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Hungarian Volunteer Sending Foundation

Hungarian Volunteer Sending Foundation (HVSF)'s Policy on Sexual Abuse and Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

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1.0. Introduction

In this document, HVSF lays down our policy on sexual abuse and safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The policy should be used as a guide and it is aimed at providing a safe environment to its staff members, other project participants and beneficiaries.

2.0. Definition: sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation

According to Lucy Berliner and Diana M. Elliott – two emblematic, often cited psychologists of the field - child sexual abuse “includes any sexual activity with a child where consent is not or cannot be given. This includes sexual contact that is accomplished by force threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants, and all sexual contact between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity. The sexually abusive acts may

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include; sexual penetration, sexual touching or molestation, sexual injury or non-contact sexual acts such as exposure or voyeurism, and sexual exploitation.”¹

Exploitation refers to the use of children or vulnerable adults for someone else’s advantage resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment, hurting the victim’s physical or mental health, education, moral, social or emotional development.

HVSF staff must be aware of the different kinds of abuse and able to respond to any incident. Harassment could be *physical* (causing physical injury), *sexual* (inappropriate touching - kissing, hugging, tickling without consent; inappropriate verbal comments and insults), and *emotional* (damaging the self-esteem of children and other vulnerable individuals).²

On a basic level we condemn any disrespect or carelessness towards children and vulnerable adults, as well as any negligence of their needs and safety.

Sexual assault: Everybody is a potential victim of sexual assault. Here we provide some general guidelines on what to do in case of sexual assault – however it is almost impossible to be prepared for it – HVSF tried to collect general guidelines to be able to be decide and react in an immediate way and to know that how can HVSF staff react when the attack have been performed.

In case of a sexual assault victims have three basic ways to react³: “passive resistance” (verbal defense), “active resistance” (physical defense) or “submission” (if there is no way out then survival should be the main objective).

After the attack⁴ staff members have to be aware that victims probably feel intimidated and ashamed. Victims must be supported and be shown empathy, so they feel that they are not alone. A confidential, private and safe environment must be created, where the victim can rest and recover. More personal support should be provided by someone the victim trusts.

¹ Lucy Berliner; Diana M. Elliott: *Sexual Abuse of Children* (From The APSAC [American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children] Handbook on Child Maltreatment((2002) (page:55)

² Ark Aid Street Mission: *Abuse Prevention & Response Policy Digest* (page 1.)

<http://www.arkaidmission.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Abuse-policy-digest.pdf>

³ Robert Macpherson: *CARE International - Safety & Security Handbook* (2004)(page 77.)

http://ngolearning.org/courses/availablecourses/CARE%20Safety%20Course/Shared%20Documents/English_CARE_International_Safety_and_Security_Handbook.pdf

⁴ Robert Macpherson: *CARE International - Safety & Security Handbook* (2004)(page 78.)

http://ngolearning.org/courses/availablecourses/CARE%20Safety%20Course/Shared%20Documents/English_CARE_International_Safety_and_Security_Handbook.pdf

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For more details about suggested behaviours, tactics related to the mentioned threat's impact reduction please check the relevant parts of the HVSF's Security Policy and Health and Safety Policy as well.

3.0. Definition: Vulnerable Adult

Vulnerable adult is a person, "who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation"⁵.

HVSF considers people as vulnerable adults primarily who can prove their named status with official documents and alternatively every person who could not provide an official proof about it, but his/her vulnerable status is self-evident. When the situation is not as clear, the relevant line manager has the right to decide based on his/her own conviction.

4.0. Zero-tolerance policy statement on Sexual Abuse and Children Safeguarding

HVSF prohibits and it has a zero-tolerance policy for any sexual abuse committed by or against any staff member, volunteer or partner. HVSF ensures that all of its staff members is aware and respect our policy on sexual abuse and safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. We do that by making sure everyone reads and signs this policy, and by providing relevant training on it, if needed, according to their mission/role.

HVSF prohibits any kind of harassment and exploitation of any individual, whether staff, children, or participants in work of the organisation's project activities and protects them by law and by its reporting system as well.

