

ASIA'S HOPE

Child Protection Policy

VERSION 2.1

PRESENTED BY JOHN McCOLLUM AT
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“Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” PSALM 82:3,4

“Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry.” EXODUS 22:22,23

What is this document?

This document sets out Asia’s Hope’s Child Protection Policy and Procedures. It is for all staff and is available also to all supporters. The Policy and Procedures are also available to others outside Asia’s Hope who want to know how Asia’s Hope works in relation to child protection.

Who does the policy apply to?

The Policy applies to all staff as part of their verbal or written contractual obligations to Asia’s Hope. It also applies to all volunteers who work for Asia’s Hope or in our name.

Why does Asia’s Hope need a Child Protection Policy?

The sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults is reprehensible and tragic. It betrays the trust children and vulnerable adults naturally place in those responsible for their instruction, welfare and guidance and, in the case of children who have been orphaned or neglected, it amplifies the effects of existing trauma. Our obligation to protect the weak stems from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, in whose name we serve.

As Asia’s Hope has grown in size and complexity, we have become aware of the need to make explicit and visible our determination that our work and activities must promote the safety and security of children and young people.

The goals of this policy are to: (1) provide a safe and secure environment for children and vulnerable adults; (2) provide for a pastoral response to victims, their families, the accused person and the affected communities and ministries; and (3) nurture the trust of our present and future ministry partners and supporters.

For the purposes of this document, the terms “staff” and “volunteers” refer to all staff and volunteers, regardless of nationality or citizenship.

Core Statements

Asia's Hope recognizes the personal dignity and rights of children for whom it has a special responsibility and a duty of care and respect. Asia's Hope, and all its staff and volunteers, undertake to do all in our power to create a safe environment for children and young people and to prevent their physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Asia's Hope is committed to acting at all times in the best interests of children, seeing these interests as paramount.

How will we do this?

- Setting in place, implementing and regularly monitoring and reviewing procedures to protect children and young people; these procedures cover Asia's Hope's recruitment practice, staff hiring and training, and management responsibilities
- Adopting a code of behavior for all staff and volunteers
- Ensuring that any allegations of abuse are promptly and properly dealt with, victims supported and perpetrators held responsible
- Ensuring that Asia's Hope works closely with child protection structures at all levels where jurisdiction applies, and with local churches when appropriate
- Aiming to be an example of best practice in the prevention of child abuse and in responding to it

Who is covered by this policy?

For the purposes of this policy, Asia's Hope regards children and young people as those who are under the age of 18. Asia's Hope's policy applies to all children with whom Asia's Hope has contact regardless of gender, nationality, religion or ethnicity. Asia's Hope recognizes that adults who are economically, physically or mentally vulnerable may also be in need of particular protection, and recognizes that the needs and concerns of this group may be different from those of children. Asia's Hope intends that its child protection procedures will also ensure a safe and protected environment for vulnerable adults in regard to the organization's work and activities.

Asia's Hope operates orphan homes, schools, student centers and other ministries in Southeast Asia. Most of the people to whom we provide services are children. Asia's Hope also has an organizational bases in the United States and Canada. We work through schools and churches to organise events and activities for fund raising and/or campaign purposes, in which children are frequently involved alongside Asia's Hope staff and volunteers.

Asia's Hope believes that all staff and volunteers need to be aware of our policy and commitments in relation to child protection even though many of our staff and many volunteers may never have any unaccompanied contact with children or young people through their work.

Child protection policy

General principles

- Asia's Hope staff and volunteers should make every effort to avoid situations in which they are lone adults working with one or more children. If urgent or practical circumstances result in such a situation occurring, staff and volunteers should resolve it as soon as possible and note it to their managers, directors or team leaders.
- No person with a known history of illegal or inappropriate physical or sexual contact as an adult with a child or any vulnerable person is eligible for employment, board membership, volunteer service or trip participation.
- Asia's Hope will take a "zero tolerance" stance regarding the abuse of children and vulnerable adults. Asia's Hope will take all precautions to avoid abuse, and will take all allegations seriously, and will seek justice for any victim of abuse.
- Asia's Hope will also ensure that volunteers organizing or involved in activities involving children are aware of our policies and procedures in relation to child protection, and will work to ensure that all staff and volunteers follow the code of behavior in this policy.
- Young people working as volunteers will also be expected to follow the guidelines set forth in this document. They will also be protected by these guidelines, covered as "children" by the policies governing adult/child contact and conduct.
- Although most nation's laws define children and young people as those under the age of 18, these guidelines also apply to adults who are vulnerable through disability, economic dependence or other factors.

