Child Protection Policy



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1. Introduction

Established in Afghanistan in 2017, the Organization for Welfare and Humanitarian (OWH) stands as a non-governmental, non-political, non-profit, and independent entity. Founded by individuals motivated by shared concerns, OWH endeavors to address societal needs and challenges.

Registered with key Afghan regulatory bodies such as the Ministry of the Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation, and Ministry of Public Health, OWH demonstrates its commitment to operating within the country's legal framework.

OWH actively engages in pivotal Health, Education, and Nutrition Clusters, significantly contributing to these sectors throughout Afghanistan. Since its inception, OWH has effectively executed diverse projects spanning Health, Training, Research, Pandemic/Disaster Management, Education, and other essential domains.

Bolstered by an experienced team, OWH prides itself on a successful track record of implementing projects supported by prominent international donors operating in Afghanistan. Its extensive experience spans across diverse regions of Afghanistan, enabling substantial contributions to a wide spectrum of developmental initiatives.

OWH holds a profound understanding of Afghanistan's regions and possesses extensive experience operating in various provinces, providing a comprehensive approach to addressing the country's diverse needs.

1.1 Vision Statement

"A Developed, Educated, Prosperous, and Healthy community, with equal access for all."

1.2 Mission Statement

"OWH provides quality services, blending ancient wisdom with modern expertise, for an accessible and proud community."

2. Policy Overview

In situations of crisis and displacement, children, adolescents and youth are at risk of various forms of abuse and that requires all the institutions to play their part and bring the required changes

required for to stop child abuse.

OWH is committed to ensure that children, adolescents and youth are protected from harm and that their rights are secured in all the relative manners.

OWH strive to ensure that:

- All girls and boys are safe where they live, learn and play
- Those who are unaccompanied or separated are cared for and have access to family tracing and reunification services
- Newborns are registered at birth and children with disabilities are supported
- Children associated with armed groups and armed forces receive the necessary support to be reintegrated into their communities
- Children, adolescents and youth can rebuild their lives through psychosocial support and recreational activities and education

3. Child Abuse

Child abuse or child maltreatment is physical, sexual, and/or psychological maltreatment or neglect of a child or children, especially by a parent or a caregiver. Child abuse may include any act or failure to act by a parent or a caregiver that results in actual or potential harm to a child and can occur in a child's home, or in the organizations, schools, or communities the child interacts with.

The terms child abuse and child maltreatment are often used interchangeably, although some researchers make a distinction between them, treating child maltreatment as an umbrella term to cover neglect, exploitation, and trafficking.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse and child maltreatment as "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 in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

The WHO also says, "Violence against children includes all forms of violence against people under 18 years old, whether perpetrated by parents or other caregivers, peers, romantic partners, or strangers. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses the term child maltreatment to refer to both acts of commission (abuse), which include "words or overt actions that cause harm, potential harm, or threat of harm to a child", and acts of omission

(neglect), meaning "the failure to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, or educational needs or to protect a child from harm or potential harm". The United States federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse and neglect as, at minimum, "any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation" or "an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm".

3.1 Types of Child Abuse

There are four main types of child abuse: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Children can suffer from one or a combination of these forms of abuse.

Emotional Abuse*:* The emotional mistreatment of a child which may involve telling a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only to meet the needs of another person. These may include imposing expectations or interactions that are inappropriate or beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limiting the child's ability to explore or learn or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction.

Physical Abuse*:* causing bodily or physical harm e.g. hitting, poisoning, burning, giving children alcohol or drugs.

Sexual Abuse*:* when adults use children to meet their own sexual urges; this may or may not include physical contact with the child (e.g. any sexual activity, intimate touching, sexually suggestive remarks).

Neglect Abuse*:* when adults fail to meet the child's basic needs to an extent that is likely to result in serious impact on the child's health or development (e.g. failing to provide adequate food, shelter, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment).

4. OWH Child Protection Principles

In response towards the Child Protection issues prevailing now a days OWH have the below principles:

- Having zero-tolerance for child abuse.
- Protecting children's rights and their best interests.

- Placing the child as the first priority when dealing with all identified or suspected cases of child abuse.
- Empowering and educating children on their rights, personal safety and steps they can take, if there is a problem.
- Integrating child protection into all aspects of our organizational strategy, structures and work practices.

OWH will also ensure

- Taking into account, in all of our planning and activities, the interests and wellbeing of children;
- Respecting the rights, wishes and feelings of the children with whom we are working;
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from neglect and physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse;
- Responding to all suspicions and allegations of abuse swiftly and appropriately;

4.1 Preventing Abuse

Preventing abuse entirely is the ultimate goal for the organization. OWH believes that we must do everything in our power to reduce cases of abuse as much as possible to help ensure children's safety. The key to our strategy is education:

- Training children, staff and volunteers on how to identify and prevent child abuse.
- Giving children the opportunity to participate in programs that educate them on their rights, personal-safety techniques and steps they can take in case of a problem.
- Encouraging and supporting children, staff and community members to report cases of abuse.
- Incorporating child protection information into other CI programs. In this way, we reach a broader audience and reemphasize the importance of protecting children.
- Allowing all children and teens the opportunity to participate in programs regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity or religion.

