

Child Protection Policy



ERIKS' mission is to fight poverty through the realization of child rights.

Seeking the realization of child rights around the world, ERIKS have a commitment to the prevention of child abuse and the protection of children. The abuse and exploitation of children happens in all countries and societies across the world. This policy sets out common values, principles, and beliefs and describes the steps that will be taken in meeting our commitment to protect children.

The policy was adopted by the board of ERIKS 2012-02 03.

Our commitment to protect children

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.
- Child abuse is never acceptable.
- We have a commitment to protecting children with/ for whom we work.
- Partners through whom we work have a responsibility to apply good practice guidance on child protection to all activities involving children. If partners do not have their own policy or their policy is inadequate, ERIKS will support the partner in developing and implementing their own policy.

What we will do

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 and good practice, that staff and others minimise the risks to children.

Reporting:

We will ensure that staff and others know what steps to take if concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

Responding:

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

How we will ensure our commitments above are met

Awareness:

- All ERIKS staff and volunteers will have access to a copy of the child protection policy including attached code of conduct.
- Introduction will include briefing on child protection issues.

Prevention:

- All ERIKS staff (locally appointed and internationally appointed), board members, and volunteers will sign up to and abide by the attached code of conduct.
- Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability for working with young people.
- Training and support will be provided by ERIKS to ensure commitments are met.

Reporting:

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

Responding:

- Systems will be established to investigate possible abuse once reported and to deal with it.
- ERIKS will ensure to take seriously any concerns raised.
- ERIKS will ensure to support children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns.
- ERIKS will act appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any process of investigation.

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Child Protection code of conduct

All ERIKS staff, board members, volunteers and in-country visitors introduced by ERIKS 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 who 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
- have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home or unsupervised sleep in the same room as a child with whom they are working
- 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

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff and others 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
- encourage partner organisations to talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- encourage partner organisations to empower children - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

In general it is inappropriate to:

- spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.

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Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse and neglect is defined as all forms of action or inaction resulting in harm (or risk of harm) to children under the age of 18 in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

There are five key recognized sub-types of abuse:

PHYSICAL ABUSE

results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents. Examples include smacking, hitting, shaking, poisoning, burning, drowning or suffocating or deliberately making a child ill.

SEXUAL ABUSE

is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies. Acts of emotional abuse may include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

EXPLOITATION

Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labor and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development.

NEGLECT

or negligent treatment is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in all spheres such as health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions. This includes the failure to properly protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

Apart from the five sub-types of abuse and neglect, there are other specific considerations that constitute child abuse:

a) Corporal Punishment – corporal or physical punishment is the use of physical force intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort for discipline, correction and control.

b) Sexual or Child Grooming refers to actions or behaviours designed to entice, encourage or persuade a child into inappropriate and/or unlawful sexual activity.

c) Child Pornography is the viewing, use, abuse, trade, transmittal and transference of abusive sexual images of children engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activity or showing of their private parts including genitals, for the purpose of sexual gratification.

d) Sexual Exploitation includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the exploitation of a child through prostitution and trafficking of children for sexual abuse and exploitation.

e) Traditional Harmful Practices are cultural practices which may put the child at risk of harm. Examples are Child Marriage where a child (usually the female) is bound into a contract of marriage through kidnapping, coercion, or compulsion and Female Genital Cutting or Mutilation.

f) Bullying takes the form of physical intimidation, verbal intimidation, including racist and sexist remarks, or emotional intimidation such as isolating or excluding a child whereby they experience deliberate hostility.

g) Spiritual Abuse occurs when someone in a position of spiritual power or authority in a faith-based environment, misuses their power and the trust placed in them, with the intention of controlling, coercing, manipulating or dominating a child.

h) Witchcraft/Ritualistic Abuse occurs within some communities that believe strongly that children may be possessed by evil spirits. Children may be abused through ritualistic practices and ceremonies, in the form of beating, maiming, rape and even as sacrifices.

i) Historical Abuse is any type of abuse that may have occurred several years before it is disclosed.