

Hunger Relief International



Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct

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Approved by the HRI Board of Directors

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I Mission Statement

Hunger Relief International (HRI) is a Judeo-Christian relief and development organization working in partnership with local communities to alleviate the impact of hunger on the lives of malnourished children and their families as a first step in a long-term strategy to achieve family and community self-sufficiency.

II Statement of Commitment

HRI is committed to conducting programs, projects and other activities in a manner that are safe for the children served by HRI and to ensuring the children with whom HRI works with or maintains contact with are in a child-safe environment. All HRI staff is prohibited from engaging in any activity that may result in any kind of harm or abuse to a child or youth. HRI is committed to creating and maintaining an environment that aims to prevent and deter any actions, whether deliberate or inadvertent that places a child or children at risk of harm or abuse.

HRI will ensure that anyone who represents or is associated with HRI conducts themselves appropriately towards children at all times and will adhere to the HRI Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. There will be a zero-tolerance approach towards any HRI staff, volunteers, contract hire, vendors or anyone associated with HRI that engages in harmful, abusive or exploitative actions that harm, abuse or exploit children and young persons living in or attending residential facilities, schools and communities that partner with HRI.

HRI will also respect and adhere to international conventions on the protection of children and youth as well as fundamental human rights principles and practices.

III Background

HRI provides life –changing education, nourishment and healing to vulnerable children from some of the world’s most destitute and vulnerable communities. HRI provides programs and support to children living in residential facilities and other vulnerable, minor children in communities in Haiti as well as children and youth in Guatemala. Services extend through HRI programs to assist families and communities in economic crisis through the “Children First program,” the “Community-based Clubs for Children and Adolescents (CBCCA)” as well as other youth programs and school feeding programs that provide outreach to children and youth at the community level.

HRI takes safeguarding protection responsibilities seriously and is committed to ensuring that all of our partners provide a safe, nurturing and joyful environment for the children being served by HRI programs and activities. HRI recognizes that every person

working closely with children has significant power and influence, and HRI works diligently to prevent any abuse of their position. HRI as an organization, and all adults involved in its programs and activities, accept the paramount duty to safeguard the welfare of all children in its programs and activities, without exception. This policy underscores the HRI commitment to provide all children with the safest possible environment in which to thrive. This requires action to prevent intentional and/or unintentional abuse and harm of any kind.

The policy is fully approved and supported by HRI's Board of Directors, professional leadership, and field staff.

IV Child Safeguarding Definitions and Terms

Inherent Responsibility (also Duty of Care)

Inherent Responsibility is a concept that refers to the non-negotiable responsibility of HRI to provide children with an adequate level of protection from all forms of harm. It is the responsibility of HRI to protect and help children from all reasonably foreseeable risk of injury and to provide appropriate care in situations of injury.

Child

For the purposes of this policy HRI recognizes a child to be a person under 18 years of age in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In countries where the age is different than 18, HRI will follow local law.

Child Protection

This a broad term to describe policies, standards, protocols, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies to the duty of care by HRI staff and individuals associated with HRI, towards the children under HRI's care and/or participants in HRI's programs.

Child Abuse

Abuse happens to male and female children of all ages, ethnicities, social backgrounds, abilities, sexual identity, religious beliefs and/or political persuasion. Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity.

Protected Adult

Any person 18 or older who, due to injury, disability or other factor(s) is unable to understand or to provide an informed Consent or Permission as explained under definition "Consent or Permission."

Physical Abuse

This occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may result in bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

Emotional Abuse

This occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name calling, disparagement, or continual coldness from parent or caregiver, to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide the child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision, or care to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.

Sexual Abuse

This occurs when a child or young person is used by an older or larger child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification - regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including threats and exposure to pornography.

Child-Sex Tourism

End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children (ECPAT) International defines child -sex tourism as: "...the commercial sexual exploitation of children by men or women who travel from one place to another, usually from a richer country to one that is less developed, and there engage in sexual acts with children, defined as anyone aged under 18 years of age" (ECPAT International, 2006).

Bullying

Bullying is the inappropriate use of power by an individual or group, with intent to injure either physically or emotionally. It is usually deliberate and repetitive. The bullying may be physical or psychological (verbal and non- verbal).

1. Physically, bullying includes pushing, hitting, punching, kicking or any other action causing hurt or injury.
2. Verbal bullying includes insults, taunts, threats, harassment, name calling and ridicule.

3. Psychological bullying includes physical intimidation and ostracism.

Exposure to Domestic Violence

Exposure to domestic violence occurs when children and young people witness or experience the chronic domination, coercion, intimidation and victimization of one person by another by physical, sexual or emotional means within intimate relationships.