All field staff and volunteers attend mandatory annual trainings on our Child Protection Policy and agency-specific child protection protocols. All new employees and volunteers are also trained and commit to following the policy and protocols.

4.2 Reporting Child Abuses

For all reported child-abuse incidents, OWH requires that the child's best interest be the first priority. In addition, all incidents must be dealt with promptly, and they must be handled in a confidential manner that does not harm the victim or the person reporting the abuse.

The child reporting incidents can be directly reported to all the immediate response points.

OWH immediate response units are:

1. The nearby OWH service delivery point
2. OWH provincial office
3. OWH regional Office
4. OWH headquarters

5. OWH communications

As you read through our web and print materials, you may have already noticed some of the measures we take to protect children. These include:

- Telling the truth of the story. This means never using manipulated or sensationalized text and/or images, and certainly not employing discriminatory or degrading language.
- Never using images of inappropriately clothed children.
- Not publicly disclosing a child's last name, personal address or other information that could be used to locate a child within a country.
- Not publishing health information, unless the family or individual has given us written consent.
- Additionally, children, youth and individuals featured in our materials must consent (or their parents or guardians must consent) to us using their image or story prior to publication.

6. Vulnerability of children with disabilities to violence

Children with disabilities are often marginalized within families and communities. This result in the fact that they are less connected to people, government and non-government services that could protect them from violence. When children with disabilities are not regarded or regarded as less important in family life, communities in school, in the law, by health care professionals

and in general policy making, then it becomes easier for perpetrators to violate their rights and more difficult for the victims of violence to protect themselves. Subsequently it is harder to find justice after their rights have been violated. By making children with disabilities part of policies (including child protection policies) and implementation of those policies in society violence against children with disabilities could be significantly reduced.

6.1 Child protection at homes of children with disabilities

Children with disabilities are often isolated from their own family and herewith from various aspects of family life. To avoid shame children with disabilities are kept out of sight when neighbors come, they are not made part of family life when special events take place. Subsequently they are often less known within their neighborhood. Even when they are known they are often regarded as less important by the family because they do not believe in their ability to contribute either to the family or to the community. All these factors lead to an increased risk of the child with disabilities to violence. Parents of children with disabilities are sometimes ashamed of having a child with a disability thinking that the disability of their child is a punishment because of a sin one of the family members has committed. This shame and disappointment can result in parents hiding their child, neglecting their child committing violence towards the child psychologically or physically.

Having a child with a disability will often have financial consequences for families. For example costs for health care might be a financial strain for families. With some disabilities children will need more care from family members (or families might lack knowledge on training their child in becoming independent in daily life activities) which can reduce the time the family can spend on gaining income. These financial consequences for families can lead to frustration that can sometimes be expressed in violence against the child.

6.2 Protection of children with disabilities in their communities

The link between the family and their immediate community is of high importance. Most families depend on their immediate community in their daily lives for financial and social reasons. The response of a family to their child is linked to the ideas they believe in and these are closely connected to the ideas the community has about children with disabilities. Believes and attitudes of families and communities on many topics including disability, are often similar.

Therefore most of the issues described for violence in the family will be similar in the community

7. PSEA

Sexual exploitation is defined as an actual or attempted abuse of someone's position of vulnerability (such as a person depending on you for survival, food rations, school books, transport or other services), differential power or trust, to obtain sexual favors, including but not only, by offering money or other social, economic or political advantages.

Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force, or under unequal or coercive conditions. It includes sexual slavery, pornography, child abuse and sexual assault.

OWH have a zero tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse. It is considered serious misconduct and can have severe consequences.

The OWH Code of Conduct prohibits SEA of anyone, including people who "look to or benefit from the organization's protection or assistance". Prohibitions also cover the use of abusive material and any exchange of "money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior." Prohibitions extend to engagement with sex trade workers.

OWH places human dignity at the center of its development work, and has a zero-tolerance stand on exploitative and abusive relationships. OWH employees must report any actual or suspected unethical behavior related to sexual exploitation and OWH has a duty to ensure that allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are investigated and that appropriate disciplinary measures are taken.

Where someone has concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or abuse, he/she must report such concerns. A confidential complaint can be made by or on behalf of a survivor by contacting Organization for Welfare and Humanitarian, your PSEA focal Points;

PSEA Focal Point 1: Pseafocalpoint@owh.org.af

PSEA Focal Point 2: Psea2focalpoint@owh.org.af

OWH HQ: admin@owh.org.af

Hotline Number: +93 202503130

OWH have a well-developed PSEA policy that explains all the PSEA aspects, which is available

at the website and be accessed by using the link https://owh.org.af/policies/.

8. Message by the Management Team

OWH management team is thankful to all the employees for their effort in the finalization of the policy and for bringing the Organization to this position.

Thank you for everything you do for making OWH a successful and terrific place to work.

OWH believes that all the rules and regulation must be formed to the best interest of the Organization, the sector of its operation and to the wider population.

9. Revision of the Policy

OWH reserves the right to revise, modify any or all clauses of this policy depending upon the need of the day and after making discussion in the board meetings.

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