

Razi Social Development Organization

موسسه انكشافی و اجتماعی رازی



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Year: 2019

Razi Social Development Organization (RSDO)

Child Protection Policy

Country Context:

Children in Afghanistan currently face many issues that impact their future. The mortality rates of infants, children under 5 and mothers are among the world's highest. Stunted growth due to malnutrition affects more than half of its children. Much of the country's population lacks access to safe drinking water, which leads to diseases that threaten public health. Child marriage and child labour are particularly prevalent. In addition to this, daughters are often sold or exchanged elsewhere, when male heirs are not born into a family and honour killing is not questioned. Physical and sexual child abuse has increased rapidly in the past 10 years throughout the country. Only one in five girls aged 15-24 can read and write. Truancy, drug use and misconduct are commonplace, through lack of effective preventative infrastructure in place. Children's rights are protected under Afghanistan's constitution, and by international conventions, such as Security Council resolutions 1612 and 1882, and the UN CRC and its two optional protocols. Afghanistan

has a National Strategy on Children at Risk, monitoring systems are being created. However, in a war-torn country like Afghanistan, a major impediment to protecting children's rights is the challenge of enforcing rule of law. Issues such as fighting impunity and addressing grave acts of violence, or sexual abuse take time and need the support of the international community in order to maintain security in the country throughout the process.

Razi Social Development Organization (RSDO):

RSDO works directly and indirectly with many children through all of its programmes, particularly through its Education, Health Programmes and Book Clubs, and, as a result, has a keen interest in Child Protection. UNICEF supported the creation of a Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) across 32 Villages in one district, which helps inform the national strategy for policies and coordinates Government, NGOs, community and religious leaders to protect children. RSDO will keep close relationships with the CPAN network in the areas in which it works, and embraces Child Protection training for all of its staff members.

RSDO's Child Protection Team in Afghanistan

The representatives of RSDO's child protection team, to whom all instances of child abuse must be reported, are as follows:

Executive Director

Gender and Adolescent Development

Programme Manager, Education

Senior Officer, Human Resources

For the purpose of this policy, a child will be considered to be a person under the age of 18 years

RSDO's Child Protection Policy embodies its commitment to human development and dignity. In this Policy, RSDO commits to the protection of children who it works with through its development programmes. This Policy is underpinned by our mission for: *"A world free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination where everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential."*

RSDO believes that all children have equal rights, including the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, as set out in the ***UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989*** and endorses **article 19**, which says that "State Parties shall take all appropriate ... measures to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child".

RSDO believes child protection is both an individual and a corporate responsibility. Every person who shares in the work of BRAC, including staff, volunteers and partners must share in the responsibility to take all appropriate measures to protect the children we serve.

RSDO is aware that protection systems in many countries are weak, despite ratification of the Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC), which may leave our staff facing complex child protection dilemmas. Following this policy together with country legislations where in place will significantly strengthen child protection.

MEETING OUR COMMITMENT TO PROTECT CHILDREN IN AFGHANISTAN

As part of our commitment we will take the following steps to protect children with whom we come in contact directly or indirectly through our work:

- We have formed a five member **Child Protection Team** in Afghanistan, which may be amended by circular from time to time. The Child Protection Team's duty will be to monitor Child Protection issues in country, link with in-country Child Protection facilities (NGO and Government) and, in consultation with Head Office, follow the disciplinary procedure.
- All staff in Afghanistan will be made aware of, sign up and abide to RSDO's Code of Conduct, which includes the attached Code of Conduct for Child Protection (Annex 1) and the Prohibited Conduct for Child Protection (Annex 2), designed to safeguard children in our care.

- Staff working directly with children shall be given special training on Child Protection. We will provide clear guidance to such staff to identify types of child abuse (**Annex 3**) and signs of abuses (**Annex 4**) and a mechanism for reporting cases of abuse. Staff must be vigilant at all times and use their observational skills in detecting any injury, marks or other signs of abuse or neglect, particularly when children are in RSDO schools. Parents/guardians will be approached discretely to discuss staff's concern. Teachers will be provided with alternative and positive mechanisms for managing the behavior of children that do not involve physical punishment or other degrading treatment.
- Permission will be sought from appropriate adult (parent, legal guardian) regarding taking/publishing information about children. Particular caution and judgment should be exercised in respect of children in poverty or vulnerable situations.
- We will advocate for the protection of children from all forms of exploitation. BRAC will network with other NGOs both nationally and internationally for raising awareness and support for the protection of children. RSDO will maintain a relationship with the relevant Government Unit responsible for Child Protection in Afghanistan.
- Recruitment of staff working directly with children will include a vetting system. During the interview process, individual or community references will be requested and applicants will be interviewed on previous work with children and required to disclose previous convictions.
- All staff will have access to this policy, which will be updated every three years.

Procedure

- When making an allegation, give as full a description as you can, including who is accused, what happened, where, on what date, at what time, if any witnesses, and, if known, why it happened.
- We will respond to any report of child abuse or breach of this policy or codes of conduct promptly and will follow BRAC's disciplinary procedure, as set out in the relevant Human Resources Policy and Procedure. Allegations will normally be investigated, which may result in the suspension of the accused. If an accusation of Child Abuse is verified, in most cases, the member of staff will be summarily dismissed and handed over to the authorities.
- False allegations will be treated in line with the same disciplinary procedure as the accused.