Child Participation

Anyone below the age of 18 taking part in a process, or playing a role in a process at his/her level, according to their evolving capacities - children and young people thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, and interacting in a positive way with other people; involving children in the decisions which affect their lives, the lives of the community and the larger society in which they live.

Consent or Permission

The agreement by a competent person age 18 or older, who clearly understands that an image,(photographed, filmed or videoed) of a child under the age of 18, may be used and published by HRI, or HRI donor or partner for a documentary or may be used for promotional purposes such as fundraising or program support.

Direct Contact with Children

Being in the physical presence of a child or children in the context of the organization's work, activities programs/projects, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long term.

V HRI Child Safeguarding Policy and Principles

A. Purpose

This HRI Child Safeguarding Policy has been developed to provide a practical guide to prevent child abuse in HRI's supported facilities and programs and activities. It outlines a range of risk management strategies that will be implemented which will reduce harmful risks to children.

1. The HRI Child Safeguarding Policy demonstrates HRI's commitment to protect children from harm and abuse.
2. The HRI Child Safeguarding Policy aims to educate staff and others about child abuse and to promote a child safe and a child friendly culture where everyone is committed to keeping children safe.

3. The HRI Child Safeguarding Policy aims to create an open and awareness environment where concerns for the safety and well-being of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, which protects the rights of all.
4. The HRI Child Safeguarding Policy provides guidance on how to respond to concerns and allegations of child abuse. It provides guidance to staff and others on how to work respectfully and effectively with children. This provides all stakeholders, including staff and others with a safe working environment.
5. The HRI Child Safeguarding Policy is required to adhere to local and international child protection criminal laws, which prohibit the abuse and exploitation of children. These include local laws where HRI programs exist, and international laws and conventions in relation to all forms of child abuse and child exploitation, including: child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, child labor and child pornography.

B. Applicability

All HRI staff, volunteers, donors, contract hire, vendors and participants in programs and other activities are individually and collectively responsible for child protection and are made aware of this policy and any related guidelines or protocols through orientation and on-going training.

The HRI CEO and Country Directors are responsible for monitoring child protection issues and facilitating policy implementation, staff training and awareness, and incident reporting. Child friendly information is available to ensure children understand about their safety and protection, and feel comfortable about speaking to someone if they have any concerns or complaints. Children will be encouraged to say at any time what they find acceptable and unacceptable in the way they are approached by adults or other young people.

C. Guiding Principles

ZERO Tolerance of Child Abuse or Exploitation

Child abuse will not be tolerated by HRI. HRI takes an active approach to protection and risk management and ensures that it's staff are selected, trained and obligated accordingly. HRI will not knowingly employ or use the services of anyone known or likely to pose an unacceptable risk to children. Any staff member found to be in non-compliance with this policy or to have committed serious misconduct will face

disciplinary action up to and including termination. Others who may be associated with HRI and its activities and found to have committed misconduct will face immediate contract termination.

Priority for the Interests of the Child

HRI places the interests of the children in all of our programs, projects, activities as our highest priority. Their physical and emotional security and welfare, along with the development of their abilities and characters, are our major concern and their protection will always be the highest priority.

Individual and Collective Responsibility for Child Protection

HRI recognizes its legal and moral accountability, and the accountability of all individuals concerned, for child protection. HRI regards child protection as the responsibility of all HRI staff at all levels and requires the active support and cooperation of all involved with the organization, including partner organizations, contractors, consultants, volunteers, visitors, donors, supporters and any partner agency collaborating with HRI.

Comprehensive and Diligent Management

HRI believes that it is not possible to eliminate all risk of child abuse but comprehensive and diligent safeguarding management can prevent and minimize the likelihood or incidence of child abuse.

VI Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct Policy

All HRI representatives, including but not limited to staff members, volunteers, board members, mission teams, implementing partners, sub-recipients, vendors and consultants, are required to conduct themselves in the company of children in a manner that fully respects the dignity and rights of the child and youth and minimizes any possible situation of risk, that would be inconsistent with the HRI Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

Required adherence by all HRI representatives and associated parties:

1. Treat all children with respect regardless of distinguishing factors such as age, race, religion, gender, disability or other identifying status.
2. Work with all children and youth in a matter that will not be construed as inappropriate, harassing, abusive, provocative or demeaning.
3. Desist from any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts, regardless of the legal age of consent.
4. Ensure that another adult, whenever possible, is present when working in close proximity of children.

5. Refrain from inviting unaccompanied children into a home or hotel, unless the child is at immediate risk and the staff should advise their line supervisor of the situation as soon as possible.
6. Report any serious complaint of child abuse from whatever source and report any known breach of the HRI policy or any concerns about the safety of the children to HRI utilizing the HRI reporting process.
7. Refrain from using communications or recording technology or social media in inappropriate ways that lead to exploitation, harassment or put children at risk and never access child pornography via any medium or any source.
8. Refrain from the use of physical punishment as a disciplinary tool.
9. Refrain from employing children for domestic or other work inappropriate to their age, stage of development or may interfere with access to education or recreation or which places them at risk of injury.
10. Comply with all national laws and regulations.
11. Ensure that adults including HRI personnel are present at all times when non-staff interact with children involved in HRI activities.
12. Make certain that information and the use of children's images follow the HRI photography and videos protocols.

