

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

### **I. Introduction:**

As a human rights organisation, Equilibres & Populations (Equipop) is committed to and encourages respect for human rights and dignity. Equipop believes that every child who participates to Equipop's activities has the right to enjoy a safe environment and be protected from harm. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that all children have a right to protection, Equipop believes that it has a duty to protect those children for whom we are given responsibilities.

### **II. Purpose:**

This policy exists to protect children from abuse in the delivery of our programs, to affirm Equipop's commitment to the safety and protection of children and to ensure that in our work we do not perpetuate or reinforce systematic or structural abuse and discrimination of children. It provides definition and outlines our guiding principles and responsibilities.

### **III. Scope:**

This policy applies to anyone who represents Equipop: staff, volunteers, partners, contractors, donors and board members.

### **VI. Commitment:**

Equipop is highly committed to protecting children from exploitation and abuse. Children can be extremely vulnerable, above all in situation of poverty, humanitarian crisis and conflict, and deserve higher standard of protection. As an organisation undertaking work in these kinds of contexts, Equipop takes its duty of protecting children seriously.

Our child protection policy is guided by the five (5) following principles:

#### Child rights:

Equipop is committed to protecting the rights of all children to live safely, without fear of abuse or exploitation as outlined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child.

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### Zero tolerance of child abuse:

Equipop will not tolerate any form of child abuse by anyone who is working within our programs or represents our organisation in any way. Equipop will not allow representatives to work with children or access communities if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or wellbeing.

### Shared responsibilities:

We believe that child protection is a shared responsibility, meaning that successful implementation of child protection initiatives is reliant on all representatives committing to and upholding the principles of this policy. Equipop will work to ensure that all partner organisations meet minimum standards of protection for children associated with our projects and programs.

### Risk management approach:

While it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child abuse, Equipop will ensure risks of child abuse are identified and mitigated in the assessment of our activities.

### Confidentiality, wellbeing and safety:

Matters raised under this policy will be dealt with in a confidential, fair and timely manner, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all involved.

## **V. Definitions:**

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

### Child:

Any person under the age of eighteen (18) years old.

### Child protection:

Activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm.

### Child rights:

Children have the rights to life, survival and development where development encompasses physical, emotional, cognitive, social and cultural development.

### Child abuse:

Child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights, and includes all forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, domestic violence, neglect, commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking and child labour as defined below.

### Physical abuse:

When a person purposefully injures, or threatens to injure a child. For example: slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing.

### Emotional abuse:

A persistent attack on a child's self-esteem. For example: name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child.

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Neglect:

The persistent failure, where there are means, or the deliberate denial to provide a 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:

When a child is used by another child, adolescent or adult, for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual abuse involves contact and non contact activities which encompasses all form of sexual activity involving children, including exposing children to pornographic images, or taking pornographic photographs of children.

Domestic violence:

This includes verbal, physical, sexual or emotional violence within the household or family, which the child witnesses, usually on a regular basis.

Commercial sexual exploitation:

Where a child is sexually abused or exploited in return for cash or for kind.

Child labour:

Where the type and frequency of work that a child of a particular age is required to do exceeds UNICEF's guidelines. Such work is considered harmful to the child and should therefore be eliminated.

Child trafficking:

Relates to any role in the recruitment, transportation or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation, by means of threat, force or other forms of coercion. This includes abuse of power.

Military use of children:

Where children are engaged in or exposed to military activity, including as soldiers or human shields.

**VI. Implementation:**

Equipop ensures that its commitment to child protection is shared by all representatives and integrated into our work by the following means:

Information on child protection policy:

Interviews are systematically organized with new Equipop's staff to ensure that all representatives are given clear guidance about ways to minimise risk to children and the standards of behaviour and practice required of them at all times when they are in contact with children. Equipop's partners are asked to develop an internal child protection policy if they do not have one yet.

Photos, images and story gathering:

Equipop ensures a strict control in using photos, images and stories of children.

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### Risk management:

Equipop takes in consideration the risk of child abuse in the design and implementation of all projects and programs. Measures are taken in order to limit the risk and ensure the child protection. Risks are monitored and reported.

### Nomination of child protection focal point:

A child protection focal point is nominated to clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of Equipop's staff and support the risk management.

### Review of child policy:

This policy will be reviewed every two (2) years.

## **VII. Breaches of child protection policy:**

Where concerns exist about the conduct of Equipop's staff, partners or board members in relation to the child protection policy, this will be investigated under the law of the country in which they work and/or by Equipop. Breaches of this policy will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary procedures, change of duties or termination of employment.

### **1/ Vigilance and Prevention**

As part of child protection and prevention efforts, the organization encourages all employees and board members to ensure that no child or young person in the professional environment of the association is exposed to situations of discrimination, violence, or abuse of any kind.

Each employee or board member is required to act vigilantly and respond to potential risk situations, such as:

- Degrading remarks or behaviors toward a child or young person;
- Discriminatory actions based on origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic;
- Sexually suggestive or inappropriate comments or behaviors toward a child or young person;
- Insults or harassment;
- Signs of physical or psychological violence;
- Any form of pressure or coercion exerted on a child or young person.

Risk situations must be promptly reported to protect the children and young people concerned.

### **2/ Reporting and Identified Listening Channel**

Any employee, board member, or partner who becomes aware of a situation involving abuse or violence against a child or young person is encouraged to report it as follows:

- By directly contacting the person responsible for the relevant division or project;
- By sending an email to the dedicated address: [ecouteviolences@equipop.org](mailto:ecouteviolences@equipop.org)

Affected individuals, whether victims or witnesses, are free to approach the interlocutor of their choice and may use multiple channels simultaneously or successively.

All reports must be factual, without personal interpretation or judgment. Protecting the

confidentiality of those involved is essential.

### **3/ Follow-Up and Disciplinary Actions**

All reports received will be analyzed and addressed. No report should go unanswered. In cases of inaction or lack of response, members of the organization are encouraged to contact the management directly.

When an employee, board member, or partner is identified as the perpetrator of violence or inappropriate behavior, disciplinary actions may be taken, ranging from a warning to termination of the employment contract or collaboration. In severe cases, legal proceedings may be considered.

### **4/ Transparent Annual Review**

An annual review will be conducted to evaluate actions undertaken, training provided, reports received and handled, and measures implemented. This review will be presented to the Board of Directors and the Social and Economic Committee (CSE) and shared with all members of the organization.

### **5/ Adherence to the Prevention Policy**

This policy is communicated to all employees, board members, and partners of the organization.

Every new individual joining the association is informed about the existence of this policy and must commit to adhering to it by signing a declaration of commitment.

The organization's partners are also invited to adhere to this policy by signing it.

**This policy has been reviewed in April 2024 and is approved by:**

Aurélie Gal-Régniez  
Executive director

April, 29th 2024