Code of behavior

There are some simple rules and procedures that will minimise the risk of an incident occurring or being alleged. Most of these are common sense and will already be followed, but it is important that staff and volunteers specifically check that they are being implemented in any event which involves children or young people.

- Never engage in sexual behavior with or in the presence of a child.
- Treat everyone — including children — with respect, recognizing their right to personal privacy.
- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these.
- Plan and organise the event so that risks are minimized.
- Recognise that caution is required in all one-to-one situations.
- In residential events or settings, ensure that adults and children have separate sleeping accommodation.
- Provide access for children and young people to talk to others about any concerns they have.

- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes and behavior they feel are abusive or degrading.
- Do not spend time alone with children — plan activities so that more than one person is present or, at least, other people are within sight and hearing.
- Do not take children alone in a car, even for short journeys, unless this is unavoidable for safety reasons. If this is unavoidable, make sure an adult caregiver or another member of staff is aware it is happening.
- Avoid inappropriate physical or verbal contact with others.
- Avoid being drawn in to inappropriate attention-seeking behavior, such as tantrums or crushes.
- Avoid showing favoritism to any individual.
- Never make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
- Do not trivialize child abuse issues.

Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers procedures

- Asia's Hope will identify positions in which direct or unsupervised contact with children or young people is possible or likely and ensure that extra care is taken in dealing with applications for such positions.
- Candidates will be asked to describe their previous experience of working with children or young people, to provide a reference who can comment on their work with children or young people, and to complete a disclosure form.
- Employment or approval of volunteer status will be subject to satisfactory clearance from checking of qualifications and the candidate's resumé and review of an abuse history disclosure form.
- Asia's Hope asserts the right to obtain access to a criminal records bureau to enable checks to be made when needed, either directly or via a reputable agency.

Assuring awareness and prevention

- Asia's Hope's commitment to child protection will be stated in appropriate corporate documents and on our website. Asia's Hope will make its policy and procedures available to anyone who requests them.
- Asia's Hope will ensure that all staff are aware of the Child Protection Policy and have access to a copy. The hiring program for all staff will include an explanation of the policy, and all staff will be expected to complete a more detailed briefing session on the policy.
- All managers have the responsibility for ensuring that the staff they manage are aware of the Policy, and for reminding them of its provisions when the need arises. Managers, directors and caregivers will be expected to take part in child protection training when available.

- Staff whose work involves frequent face to face contact with supporters or presence at local, regional or national events, should ensure they are familiar with the detail of this policy. They should also know the identity and contact details of the Asia's Hope board member/s, and have contact details for statutory authorities including Social Services and the Police.
- Any Asia's Hope staff planning events should ensure that child protection issues are considered as part of the risk analysis and/or health and safety arrangements.
- In planning or coordinating multi-ministry or network-organized events and activities, Asia's Hope will ensure that child protection considerations have been taken into account if relevant.

Dealing with Disclosures and Suspicion

General principles

Asia's Hope recognizes that disclosures (i.e. when a specific allegation of abuse is made against a named individual) and suspicion (i.e. when concern is expressed about abuse that may have taken place or be in progress) should always be investigated and acted upon swiftly by the Child Protection Advisory Board*, making the welfare of children the paramount consideration. Any information offered in confidence should be received on the basis that it will be shared with relevant people in authority: this might include a National Director, Executive Director, board member and/or, if appropriate, child protection personnel in legal agencies. Parents or caregivers will also be informed if appropriate. Apart from this, careful confidentiality will be observed. *No staff member or volunteer will prejudice their own standing or position within Asia's Hope by responsibly reporting potential or suspected child abuse.*

Interview guidelines

If any member of staff or volunteer suspects abuse, or if a child or young person makes a disclosure, or if a person external to Asia's Hope reports a suspicion or allegation relating to Asia's Hope staff, volunteers or activities, the following steps should be taken:

- Interview the child with two adults present, preferably of the child's gender, and make a detailed report.
- Listen to and do not challenge — even if you do not believe — what the child or young person says.
- Do not investigate, and do not inform, question or confront the alleged abuser.
- Take the alleged abuse seriously.
- Reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Let them know you need to tell someone else. Do not promise total confidentiality.
- Let the child or young person speak freely but do not press for information.

- Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and that you will keep them informed.
- Do not make promises or predictions about the outcome of investigations or disciplinary actions against the accused.
- Record carefully what you have heard while it is still fresh in your mind. Include the date and time of your conversation and any incident disclosed.
- Avoid multiple interviews.

Reporting guidelines

- Avoid any delay.
- Contact the Country Director immediately with a copy of the written report.
- The Country Director must provide a translated copy of the report to the Executive Director within 24 hours of the interview.
- The Executive Director will immediately make the report available to the designated Child Protection Officer* for Asia's Hope.
- Any decisions regarding the credibility of the report will be made by the Asia's Hope Child Protection Advisory Board*.

**To be newly empaneled by the Asia's Hope Executive Board for each incident — the Advisory Board shall consist of at least 3 persons of outstanding integrity, in full agreement with the Asia's Hope Statement of Faith, Bylaws and Child Protection Policy. When possible, the Advisory Board should not be composed entirely of Asia's Hope staff or board members, and at least one of the Advisory Board members should have particular expertise in the treatment of the sexual abuse of minors. The Child Protection Officer shall be a member of an Asia's Hope board.*

Reporting Pro-Forma

Part One; About You

- Name
- Your role in or relationship with Asia's Hope
- Details of any other organization involved
- Your relationship to the child or young persons concerned

Part Two: About the Child/Young Person(s)

- Name(s)
- Male/female?
- Age
- Address
- Who does the child or young person live with?

Part Three: About Your Concern

- How did you come to have a concern: was abuse observed or suspected? Was an allegation made? Did a child disclose abuse?
- Date, time and place of any incident(s)
- Nature of concern/allegation
- Observations made by you (e.g. child's emotional state, any physical evidence)
- Write down exactly what the child said and what you said: continue on a separate sheet if necessary.
- Any other relevant information? (e.g. disability? Language?)
- Were other children involved or aware?
- Were any other adults involved or aware?
- Time and date of reporting
- Person(s) to whom report was made
- Advice given
- Action taken

Asia's Hope's Management Responsibilities and How We Will Act

If a member of staff or volunteer is the subject of an allegation of child abuse, certain restrictions — up to and including full suspension without pay — may be placed upon the staff member or volunteer by the Executive Director of Asia's Hope until an investigation has been completed. In every case, it should be made clear that these restrictions do not imply guilt but rather protect all parties while an investigation is undertaken.

If a suspicion or disclosure of abuse takes place in which the alleged abuser is a member of staff or a volunteer, or the incident has taken place on Asia's Hope premises or in connection with Asia's Hope activities, Asia's Hope will take appropriate action, which may involve contacting statutory authorities. If an allegation of child abuse is made involving a member of Asia's Hope staff, this allegation, together with a record of the investigation undertaken and the outcome, will be recorded in their personal files. Confidentiality regarding these records will be scrupulously maintained. Release of information must be approved by the Asia's Hope Executive Board. Records will be kept for 50 years. In all cases, Asia's Hope may report findings to statutory authorities when required by law.

If a confirmed incident of child abuse takes place in connection with Asia's Hope as an organization or any Asia's Hope activities, Asia's Hope undertakes to provide support for the alleged victims and the alleged abuser while an investigation is carried out. Asia's Hope will also seek to ensure that any continuing support needed after a situation has been resolved is made available.

If a member of Asia's Hope staff or anyone closely associated with Asia's Hope's work in some recognizable capacity is found to have committed acts in relation to children which are criminal or which breach in a serious way the principles and standards set out in this policy, Asia's Hope will take disciplinary action and/or any other action which may be appropriate to the circumstances up to and including the involvement of statutory authorities when required by law. If volunteers are found to have committed such acts, the volunteering relationship will be ended, and statutory authorities will be contacted when required by law.

Reviewing this policy and reporting to Asia's Hope's Asia's Hope Executive Board Members

Asia's Hope will ensure that this policy is reviewed every 2 years and that an annual report on any incidents relating to child protection is made to Asia's Hope Executive Board Members.