

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## 1. Purpose

The Child Protection Policy is developed to ensure the highest standards of professional behaviour and personal practice to ensure no harm occurs in any situation to children and adolescents during their involvement in GAP activities, projects, and programmes. GAP upholds the rights and obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

GAP acknowledges as its fundamental duty to protect and safeguard children, who can be extremely vulnerable, in which context GAP operates (poverty, emergency response to natural disaster or development aid).

## 2. Applicability

The policy applies to all staff members and consultants of GAP in both New Zealand and overseas, including:

- Trustees
- Volunteers
- Consultants
- Programme partners
- Suppliers
- Visitors of GAP projects & programmes

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all GAP activities, projects, programmes onshore and offshore and situations, professional or otherwise, during and outside working hours. It is GAPs responsibility to ensure that everyone is informed of the existence and content of this child protection policy.

## 4. Definitions

**Child** means person under the age of eighteen (18) years as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Child protection** is an activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly arising from child abuse or neglect.

**Child abuse** is the physical, sexual, emotional mistreatment or neglect of a child 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.

## 5. Guiding Principles

- No employment of children under any circumstances is allowed.
- Zero tolerance of child abuse.
- Recognition and promotion of children's best interests.
- Sharing responsibility for child protection.
- Use of a risk management approach to prevent child abuse; and
- Report and respond to all incidents of child abuse.

## 6. Standards of Conduct

- Treat children with dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, disability, or other status.
- When working in proximity of children be visible and, wherever possible, ensure presence of another adult.
- Speak up - (report) when having concerns about child's protection and safety.
- When getting and/or using children's images or personal information, obtain legitimate child's consent from a parent or guardian of the child.

## 7. Prevention & awareness

- Thorough reference and background checks, including Police checks, during all recruitments: staff & consultants.
- Proper introduction of the Child Protection policy, relevant forms, and GAP Code of Conduct during employees onboarding.
- Child Protection Policy is embedded in all contracts with all staff, consultants, partners, and contractors.
- Training will be implemented as appropriate, e.g. after policy update, reported situation or incident.

## 8. Reporting Principles & Procedures

- Reporting suspected or actual child abuse is mandatory for all staff, volunteers, consultants, and sub-contractors.
- No GAP staff or partner will prejudice their own position or standing with GAP by responsibly reporting someone who they believe is breaking the Child Protection Policy.
- Responsible reporting also means that any person making a report should bear in mind that all concerns are allegations until they have been investigated. For this reason, it is important for anyone raising a concern to follow the specific reporting guidelines set out below. Confidentiality is expected within the reporting chain.

All staff should normally discuss their concerns with their line manager/PSEAH coordinator. Any information provided will be handled with confidentiality and action will be taken if the Child Protection Policy has been breached. While GAP works in communities that include children, GAP does not directly work with children. GAP's Child Protection policy guides our practice. If an incident should occur, initially assess the incident using the PSEAH Reporting Template SPS OP 712B. This must be used in conjunction with your line manager or PSEAH coordinator, don't do this alone. This is a specialized area of which GAP does not hold the expertise, when a serious incident has been identified it will be passed onto an independent and qualified agency.

Discussions held with a senior manager should focus on:

- Evidence that the Child Protection Policy has been broken.
- The identified risks to the child/children.
- Measures to safeguarding children and minimise risk, and next steps.

Discussions on the next steps should focus on:

- An assessment of the reported concerns and support needs.
- Whether, and at what stage, the issue should be reported to external bodies.
- Appropriate response, e.g. disciplinary process or urgent action if children are judged to be at risk.

## **9. Associated documents**

- SPS OP 713A – GAP Child Abuse Incident Response and Reporting Procedures
- SPS OP 297 – Code of Conduct
- SPS OP 723 – Complaints Response Mechanism
- SPS OP 724 - Whistle Blowing Policy
- SPS OP 712B - PSEAH Reporting Template
- SPS OP 712A – PSEAH Training Module for Safe Practice
- SPS OP 716a – Partner Due Diligence Assessment Tool
- SPS OP 701 – GAP International Policy
- SPS OP 712 – GAP PSEAH Policy