VII Strategy for Risk Management

HRI recognizes there may be potential risks to vulnerable and disadvantaged children and youth during program implementation. In this context, HRI regularly and proactively undertakes risk assessment as part of the risk management process, including assessments of the communities where HRI works, with the intent of risk reduction. This is achieved by examining each and every new and emerging program and activity and any potential impact on children. Programs that involve direct work and interaction with children are considered to be a higher risk and require close examination and may require more diligent child protection measures and procedures put in place before program implementation. As children are the focus of every community in which HRI works, HRI is consistently mindful of potential risks to both the children and their communities.

Staff and others are continually made aware of risks, and equipped through training to minimize opportunities and situations that may result in harmful developments.

Appendix A provides the guidelines for reporting child protection concerns.

VIII Recruitment Procedures

Procedures for staff recruitment, national or international, contain appropriate child protection measures, including, wherever possible, the provision of background checks, employment background checks, local police records check and references from previous employers or others who had contact with the applicant. HRI will reject any applicant for an HRI position, a vendor, or a contractor that could be considered a risk to child safety, based upon credible background information.

References will need to be supplied by the applicant and contacted for character reference. Behavioral based interviews will be conducted with all applicants applying for positions that involve working directly with children. All staff, contractors and volunteers, donors, vendors, etc. will be required to immediately disclose all charges, convictions and any other outcomes of an offense which occurred before applying for employment with HRI.

Prior to commencing work, all new hires should be clearly informed of their contractual requirements to comply with this policy and sign an acknowledgement form that obligates them to comply with HRI's Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. They are also obligated to participate in child safeguarding orientation and any relevant training as may be considered appropriate by their supervisor.

IX Commitment to Orientation and Training

HRI personnel are subject to regular training on child protection standards and measures and are required to keep their knowledge up to date on current child safeguarding practices and HRI policies.

HRI Focal points, including the CEO, Country Directors, Project and Program Managers, will participate in regular training courses and workshops to ensure that they are competent and knowledgeable to conduct the initial handling of any complaint or concern compliant with the reporting process. In addition, the training courses are a good opportunity for participants to offer suggestions for improving the policy and strengthening the complaint and response mechanism.

The Child Protection focal points will have the role of ensuring that all staff is up to date with policy changes and the implementation of training regimes for all staff and children alike.

X Appropriate Use of Child Images

HRI will at all times portray children in a respectful, appropriate and dignified manner.

1. A child should always be portrayed in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in any way that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
2. A child and his/her adult family member or recognized guardian must always be asked for consent when using their images. When asking for consent to use the image, details should be given as to how and where this image will be used. An HRI consent form must be completed and signed by the family member or guardian.
3. There should be no identifying information of the child or youth used in the publication of images or their location.
4. Children should be portrayed as part of their community to the extent possible.
5. Local cultural traditions should be taken into account carefully before photographing or making videos with the intent of respecting those traditions.
6. Images should be an honest representation of the context and the facts.
7. When sending images electronically, file labels should not reveal identifying information such as the name(s), the age, gender or location of the subject.

HRI maintains strong communication links with the parents or those otherwise legally responsible for the children in its partner residential facilities and programs, projects, activities and ensures that they are appropriately informed about all issues regarding the children and their welfare.

HRI respects the confidentiality of information regarding children's health, family backgrounds and personal histories. This private, confidential information is accessed only by authorized staff on a 'need to know' basis.

Guidelines, rules and implementation procedures relating to child protection are subject to all HRI personnel. Only authorized personnel with approval from the Board and Senior Management Team can make changes to the rules, guidelines and procedures or decisions regarding child protection.

The Child Safeguarding Policy and all associated policies, or guidelines such as the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Reporting Process will be reviewed regularly and amended and updated as required.

