



L'ALBERO DELLA VITA

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

### OVERVIEW

#### Why a Child Safeguarding Policy?

Since 1997 Fondazione L'Albero della Vita (FADV) has pursued the continuous improvement of the quality standards of its activities. It has done so through its projects and its ongoing training activity towards the educational staff, with specific and appropriate methodologies based on the original intuition of the importance of **working in a person-oriented way in order to promote social change**.

This Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP) is made up of reflections, models and tools and it represents FADV's commitment to make sure that **educational and project staff, projects and programmes and all the Organization activities do no harm to children or expose them to the risk of harm and abuse**.

### STAKEHOLDERS

- Children involved in any FADV activity and project both directly implemented or supported by FADV in Italy, Europe and developing countries;
- All FADV staff: managers, employees, volunteers, trainees, interns and representatives, working within all programmes and in every office and structure of the Organization in Italy and abroad;
- Partner organizations' staff and representatives;
- Sponsors, donors and visitors;
- Families (biological and foster families) of children who benefit from or are involved in FADV programmes and activities both directly implemented and supported by FADV;
- Teachers involved in FADV programmes;
- Consultants

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Iscritta al Registro delle Persone Giuridiche presso la Prefettura di Milano, n. 576, pag. 955, vol. 3



## REFERENCES & PRINCIPLES

This document is based on the following references:

- FADV Mission and Vision
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 19)
- General Comment No. 13 (2011) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence
- Keeping children Safe Child Protection Standards.

FADV claims that:

### **No harm against children is justifiable;**

- A rights-based approach to child safeguarding requires a paradigm shift towards respecting and **promoting human dignity and the physical and psychological integrity of children**. They have to be perceived primarily as individuals bearing rights rather than 'victims';
- The concept of dignity requires that every child is recognized, respected and protected as a rights holder and as a unique and valuable human being with an individual personality, distinct needs, interests and privacy;
- **The right of children to be heard and the right to have their views taken into account must be systematically respected in all decision-making processes**. Children's empowerment and participation should be fundamental in child safeguarding strategies and programmes;
- The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all matters involving or affecting children, particularly when they are victims of violence, as well as in all measures taken to prevent any form of harm and abuse;



## VISION, MISSION

### Vision

**L'Albero della Vita aspires to a world where adults and children are united to realize change, stimulating awareness in every woman and in every man.**

L'Albero della Vita aspires to a world where everyone is freely inclined to a higher self-awareness and to a self-educational process of constant improvement. A world where childhood is granted great dignity and a real innovative potential is protected and developed everywhere with proper approaches and methodologies. L'Albero della Vita's concept of humanity and its future is inspired by the principles and approaches for development and communication of Patrizio Paoletti Foundation's "*Pedagogia per il Terzo Millennio*".

### Mission

**L'Albero della Vita, since its establishment, is committed in Italy and internationally to promote effective actions aimed at ensuring well-being, protecting and promoting human rights, encouraging the development of children in difficulty, their families and their communities.**

For L'Albero della Vita, **ensuring children well-being** means creating opportunities for a dignified, full and rewarding life: in other words, offering them a proper nutrition, personal and medical care, age-appropriate leisure, social and sports activities, as well as the chance of freely nurturing their most intimate aspirations.

Our organisation strives to **protect and promote rights** by designing each project and intervention according to the clear guidelines of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child. This translates into improving the life within the family, school and community by making it safer, more suitable for children's life and proper growth and, finally, with more opportunities.

**Fostering development** means to look at children's potential, investing on their inner growth so that they can become one day wise and responsible adults, who are in control of their passionate life and are able to contribute to improve their society in a proactive, conscious and responsible way. This is how a sustainable change can be generated in the disadvantaged environments, where L'Albero della Vita's initiatives support minors and people around them.



## GOALS

The CSP is aimed to ensure FADV maximum commitment in protecting the children it comes into contact with or impacts upon directly or indirectly. It encompasses all the values and principles that FADV staff as well as its donors, volunteers, consultants, visitors, suppliers must respect in their daily work activities with and within the Organization. The CSP defines a set of shared operating principles and rules to ensure the safety and well-being of the children who benefit from FADV's work and to prevent any form of harm which could be perpetrated by FADV staff, volunteer, associates or partners, whether deliberately or through a lack of understanding. In addition, the CSP provides the Organization with simple and targeted procedures to refer to for the prevention of abuse and to set up a prompt response whenever abuse occurs against one of the children benefiting from FADV projects.

