



## **Child Protection Policy for Help for Children Foundation (NPF)**

### **Short profile of NPF**

“Help for Children” Foundation (NPF) is an Albanian national local organization of the civil society, founded in 1998. It is active in the development sectors of social inclusion, quality inclusive education and provision of integrated social services for Albanian families, with a focus on empowering children and youth through education and training to become dignified citizens for contributing to building a fair, safe and peaceful Albanian democratic society, where everyone feels included and with equal socio-economic opportunities and confident in the path towards EU accession.

NPF is an evolving organization strategically oriented to continually improved functioning through well-established operational structures and implementing meaningful activities at local and national level. It is bottom-up and holistic, focusing on individual behavior change amongst children, young people, families and communities as well as systematic change in central and local institutional policy and practice towards a more supportive environment for a sustainable social and economic development for disadvantaged and those at risk. The organization owns vast experience in working with youth who live in conflictual situations.

### **1. Introduction**

The Help for Children Foundation (NPF) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being of all children who participate in our programs. As an Albanian national civil society organization, NPF prioritizes the protection of children in all areas of our work. This policy is designed to provide clear guidelines and procedures to ensure that children are protected from harm, and to establish a framework for appropriate responses in case of child protection concerns.

### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure a child-safe environment in all NPF activities.
- Prevent all forms of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children.
- Outline procedures for reporting concerns and ensuring swift, appropriate action.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of NPF staff, volunteers, and partners in protecting children.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies and is mandatory to:

- All board members, staff, volunteers, contractors, and any individuals working with NPF who have direct contact with children, including those involved in after-school programs, social services, training, and camps.
- All NPF activities, including educational programs, social inclusion initiatives, and family support services.

### 4. Key Definitions

Terminology	Definition
<b>Child Safeguarding</b>	<b>Child Safeguarding</b> is making “Help for Children” (NPF) <i>safe</i> for children. It involves our collective and individual responsibility and actions to ensure that all children are protected from deliberate or unintentional acts that lead to the <i>risk of or actual</i> harm by NPF staff, representatives and third parties, who come into contact with children or impact them through our development interventions, humanitarian responses and operations. This includes our direct projects’ implementation, work through partners and management of children’s personal data.
<b>Child</b>	<b>Everyone under the age of 18</b>
<b>Child Abuse</b>	<b>Child abuse</b> consists of anything, which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of a safe and healthy development into adulthood.
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	<b>Physical abuse</b> is the non-accidental use of physical force that deliberately or inadvertently causes a risk of/ or actual injury to a child. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing non-accidental physical harm to a child. Physical harm can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness or temporary, permanent injury or disability of a child.
<b>Neglect</b>	Neglect includes but is not limited to failing to provide adequate food, sufficient or seasonally appropriate clothing and /or shelter. Neglect is also failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment or providing inappropriate medical treatment (e.g. administering medication when not authorized); or failing to provide a safe physical environment (e.g. exposure to violence, unsafe programming location, unsafe sleeping practices, releasing a child to an unauthorized adult, access to weapons or harmful objects, failing to child-proof a space that children will occupy etc.). It can also be NPF staff, partners, contractors and sub- grantees failing to apply minimum requirements as set out in mandatory procedures.
<b>Emotional Abuse</b>	Emotional abuse involves doing harm to a child’s emotional, intellectual, mental or psychological development. This may occur as an isolated event or on an ongoing basis. Emotional abuse includes but is not limited to any humiliating or degrading treatment (e.g. bad name- calling, threats, yelling/screaming/cursing, teasing, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming etc.), failure to

	meet a child's emotional needs, and rejecting, ignoring, terrorizing, isolating or confining a child.
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	<p>Sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activities, Whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non- contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Adult males do not solely perpetrate sexual abuse.</p> <p>Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.</p>
<b>Exploitation and Child Labour</b>	<p>Child exploitation is an umbrella term used to describe the abuse of children who are forced, tricked, coerced or trafficked into exploitative activities. For NPF child exploitation includes modern slavery and trafficking of children and children forced or recruited into armed conflict. Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or</li> <li>→ for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual.</li> </ul> <p>Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur with the use of technology. Child sexual abuse and exploitation also includes child early and forced marriage.</p> <p>Child Labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It is work that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children;</li> <li>→ interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.</li> </ul> <p>For NPF it is not acceptable for any staff or representatives to engage anyone under the age of 18 to work as domestic help in their place of work or at home. It is not acceptable for NPF to engage anyone under the age of 18 to undertake any work which may be considered harmful.</p>

## 5. Legal Framework and Regulations

In line with Albanian law, international standards such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and European child protection guidelines, NPF is committed to ensuring that all children under our care are protected from harm. Specifically:

*Albanian Law No. 18/2017 on Protection of Children's Rights:* We comply with the principles outlined in this law, ensuring children's rights to safety, protection from exploitation, and their right to participate in decisions affecting them.

*UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child):* We uphold the rights of children as defined in the UNCRC, ensuring their protection, education, and well-being.

## 6. Principles of Child Protection

The principles of a Child Protection Policy are the foundational values and guidelines that shape how NPF ensures the safety, well-being, and rights of children. These principles ensure that child protection is central to the organization's work and its interactions with children.

Here are the key **principles of NPF Child Protection Policy:**

### 6.1 Best Interests of the Child

All decisions and actions regarding children must prioritize their best interests. This principle ensures that children's safety, development, and well-being are at the forefront of all activities, decisions, and interventions.

### 6.2 Zero Tolerance for Abuse and Exploitation

The organization adopts a zero-tolerance stance towards any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or mistreatment of children. This means that any incident of abuse or exploitation will be addressed swiftly, with appropriate measures taken to protect children and hold offenders accountable.