X Donors and Partners

HRI recognizes the need to implement specific guidelines to manage harmful risks to children as they relate to HRI donors and partners. HRI's guidelines for interactions between our donors and partners, and the children they support include:

1. All interactions between donors or partners and children should be conducted with sensitivity recognizing appropriate cultural and traditional practices of the children. Any materials distributed or otherwise used in interaction or activities with children should contain appropriate content that is culturally and traditionally appropriate.
2. All visits by sponsors must be arranged well in advance with the Missions Coordinator and/or Country Director, or other person(s) designated by the Country Director.
3. An orientation meeting will be conducted upon arrival with donors and or partners and they will be required to read the Child Safeguarding Policy and sign the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Form.
4. Supervised visitations from HRI partner facilities is permitted but needs to include a minimum of one representative of the residential facility and one HRI representative. For other HRI programs, projects, activities, Parent Committees will be always invited.
5. It is mandatory for at least one qualified HRI staff (Social Worker, Country Director, Program Manager) to be present at all times during any donor or partner during authorized visitations.
6. Visitors (donors/partners/mission visits) and children and their families must not exchange contact details during visits.
7. Children must not be invited to leave or be taken away from their residential facilities, homes or communities except for emergency situations as may be approved by the Country Director.

XI Reporting Procedures

In the event incidents, comments, suspicions or concerns arise, the incident will be immediately reported to the HRI Country Director or the HRI CEO in the absence of the Country Director and an investigation must commence. All cases of alleged abuse will be investigated thoroughly in line with established HRI procedures. When the allegation has been investigated and confirmed as misconduct, the person responsible for the violation will face disciplinary action, up to and including termination if HRI staff. Visitors in violation of the policy will be asked to remove themselves from HRI activities and will be asked to refrain from further visits to HRI activities.

A child reporting concerns or claiming to be the subject of abuse will be protected, taken seriously and treated with respect and dignity by HRI staff. He or she will be reassured that they are not to blame – he or she will never be treated with disbelief or in a manner that might cause shame or embarrassment. HRI will initiate actions that may involve reporting to local authorities or other making appropriate referrals.

In the event of an allegation made in good faith which is shown to be unfounded or untrue, no action will be taken against the person making the allegation. Intentional false and malicious allegations are unacceptable and perpetrators will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. HRI staff, volunteer, contract hire or other HRI representatives who knowingly fail to report suspected child abuse by HRI staff or HRI representatives, will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination and may be subject additionally to local law.

All HRI staff will be oriented and trained in the Child Safeguarding Reporting Process. The HRI Country Director will be responsible for ensuring follow-up on all allegations and complaints by investigation with the technical assistance of the CEO and legal counsel. Legal counsel will recommend actions to be taken or may recommend no-action in consultation with the HRI CEO. Possible recommended appropriate disciplinary action may range from behavioral management, counseling, or referral to local law enforcement and or disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Appendix A: HRI Child Safeguarding Reporting Process

Who Can Report

- Any child or young person living in residential facilities or participating in HRI programs, projects, activities.
- Parents or adults in the communities where residential facilities partnering with HRI are located, and/or where HRI is implementing programs/projects/activities (participants or not).
- HRI or residential facility staff, HRI staff, volunteers or partners or others who feel the necessity to report a complaint.

What to Report

Misconduct, allegations, disclosures or observations of child abuse or suspected breaches of the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.

When to Report

All concerns, allegations or abuses must be reported within 24 hrs, or as soon as practically possible. It is important that the reporting does not exceed 72 hours from the incident.

Who to Report To

Any child abuse allegations against staff, donors, supporters, residential facility staff must be reported to HRI professional leadership, namely the CEO or Country Director.

Concerns for the safety or well-being of any child must be reported to the HRI Country Director, Program Manager, Project Coordinator or Social Workers.

What Will Happen?

The situation and information will be immediately assessed by HRI leadership. An investigation and a confidential report will be prepared in compliance with this policy or within the context of the legislation of the country in which the infraction occurred. The CEO and the Country Director(s) will always be notified. HRI's independent counsel and Country Director have overall responsibility for the investigative process.

Possible Outcomes

- Criminal matter or child protection report made to IBESR, Municipality, Office for the Protection of the Citizen, Police or Child Protection Authority (BPM), or other appropriate authority of the country. If the victim is female, the appropriate regulatory agency (i.e. Ministry of the Women's Conditions in Haiti) or other

organizations working on women's rights will be included. (These are specific to Haiti.)

- Victims and alleged offenders safety and needs will be assessed and responded to or referred to the appropriate legal bodies.
- Breach of this Policy and the Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Important Note:

Note that the staff is made aware that CEO, Country Director and an HRI contracted attorney can be contacted at ANY time for advice

Feedback and consultation to be given where possible to those directly involved or affected. Debriefing and counselling will be offered if needed.

Annex I: Reference documents, international instruments and training resources

HRI's Child Safeguarding Policy is compliant with international and national primary child protection legislation expressed in the:

- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, 1974 (USA)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) on 9 June 1999
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified on 6 February 1991
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified on 19 December 1972.
- American Convention on Human Rights ("Pact of San Jose"), ratified on 27 September 1977
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women ("Convention of Belem do Para")

Although some countries are still not signatories to basic human rights instruments, such as the:

Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict,

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

HRI holds itself to these higher standards to ensure children associated with HRI programs are fully protected.