4.0. Recruitment, responsibilities and reporting

Recruitment: HVSF asks for evidence of character during its recruitment process as the first step towards preventing abuse. HVSF asks for criminal records (provided by a third party organization such as the Hungarian Criminal Records Authority), collects information about the applicants' educational and professional background. HVSF also contacts previous employers for references.

⁵ Home Office, Department of Health (UK): *No secrets: Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse* (page 8.)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/194272/No_secrets_guidance_on_developing_and_implementing_multiagency_policies_and_procedures_to_protect_vulnerable_adults_from_abuse.pdf

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Candidates will be made aware of this policy at the interview stage and will have to read and sign it once hired.

Responsibilities: It is important to emphasize that every HVSF staff member is responsible for ensuring and maintaining a safe environment for everyone else. A project manager (Mission Director, field/team manager or other staff member with relevant background) is assigned responsibility for implementing (and monitoring) of HVSF's Sexual Abuse and Children Safeguarding Policy. It is their duty to apply, adapt and propose any justifiable changes to this policy. They are the project's contact person on issues of this nature, meaning they will manage reporting and response.

Reporting: HVSF will report any incidents of alleged sexual abuse to the relevant authorities. HVSF forbids the deliberate false accusation and any kind of prejudgments during an investigation. Violating this rule makes you subject to disciplinary action and/or job termination.

HVSF expects all of its staff members and partners to report any suspicious behavior or incident of abuse to the designated line manager immediately, orally and/or in writing (by using HVSF Incident Reports). It is the line manager's responsibility to report the situation to the relevant authorities after a thorough in-house investigation (cooperation between the responsible line manager and the employees, relevant witnesses), if needed. HVSF will consult a third party expert on the matter, if needed.

During the investigation, specific care should be taken to respect the rights to privacy and confidentiality, dignity and protection of children and any vulnerable adults. During the investigation the best interests of children and vulnerable individuals and their age and maturity have to be the priority. Information related to any kind of abuse could be shared only if they do not infringe those rights and only on a "need to know" basis.⁶

Signs sexual abuse to look out for: Physical evidence of sexual abuse could be: "difficulty in walking; torn, stained or bloody underwear; pain or itching in genital area; bruises or bleeding on external genitalia; sexually transmitted diseases".⁷ Behavioral signs of sexual abuse could be: "reluctance to

⁶ International Needs Canada (INCA): *Child Protection Policy* (2012) (page 2.)

http://www.internationalneeds.ca/UserDir/Documents/Sponsorship%20Resources/InternationalNeedsCanada_ChildProtectionPolicy_Fillable.pdf

⁷ Merry Heart Children's Camp: *Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention Policy and Procedure* (2015) (page 4.)

<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/54db9ee1e4b011d9d8fc31fd/t/5580b141e4b08e8da8450a7b/1434497345739/Sexual+Abuse+and+Molestation+Policy.pdf>

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be left alone with a particular person; wearing a lot of clothes, especially to bed; fear of touch; nightmares or fear of the dark; apprehension when sex is brought up.”⁸

5.0. Practical guidelines for the protection of children and vulnerable individuals

5.1. Media communication and photography

HVSF use our records and images in our newsletters, project and activity campaigns, or on our website. Here we lay down some guidelines on the adequate use of images. Avoid publishing pictures which do not comply with local traditions and/or present children in a negative, harmful, risky context (such as posing in a sexually suggestive way, unsuitably dressed, etc.). When publishing pictures and videos, every staff member has to be aware to do not include any information that could allow someone to contact the children or other vulnerable individuals depicted. The files and personal data should be handles confidentially.

HVSF does not publish pictures of children without permission from their legal guardian.

5.2. Child protection during HVSF activities

Every HVSF staff member who works with children has to sign a document, confirming that they read and understood our policies, recommended guidelines and procedures regarding the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

Every child must be treated fairly regardless of their race, ethnic or social origin, gender, nationality, language, religion, disability, etc. HVSF makes sure that children are accompanied or supervised by an adult HVSF staff member during activities. Only screened staff members (experts, volunteers) or staff members with the permission of the responsible line-manager can be alone with children. Every activity involving children has to be supervised by a screened HVSF staff member.