ANNEX 1 – CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Employees shall:

1. adhere to BRAC's policy of equal opportunities, at all times ensuring that the workplace is free from discrimination of any form. Children shall not be excluded on the basis of gender, disability, race, ethnicity, religion or any other criterion.
2. provide additional support as necessary to the more vulnerable children (ethnic minorities, disabled, girls, those with learning difficulties).
3. listen to children, encourage and respect children's voices and views, and always act in their best interests.
4. encourage children's personal, physical, social, emotional, moral, educational and intellectual development and create an environment which enables such development.
5. provide children with positive corrective measures, giving examples of good conduct.
6. be aware of situations which may present risks to children and try to prevent and manage such situations by planning and organizing the work and the workplace, so as to minimize risk of violations of this code.
7. ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable issues or concerns to be raised and discussed by children or their families. Employees shall never scold or ridicule a child for raising any issue or concern. Employees shall make children feel confident and secure and safe in voicing their concerns, as well as take a clear stand when other adults physically or verbally abuse a child.
8. be aware of the potential for peer abuse (e.g. children bullying, discriminating against, victimizing or abusing other children) and actively prevent it. For example, supervising high-risk, peer situations where older and younger children are mixed.
9. be aware that adults are always responsible for their behavior regardless of the child's behavior. They may work with children who, because of the circumstances and abuses they have experienced, may use a relationship to obtain 'special attention'. The adult is always considered responsible even if a child behaves manipulatively or seductively.
10. Adults should avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position. This awareness must extend to cases which require the employee to act on stories that children might tell about abuse they have suffered by other children or by other adults
11. be visible in working with children, and should meet with child(ren) in a central, public location except for when the dignity or safety of the child needs to be protected with privacy.
12. whenever possible, ensure that adults do not isolate themselves with one child and that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.

13. remember that all staff members are accountable under this code, and that violation of this Code shall result in appropriate and lawful measures taken by the organization and under the laws of the land.
14. report violations or alleged abuse by any other employees or volunteers immediately so that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior does not go unchallenged.
15. Never rest on their laurels and think “this couldn’t happen to me”!

ANNEX 2 – PROHIBITED CONDUCT FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Employees shall not:

1. develop relationships with children who could in any way be deemed exploitative, abusive or inappropriate. If there is any doubt, contact the Child Protection Team.
2. develop or attempt to develop intimate physical, sexual or parental relationship with children. Neither shall the employees encourage any child to develop romantic type of feelings for any person.
3. take pictures, videos or any other recording (audio, video, pictorial) of children without the parent’s / guardians prior consent.
4. use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate, and also shall not use any language that will mentally or emotionally abuse any child.
5. invite unaccompanied children to their home or encourage meetings outside the programme activity, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
6. stay alone overnight with one or more students or minors, whether in the staff member’s house, project premises or elsewhere;
7. encourage other staff to hold or care for the child when the child accompanies its parent on work related travel. This shall not apply to designated caregivers.
8. be with a child alone in a closed room or a place where no one else can see the employee. If an employee is alone with a single child at any time that employee must ensure that another adult is present or at least close by.
9. kiss, hug, stroke, fondle, rub, or touch a child in an inappropriate way. The child must be able to withdraw from any physical contact whenever they want to.
10. do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing, and grooming.

11. initiate physical contact (e.g. holding hands) unless initiated by the child. The child must be able to initiate as well as terminate any physical contact, including holding hands, unless a dangerous situation exists and it is necessary for the safety of the child, such as in traffic or crossing the road or similar situations.
12. allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other, and shall not stand aside when inappropriate actions inflicted by adults or children on other children or other adults occur, even though it may be common.
13. condone or participate in, behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive (emotionally, physically or sexually), and shall not behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative with each other or with other adults.
14. speak, act disrespectfully towards or discriminate against a child or a child's family because of the child's socio-economic background, class, gender, religion, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, political or other opinion, or other status.

This code is not an exhaustive list of prohibited conduct. If any behavior is identified that is not in the spirit of this policy, disciplinary action will be taken.

ANNEX 3 - CATEGORIES OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is caused by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; most often by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is defined as intentional physical injury to a child or corporal punishment of a child. Torture, beatings, and assault of children are obvious forms of physical abuse. May involve tapping, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Emotional Abuse: This is the emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children

frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse involves agreeing to or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production or, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways with one another.

Neglect: Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional need.

Organized Abuse: Organized or multiple abuse may be defined as abuse involving one or more abuser and a number of related or non-related abused children or young people. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert to abuse children, sometimes acting in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority to recruit children for abuse. Organized and multiple abuse occur both as part of a network of abuse across a family (forced marriage, honour killing) or community (child labour), and within institutions such as schools/madrasas.

ANNEX 4 - SIGNS OF ABUSE

Physical signs

- any injuries, bruises, bites, burns, fractures, etc, which are not consistent with the explanation given for them
- injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- injuries which appear to have been caused by a weapon e.g. cuts, welts, etc
- injuries which have not received medical attention
- instances where children are kept away from the group inappropriately or without explanation
- self-mutilation or self-harm e.g. Cutting, slashing, drug abuse

Emotional signs

- changes or regression in mood and behavior, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression
- nervousness/inappropriate fear of particular adults e.g. frozen watchfulness
- sudden changes in behavior e.g. under-achievement or lack of concentration
- inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults e.g. excessive dependence
- attention-seeking behavior
- persistent tiredness
- wetting or soiling of clothes by an older child

Neglect signs

These signs can manifest due to poverty or absence of adult caregiver and should not be misconstrued:

- regular poor hygiene
- persistent tiredness
- inadequate clothing
- failure to thrive e.g. poor weight gain
- consistently alone and unsupervised

Sexual signs

- any direct disclosure made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behavior, or who regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play
- withdrawn and tries to hide behind others
- preoccupation with sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults or other children
- fears, phobias, talking of vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- other emotional signs (see above) may be indicative of sexual or some other form of abuse