### 6.3 Non-Discrimination

Every child has the right to protection, regardless of their background, culture, gender, ability, or any other status. The policy should ensure that all children receive equal protection and opportunities, and no child should be subjected to harm because of their identity.

### 6.4 Participation and Empowerment

Children should be encouraged and empowered to express their views and be involved in decisions affecting their lives, according to their age and maturity. This principle recognizes that children have the right to be heard and to have their voices respected.

### 6.5 Confidentiality

The privacy and confidentiality of the child and their family must be maintained throughout any child protection process. Information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis and with consent where appropriate, respecting the child's rights to privacy.

### 6.6 Prevention

Preventative measures should be put in place to reduce the risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. This includes creating safe environments, providing staff and volunteers with training, and establishing clear guidelines to prevent inappropriate behavior.

### 6.7 Accountability

The organization, its staff, volunteers, and partners are accountable for maintaining a safe environment and responding to concerns appropriately. Everyone in the organization has a responsibility to ensure child protection, and there should be clear consequences for failing to meet these responsibilities.

### 6.8 Transparency

The organization should operate with transparency, ensuring that policies, procedures, and actions related to child protection are clear and open to scrutiny. Children and their families should be aware of the policies and procedures that protect them.

#### *6.9 Safety and Security*

The organization has ensured that children are safe from harm while participating in its programs and activities. This includes implementing procedures to protect children from all forms of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect and exploitation.

#### *6.10 Collaboration*

Effective child protection requires collaboration among staff, volunteers, parents, local authorities, and the community. The organization should work together with relevant stakeholders to safeguard children and to respond appropriately to child protection concerns.

#### *6.11 Education and Awareness*

Children, staff, and families should be educated about the risks and signs of abuse and the available support systems. Creating awareness about child protection issues is key to preventing harm and ensuring that children are informed and can seek help when necessary.

## **7. Reporting Mechanisms and Procedures**

To ensure a swift and effective response to any child protection concerns, we have established the following reporting mechanisms and procedures:

*Immediate Reporting:* Any staff, volunteer, or partner who suspects or witnesses any form of child abuse or neglect must report it immediately to the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO).

- The CPO is responsible for all child protection-related matters and is the first point of contact for all child protection concerns.
- Reports can be made in person, via phone, or through a dedicated email address [npftirana@gmail.com](mailto:npftirana@gmail.com), and may be done anonymously if desired.

*Initial Assessment:* Upon receiving a report, the CPO will:

- Conduct an initial assessment of the concern to determine its severity.
- In cases of immediate risk to the child, the CPO will notify local authorities (such as the police or social services) immediately.
- Ensure the child is removed from any potentially harmful situation if necessary, and provide access to necessary medical or psychological support.

*Investigation:* If the concern requires further investigation, the CPO, in collaboration with relevant authorities, will:

- Gather statements from the child, the reporter, and any other relevant individuals.
- Ensure the child is supported throughout the process, including access to child-friendly communication methods and counseling if needed.

- Ensure that the confidentiality of all parties involved is maintained throughout the investigation.

*Response and Action:* Based on the outcome of the investigation:

- The CPO will make recommendations for appropriate actions, which may include disciplinary measures against staff or volunteers, or reporting the incident to the authorities for legal proceedings.
- If the child has been harmed, the organization will work with the family and local services to provide necessary support, including medical care, legal assistance, and psychosocial support.

*Feedback and Follow-up:* After the issue has been addressed:

- The CPO will follow up with the child and their family to ensure that the situation has been resolved and that the child's well-being is being maintained.
- The organization will keep records of the case, including the action taken, for [monitoring and review](#).

## **8. Training and Capacity Building**

*Mandatory Training:* All staff, volunteers, and partners will undergo child protection training. This training will include:

- Understanding signs of abuse and neglect.
- Appropriate behavior and boundaries with children.
- The organization's child protection policy and procedures.
- The legal responsibilities of staff and volunteers in reporting concerns.

*Refresher Training:* Regular refresher courses will be provided to ensure that all staff and volunteers stay up-to-date with child protection best practices.

## **9. Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers**

To maintain a child-safe environment, all staff and volunteers must adhere to the NPF code of conduct, which they read and sign prior to starting their job, including:

- *Appropriate Behavior:* Treating all children with respect, dignity, and fairness.
- *Physical Contact:* Any physical contact must be appropriate, non-invasive, and with the child's consent. No form of corporal punishment, abuse, or inappropriate contact will be tolerated.
- *Respect for Privacy:* Personal and sensitive information regarding children must be kept confidential. Sharing of such information is only allowed with the relevant authorities or when it's in the child's best interest.
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## 10. Preventive Measures

In addition to responding to reports of abuse, NPF is committed to taking steps to prevent abuse and exploitation, including:

- *Safe Recruitment:* All staff and volunteers will undergo background checks, including criminal background checks, before being hired or engaged in child-related activities.
- *Safe Environments:* We will ensure that all facilities and activities where children are present are safe, secure, and adequately supervised.
- *Children's Rights Education:* We will educate children on their rights and how to report concerns about their safety, both within and outside the organization.

## 11. Monitoring and Review

Help for Children Foundation is committed to creating and maintaining a child-safe environment for all children involved in our programs. We take child protection seriously and will take all necessary steps to prevent, identify, and respond to any incidents of abuse or neglect.

- *Policy Review:* This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Any child protection incidents will be analyzed to ensure that lessons are learned, and improvements are made.
- *Feedback Mechanisms:* Children, parents, and staff have opportunities to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the child protection policy and any improvements needed.

This policy is designed to ensure that every child has the right to a safe, supportive, and enriching environment, where they can learn and grow without fear of harm.

Reviewed

15 November 2024