## DEFINITIONS

Below are the definitions taken into account for the implementation of this Policy. The terminology used refers to most International Agencies and other organisations dealing with child safeguarding.

**Violence** is defined as any behaviour by parents, carer, other adults, adolescents or children, resulting in potential or actual harm to the health, development or dignity of the child or adolescent.

Such conduct may be intentional or unintentional and includes both omissions (e.g. negligence) and commissions (e.g. abuse).

Within this broad definition, five main categories of maltreatment can be identified:

physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, neglect or negligent treatment and exploitation.

### *Child abuse*

Any act deliberately carried out by a parent or a person in a position of power, responsibility and trust with regard to the child or adolescent and which may cause potential or actual harm to his or her safety, well-being, dignity and development. It covers all forms of physical and psychological harm, associated with abuse of power and betrayal of the child's trust by the adult.



### *Physical abuse*

Physical abuse refers to any conduct which causes actual or potential physical harm to a child or adolescent and which is carried out by an adult or a peer. Unlike other forms of maltreatment, physical abuse is characterized by the following elements:

- **the unpredictability of the conduct:** the child or adolescent does not know what can trigger anger and aggression and he/she moves constantly in uncertainty.
- **attacks of anger:** aggressive behaviour is determined by anger and the desire to exercise strong control over the child or adolescent so much that the greater the anger, the more intense will be the mistreatment.
- **Fear as a means of controlling the behaviour of the child or adolescent:** it is not uncommon for the abuser to believe that the child or adolescent must be afraid in order to learn to behave correctly and therefore, he/she creates a climate of intimidation to correct the behaviour and obtain respect and obedience. However, in this way the child does not learn to behave properly and grow up but only to avoid beatings.

### *Sexual Abuse*

Sexual abuse is the involvement, as an object of gratification, of a child or adolescent in sexual activities (with or without physical contact) that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in agreeing to. It can be perpetrated by an adult or a peer.

Some examples of sexual abuse: touching genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration, exposure to pornography etc.

### *Psychological abuse*

By psychological abuse we mean a behaviour repeated over time that affects the emotional, cognitive and relational development of the child or adolescent and his/her perception of himself/herself. It can take different forms and it often accompanies other types of maltreatment. As it does not normally involve physical harm, it is difficult to prove and sometimes requires the intervention of the authorities.

Some examples of psychological abuse:

- constantly belittling, humiliating and criticizing a child or adolescent;
- ridiculing him/her to diminish his/her personality, physical appearance or abilities;



- making him/her feel inadequate and unloved;
- make him/her live in a climate of intimidation and anguish and bully him/her;
- expose the child or adolescent to violence and abuse by others, such as parents, siblings or even pets.

### *Neglect or negligent treatment*

By neglect or negligence, we mean the inadequate attention to the material and emotional needs of the child or adolescent, by parents or caregivers. This includes the inability to protect the child or adolescent from potential danger and to guarantee and protect his or her basic needs such as medical care, education and adequate emotional growth, often to the point of exposing him or her to physical and emotional harm.

### *Exploitation*

The exploitation of the child or adolescent for the benefit, gratification or profit of third parties.

Such activities expose the child to unjust, cruel and dangerous treatment and are detrimental to the child's emotional, social and moral development and psycho-physical health. We can identify two main categories of childhood and adolescence exploitation:

- **Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents:** by sexual exploitation we mean any activity in which a person takes advantage of his or her position of power over a child or adolescent and takes advantage of the child trust and vulnerability for sexual purposes and for economic, social or political gain. The child or the adolescent is then exploited both as a sexual object and as a commercial object. Some examples of sexual exploitation: child prostitution, child trafficking for sexual abuse and exploitation, child pornography, sexual slavery.
- **Economic exploitation of children and adolescents:** by economic exploitation we mean the employment of a child or adolescent in work activities that are particularly risky and that jeopardise his or her physical and mental well-being and his or her right to education, health and family. Economic exploitation involves making profits for production and distribution.



## FADV CSP MINIMUM PROCEDURES

The Organization has adopted a **Code of Conduct** that describes the appropriate conduct to be observed by its employees and partners. The Code of Conduct is strategic to ensure the well-being and safety of children who are beneficiaries of FADV's projects, it provides all people with a model of behaviour that FADV considers appropriate for establishing a relationship between adults and children.

