



Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation

Child Protection Policy

1. Statement of Commitment:

- 1.1. Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation are committed to the welfare and rights of children. All children under the care of HOMF will be treated with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status. This includes all children under the age of 18 years.
- 1.2. Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation are committed to encourage its staff to familiarize themselves with their own child protection policy to protect and provide a safe environment for children and staff. This is also to protect the organization and encourage donors to have confidence in the organization.
- 1.3. Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation are committed to comply with all relevant local legislation on child rights and welfare in order to provide what is in 'best interest of the child' including labour laws that apply to children.
- 1.4. Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation encourage their staff to give respect and dignity to all children in their care. Child carers are encouraged to be good role models, spending time with each child, listening to them, encouraging children when they do something well and giving good explanations on why they should not do something else. They should keep their promises. They should provide discipline firstly through verbal means.
- 1.5. **Different forms of child abuse are described:**
 - 1.5.1 **Physical Abuse:** Any punishments and physical abuse to children like beating including with a stick or other implement, poisoning, shaking and smothering or forcing the child to work in an unsafe way/environment. These are things that deliberately and negatively affect the physical well-being of children.

1.5.2 **Mental Abuse:** Any actions (gestures, words and behaviour) that deliberately affect a child's mental/emotional well-being for example by making them afraid, anxious, annoyed or discouraged.

1.5.3 **Neglect:** Any actions that deliberately neglect to provide the four essential rights of children (right to live, right to learn, right to participate and the right to speak).

1.5.4 **Sexual Abuse:** Any actions with sexual intent towards children such as touching children's genitals, forcing child to watch or take part in pornography or coercing the child to have sex .

2. **Communicating the issue:**

2.1. Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation are committed to informing children and decision makers that **child abuse is wrong**. It is also understood that keeping silent is also wrong.

2.2 Child protection policies provide a safe and positive environment for children and are foundational in the education, research and advocacy initiatives that the Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation is involved in.

2.3 Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation are committed to educating its staff about the importance of child protection so that children are protected from abuse by staff and others. This is also a preventive measure to protect staff and the organization's integrity.

2.4 Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation encourages and supports the development of child protection policies and active implementation of these policies to all Non Government organisations, groups and networks in Thailand through any meetings it may have with them.

2.5 Where possible children are also included as key stakeholders because Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation believes that children have the right to speak and be heard. Involving them in the process also enables them to know their right to protection. Children are encouraged to have active cooperation, share information and be involved in advocacy initiatives.

2.6 All staff agrees to this policy and is reviewed every 2 years.

3 **Behavioural Protocols:**

3.2 All staff, volunteers, interns, consultants, visitors, donors or sponsors of Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation are expected to treat all children and other staff with respect and dignity. Inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative or demeaning language or behaviour towards children will not be tolerated.

- 3.3 Each individual must sign a statement to say that they have read the policy, will respect it and understand that action will be taken in cases of inappropriate behavior.
- 3.4 There will be careful regulations about what forms of discipline can be used, encouraging primarily verbal and withdrawing privileges. Staff are strongly encouraged to inform their director when discipline is appropriate. Discipline must be non-violent and non-humiliating.
- 3.5 Whenever possible, it should be ensured that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children. Sleeping close to unsupervised children will not be allowed unless absolutely necessary.
- 3.6 That a child will not be engaged in any form of sexual activities or acts. Adults will always be responsible for their behavior and cannot blame the child even if the child 'provokes' or acts in a 'seductive' way.
- 3.7 That computers, mobile phones, video and digital cameras will be used appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium.
- 3.8 If protocols are broken the person involved will be disciplined and may lose their job.
- 3.9 Communities and children with whom Mercy International / House of mercy Foundation staff work will be informed of the protocols and will be assured that project support will not be discontinued if they report suspicious behavior. Also staff will not be asked to leave for reporting suspicious behavior.
- 3.10 Where children are placed in communities, there will be careful screening and training of foster parents to ensure safe and adequate care will be given.

4 Recruitment and Screening

- 4.2 Refrain from hiring 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
- 4.3 Screening is equally important for volunteers/interns, Board staff and consultants.
- 4.4 Information on child protection policies must be given before and on acceptance of employment. A form must be signed agreeing to the Child Protection Policy and stating that they have not had any previous convictions for abuses against children or violent behavior. Their future employers will be informed if dismissed for abuse.

4.5 References should be checked preferably by telephone to give previous employers an opportunity to express concerns verbally.

5 Responses to Allegations

5.2 Immediately report concerns or allegation of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures.

5.3 Procedures must be set out by the organizations to ensure that all staff knows what to do if an allegation is made, either by a child, parents, staff member or visitor.

5.4 Mercy International / House of mercy Foundation encourages all staff to adhere to the country's Labor Code if available.

5.5 All members of the team will encourage their staff to be open in discussing the potential of abuse in their organization.

5.6 Where an allegation has been made that a staff member/visitor to the organization has abused a child then the Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation will investigate and take the appropriate action to deal with the situation.

5.6.1 Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation will have a designated person whose responsibility is to be responsible for dealing with child protection issues in the organization.

5.6.2 Relationships with other organizations are encouraged for accountability and support in times such as these.

5.6.3 Both victim (and perpetrator) will be treated with respect from the start of the process to the end.

5.6.4 Children rarely lie in situations like this so their story must be heard and believed unless proven otherwise. They may also require extra protection if the perpetrator has not been arrested.

5.6.5 Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation will have a reporting procedure where the Director is informed and then others as the need arise.

5.6.6 Records should be made of all facts related to the investigation and these should be carefully and confidentially filed.

5.6.7 The relevant Embassy should be informed if a foreigner is involved.

5.6.8 There should be a person designated to deal with the media and the police. Where possible consideration will be made beforehand by the organization's leadership about how the police and media will be informed or involved.

5.6.9 If the organization is inexperienced, asking for help from other organizations with child protection policies is encouraged.

6 Use of children’s images and personal information for promotion, fundraising and development education

When photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, Mercy International / House of Mercy Foundation must:

- 6.2 Before photographing or filming a child, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images.
- 6.3 Before photographing or filming a child, obtain consent from the child or a parent or guardian of the child. This must be explained to the child how the photograph or film will be used.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- 6.6 Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.

Signatures of Authorised Officers

Mercy International

House of Mercy Foundation

Founding Director: Robert H. Dunk

Chair Person: Pawinee Angnoi

.....

.....

Date: 28/11/2010

Signature of Witness:

.....

Name of Witness: Payong Yongyai

