



Child Protection Policy

Version 2

July 25, 2022

I. Policy Statement

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right of children to be protected from all forms of violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse. Consequently, individuals and organization in contact with children and young people should ensure that children are protected and are safe from harm when participating in various activities.

Equality Myanmar (EQMM) is a child-safe organization. It believes that children have the right to be free from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination upheld by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention also states that children have the right to participate in decision- making and due weight should be given to their opinions, according to their age and maturity. EQMM will strive to ensure that children who participate in its programs and activities will have a positive and enjoyable experience through its safe and *child-supportive environment*. The organization will not tolerate any form of violence against children, such as child abuse and sexual exploitation, committed by its staff (full time, part time, consultant, and volunteers); representatives; and staff of its partner or network organizations. It will undertake all necessary child-friendly measures to prevent these from happening.

EQMM recognizes that some children are more vulnerable to abuse and sexual exploitation than others, such as young children, those from ethnic minority communities, stateless and refugee/IDP children, and those who are disabled. EQMM will undertake reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure that their welfare is promoted and that their rights are protected.

In all its decisions and actions, EQMM will:

- a. Give primary importance to the best interest of the child.
- b. Promote and protect the safety and well-being of children to minimize risks of child abuse committed against children.
- c. Ensure that children are listened to, valued, and respected.
- d. Facilitate regular updates and sharing of experiences and best practices on addressing violence committed against children, such as child abuse and sexual exploitation.
- e. Ensure that all staff, representatives, and staff of member organizations understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children and are continuously provided appropriate learning opportunities to develop child safeguarding knowledge and skills to monitor, identify, and respond to signs of abuse.
- f. Educate and inform children and their caregivers of the standards of behavior that they can expect from EQMM staff, representatives, and staff of member organizations and the procedures on how to raise a complaint against these individuals if they have any
- g. Ensure that all suspicions and claims of abuse are taken seriously and are responded to promptly and appropriately.
- h. Maintain and secure confidential, detailed, and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns.
- i. Rigorously screen potential employees and partners to ensure that unsuitable individuals or those who have the potential to harm children are not employed or deployed in its activities.

II. Purpose of the Policy

This Child Protection Policy sets out common values, principles, and beliefs and describes the steps that will be taken in meeting our commitment to protect children and aims to:

- a. Protect the rights of children who may be directly or indirectly involved in EQMM's programs and activities.
- b. Ensure that staff, representatives, and staff of member organizations take all judicious steps to ensure that children they are in contact with are treated with respect and dignity, are protected, and are kept safe from harm.

III. Definitions

- a. **Child** - Under this Policy a child is defined as anyone below 18 years of age

- b. **Child protection** – These are measures to ensure that the child is protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation.
- c. **Child abuse** – “A deliberate act of ill treatment that can harm or is likely to cause harm to a child’s safety, well-being, dignity and development”. It can be any of the following
 - o **Physical abuse** - Physical abuse causes harm to a child’s person. It may involve but are not limited to hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, and other physical maltreatment. It may be done deliberately or recklessly or be the result of a deliberate failure to prevent an injury from occurring.
 - o **Neglect** - Neglect is the persistent or severe failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs.
 - o **Sexual abuse** - Sexual abuse includes all forms of sexual violence including incest, early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography, and sexual slavery. Child sexual abuse may also include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child, and showing children pornographic materials.
 - o **Emotional abuse** – This includes humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name-calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement, and isolation. It causes severe and adverse effects on the child’s behavior and emotional development, resulting in low self-worth. Some level of emotional abuse is present in all forms of abuse.
- d. **Sexual exploitation** – This means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

IV. 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.
- 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.
- Child abuse is never acceptable
- We have a commitment to protecting children with/ for whom we work
- When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for children in their programs.

V. 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 minimize the risks to children.
- **Reporting:** We will ensure that staff and others are clear what steps to take where 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.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, EQMM will also ensure that the organization:

- Takes seriously any concerns raised
- Takes positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- Supports children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns
- Acts appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation
- Is guided through the child protection process by the principle of „best interests of the child“
- Listens to and takes seriously the views and wishes of children
- Works in partnership with parents/carers and/or other professionals to ensure the protection of children.
- Ensures all Equality Myanmar staff sign up to and abide by the attached code of conduct and are briefed on child

- protection issues during orientation
- Provides training, learning opportunities and support as appropriate to ensure commitments are met.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Equality Myanmar requires all staff to abide by the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct to promote safe, positive, and encouraging environments for children and young people.

All staff, representatives, and volunteers of EQMM SHOULD:

- Treat children and young people with respect, listen to and value their ideas and opinions, and protect their well-being
- Be positive role models to children in all their conduct with them
- Always have another adult present or in sight when conducting one-on-one instruction, coaching, etc.
- Raise any concerns, problems or issues pertaining to child safety and well-being with management as soon possible
- Immediately report any violations of the EQMM Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct to the appropriate authority.

In dealing with children, staff, representatives, and volunteers MUST NEVER:

- Abuse, harass, discriminate, and victimize children. Specifically, do not:
 - Physically abuse children (e.g., hit, pinch, slap)
 - Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
 - Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative. Specifically, do not:
 - Have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 years regardless of the age of majority or consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
 - Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised or sleep in the same room or bed
 - Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves, such as going to the toilet or changing clothes
 - Tolerate or participate in behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe, or abusive
- Develop any “special” relationships with children that could be seen as favoritism (e.g., special treatment, offering of gifts)
- Develop or continue relationship with the child through phone, emails or social networking sites

To minimize opportunities for abuse and prevent unfounded allegations, staff, representatives and volunteers of EQMM should practice the following protective measures in all activities:

Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed. Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.

Empower children. Discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

- Be conscious of situations which may present risks to children and manage these accordingly.
Plan and organize the work and the workplace so as to minimize risks.

- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists among staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior does not go unchallenged.
- Resolve conflicts fairly and promptly and report and act on any breaches of these standards of behavior through established procedures

I understand that any breach of the Child Protection Policy or the Code of Conduct is a violation of my obligations and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, legal action, and/or criminal investigation and prosecution.

Signature:	
Date:	
Name:	
Position:	