trustee, or other person acting on behalf of the charity found guilty of misconduct will be immediately terminated from duties and will not be allowed contact with SCC children
- vi. Any non-SCC appointed staff found guilty of misconduct will be reported to Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport, or their respective organisation with request for termination

SCC will aim to conduct all investigations both internally and in conjunction with relevant external government agencies, with the highest degree of professionalism, confidentiality, respect, sensitivity and fairness to protect all those involved. Every effort will be made to obtain independent, confidential interpreters when needed.

Children who have been abused or are suspected of being abused will be supported and closely monitored with the highest degree of care and sensitivity wherever possible. Through supported education it would be SCC's aim to help restore a stable, secure and predictable element in the child's life.

3. Recruitment and Selection of Staff

Charity personnel are recruited and selected to ensure their suitability to work with vulnerable children. SCC staff members, consultants, volunteers and trustees are representatives of the charity and the values it upholds, thus are widely recognised as trusted and safe to children. They work with and are thus given access to contact with vulnerable children, which therefore requires rigorous screening and checks prior to assignment placing. The following are some of the measures which SCC takes to ensure safe placement of suitable and trustworthy staff:

- i. It is made clear to all staff, consultants, volunteers, trustees and SCC applicants that SCC deems child protection matters of utmost importance, from the initial stages of recruitment onwards, and that it permeates every level and aspect of working for SCC
- ii. Job and volunteer advertisements contain job descriptions and key selection criteria to ensure that suitable candidates are attracted to the relevant position
- iii. All staff, consultants, volunteers and trustees are required to read SCC's Child Protection Policy and procedures. Each staff member, volunteer, unsupervised visitor and trustee must sign a declaration form indicating that he/she agrees to uphold safe practices and has not, nor intends to, commit any form of child abuse
- iv. All staff, consultant, volunteer and trustee applicants are required to provide at least 2 personal and 2 professional references with their applications. From these references at least 3 referees are contacted by telephone and interviewed about the applicant's integrity, history, trustworthiness, responsibility and conduct with children. Referees also complete a signed written reference in support of this

- v. Staff, consultant, volunteer and trustee applicants must document their criminal history and consent to a criminal records check his/her application. SCC may conduct the criminal records screening or may ask the applicant to complete and submit the criminal records check
- vi. Every effort is made to interview volunteer applicants in person prior to acceptance into SCC's volunteer programme. When a meeting in person is not feasible, a telephone interview will be conducted
- vii. All volunteers are interviewed on arrival in Cambodia prior to commencing work. If there are any concerns about the suitability of a volunteer, the Volunteer Coordinator and the Board of Trustees are informed and the volunteer is withheld from commencing work until the Volunteer Coordinator has fully investigated any areas of concern and completed extra background checks. If there are any irresolvable, reasonable doubts relating to a volunteer's history or suitability to work with vulnerable children, the position will be revoked without prior warning or notice.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

SCC pledges to regularly and routinely monitor all staff conduct and activities to ensure the ongoing protection of children is maintained to the highest level possible. This is achieved through:

- i. All staff being aware that their conduct will be monitored and reviewed regularly according to the Child Protection policy and procedures. This will be conducted as unobtrusively as possible with minimal impact on personal integrity and duties
- ii. The General Manager meeting regularly with staff and volunteers in Cambodia, to monitor and evaluate conduct, duties and behaviour
- iii. Daily supervision of staff and volunteers by school teachers and administrators trained in child protection
- iv. Maintaining open lines of communication between school teachers / administrators and SCC field staff as well as between SCC field staff and UK-based trustees, to encourage timely and effective reporting of any concerns or incidents or misconduct involving child protection
- v. Annual review of policies and procedures for child protection led by the Board of Trustees

In the event of an incident of misconduct, the charity, school and staff operations will be immediately evaluated and reassessed on all levels in order for necessary changes and extra safe guards to be added.

5. Confidentiality

All staff shall ensure personal and identifying material, particularly that which would place a child at risk of harm, remains private and confidential. All written reports of a confidential nature shall be circulated to the Board of Trustees only, unless permission of the person/s involved is obtained, or if for legal purposes documents are required by external agencies and departments. All records, documents and correspondence involving material of a confidential matter should be kept securely, away from children or public access. Any breaches of confidentiality will be taken seriously and dealt with accordingly by SCC.

6. Record Keeping

Every effort will be made to ensure the maintenance of accurate records of concerns, risks, incidents and accidents, even when there is no need to refer the matter immediately. These records will aim to be objective and without personal bias wherever possible, and include any information from relevant witnesses. They shall be dated and signed and kept always in the possession of either the UK Trustees or the General Manager.

7. Training and Education

SCC is committed to the creation, implementation and ongoing input of training and education strategies which will assist in creating a safer environment for its vulnerable children. Although still in its early stages of development, future plans will aim to include:

- i. Collaborating with school staff and other Cambodian-based NGOs to develop culturally appropriate additions to the school curriculum relating to child protection issues, safety and human rights
- ii. Working towards programs which will promote and encourage children to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse
- iii. Developing culturally sensitive programs involving the community, to raise awareness amongst local staff on child protection issues, signs and indicators of abuse, and procedures for dealing with suspected misconduct
- iv. Providing children with access to information and education material on acceptable conduct and self-protection from abuse