Every staff member must know how to appropriately interact with children. Staff may not touch children without good reason (for instance, to stop them from harming themselves or others). Inappropriate touching is prohibited; touching in general is discouraged. For example, hugging is discouraged in general but, when a child initiates it, it is reasonable to return it). Never use physical punishment on children at all. Choose your behaviour and words wisely when you interact with children as to not intimidate or distress them. Harassment and abuse of children is prohibited.

⁸ Merry Heart Children's Camp: Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention Policy and Procedure (2015) (page 4.)
<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/54db9ee1e4b011d9d8fc31fd/t/5580b141e4b08e8da8450a7b/1434497345739/Sexual+Abuse+and+Molestation+Policy.pdf>

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5.3. Incident reporting

As stated before, HVSF expects all of its staff members and partners to report any abusive behavior to the designated line manager immediately, orally or in writing (by using HVSF Incident Report N°3). After a thorough in-house investigation (cooperation between the responsible line manager and the employees, witnesses, who had the best point of view related to the case's assessment) – when the situation is not obvious – the line manager's responsibility is to report it to the relevant authority (for example: if incident report indicates a criminal activity then line manager will report it immediately to the police). If it is needed, HVSF will use outside third party expert to reveal the questionable part of the situation.

Through incident reporting, information has to be provided about what happened, including the date, location, and the name of the witness/witnesses. It is essential to maintain the trust of the person reporting! According to that the field manager (or the designated line manager) has to protect the gathered information with the greatest care, held in the strictest confidence, shared only on a "need to know" basis. It could happen that the person reporting the possible child abuse does not want the information shared with others, on the other hand in some cases, HVSF may act against the wishes of the reporter in the best interests of the child or the vulnerable adult.

<u>HVSF Incident Report N°3 - Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults</u>	
<u>Person Reporting</u>	<u>Child/Children/Vulnerable Adult(s)</u>
Name:	Name of Child/Vulnerable Adult:
Telephone number/ Email address:	Age and Date of Birth of child/v.a.:
Your relationship to HVSF/ project's hosting organization:	Who does the child/v.a. live with?
Your relationship to the child concerned- if relevant:	Address/ place of residence (and telephone no. if available):

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Person Reporting's Concern

Are you reporting your own concern or passing on those of someone else? Give details:

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.....

Brief description of what has prompted the concerns (include dates and times of any specific incidents):

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.....

Observations made by you: Physical signs? Behavioural signs? Indirect signs?

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.....

Have you spoken to the child/v.a.? If so what was said?

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.....

Has anybody been alleged to be the abuser? If so give details:

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.....
.....

Have you consulted a government department or any other agency, or reported this to anyone else? Give details (name of person, organisation, date and time):

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.....
.....

Does the child/v.a. require any medical attention?

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.....
.....

Signature:

Date:

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6.0. **Acknowledgement of the policy: Declaration of Commitment**

By signing this document, staff declares to have read and understood our policy on sexual abuse and child protection, and that they fully commit to follow and implement it to the best of their ability, while employed by HVSF.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

7.0. **Sources**

- Ark Aid Street Mission: *Abuse Prevention & Response Policy Digest*
<http://www.arkaidmission.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Abuse-policy-digest.pdf>
- Lucy Berliner; Diana M. Elliott: *Sexual Abuse of Children* (From The APSAC [American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children] Handbook on Child Maltreatment (2002)
- Merry Heart Children's Camp: *Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention Policy and Procedure* (2015)
<http://static1.squarespace.com/static/54db9ee1e4b011d9d8fc31fd/t/5580b141e4b08e8da8450a7b/1434497345739/Sexual+Abuse+and+Molestation+Policy.pdf>
- International Needs Canada (INCA): *Child Protection Policy* (Burlington, Ontario, 2012)
http://www.internationalneeds.ca/UserDir/Documents/Sponsorship%20Resources/InternationalNeedsCanada_ChildProtectionPolicy_Fillable.pdf
- Robert Macpherson: *CARE International - Safety & Security Handbook* (2004)
http://ngolearning.org/courses/availablecourses/CARE%20Safety%20Course/Shared%20Documents/English_CARE_International_Safety_and_Security_Handbook.pdf