### *Code of Conduct*

FADV staff, its partners and visitors who work with, impact on, or come into contact with children, are required to:

- Treat children with respect, always recognising their rights, regardless of race, sex, colour, language, disability, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.
- Never infringe the children's rights.
- Always work to support and encourage the development of children's skills and potential
- Take the children's point of view seriously and respect their opinion.
- Always inform children about their rights.
- Take care of the environment in which the children are, ensuring their safety and well-being (see Working Environment Policy).
- Encouraging children to express themselves freely.
- Never seclude with a child
- Avoid any possible ambiguous situation that could cause a complaint.
- Prevent high risk situations and react promptly if abuse occurs.
- All images must respect the dignity of children and must never represent them in conditions of submission or vulnerability. Children must always be dressed and represented in scenes of normal everyday life.
- Respect local, national and international laws on the protection of children and adolescents.
- Respect children and adolescents' privacy.



FADV staff, its partners and visitors who work with, impact on, or come into contact with children, are required **NOT** to:

- Use corporal punishment and use offensive and humiliating language in the presence of a child.
- Humiliate, discriminate against children or behave contemptuously towards them.
- Have sexual relations with children or involve children in any kind of sexual activity.
- Have physical contact with children or behave in ways that may be considered inappropriate and/or regrettable according to their culture and traditions.
- Organize activities that can expose children to risks of abuse.
- Establish any kind of relationship with children that may constitute abuse or even exploitation.
- Taking photos or recording videos that may in some way harm children.
- Sensitive data that can help locate children should never circulate on the Internet, blogs or social networks, nor should it be accessible to the public.

## **STAFF RECRUITMENT**

The recruitment of staff, consultants, volunteers, associates, managers, interns and trainees must reflect FADV's commitment to children safeguarding, ensuring that all necessary verifications are carried out and all communications and procedures are adopted to exclude anyone who is not suitable to work with children and adolescents.

To ensure children and adolescents' safety it is essential to select staff, collaborators and volunteers who respect FADV's commitment to children and adolescents' protection.

Therefore, it is possible to prevent or reduce potential damage when selecting personnel.

While recruiting new staff, FADV evaluates:

- His/her motivations to work on childhood and adolescence issues;
- His/her commitment to respect the rights of children and adolescents;
- His/her understanding of the material and emotional needs of children and adolescents in local contexts;
- His/her knowledge of and familiarity with the most relevant international debates on sensitive issues related to child safeguarding;



- His/her adherence to certain values such as honesty, non-discrimination, reliability and loyalty;
- His/her references;
- His/her records from the Criminal Records.

## AWARENESS-RAISING AND TRAINING

FADV must provide this policy document to every new member of the staff, volunteer and collaborator so that they can have a common and shared definition of what constitutes a form or manifestation of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect of children and adolescents. It is important that all staff, consultants, volunteers, managers, interns and trainees in contact with children are aware of situations that present risks and that they are able to manage these risks.

All staff, consultants, volunteers, managers, interns and trainees must help to build an environment where children and adolescents are able to identify unacceptable behaviour, discuss their rights and express their concerns.

FADV is committed to ensuring support, supervision and periodic training, tailored to the knowledge of the staff and the local context and shared in a participatory manner, so as to encourage staff members to express any problems and weaknesses.

In particular, for each new member of the staff, FADV will provide an ad hoc training, articulated in some essential components:

- the key elements of this Policy;
- the definitions of possible forms of abuse and exploitation and signals through which they can be recognized;
- the procedures for reporting suspected violations of the Policy.

FADV is committed to sensitize its staff, consultants, volunteers, interns and trainees about children safeguarding through this set of awareness raising activities:

1. **Awareness:** ensuring that staff, volunteers and Members of the Board are aware of the phenomena of mistreatment, neglect and exploitation of children and adolescents and the potential risks associated with them.
2. **Prevention:** guaranteeing risk reduction through the dissemination of good practice, the creation of a safe and child-friendly environment and the encouragement of children and adolescents' participation.



3. **Reporting:** Ensuring that those involved in FADV projects and activities are clear about the measures to be taken and promptly report potential dangerous situations for children and adolescents.

## GENERAL PROCEDURE - suspected child abuse report

FADV defines the General Procedure for the appointment of a designated officer and for the reporting and management of suspected mistreatment, abuse or exploitation of girls, boys or vulnerable adults.

In particular, the procedure states that:

- Bancora Antonio, as Head of International Unit, Senior Manager Project Design and Development, Senior Manager Humanitarian Aid is appointed as **Focal point responsible for the protection of vulnerable children**. He is in charge of receiving and managing any reports of abuse on children and adolescents.

- Once he has received a report, the Focal point will initiate the **investigation procedure** to ascertain whether the alleged abuse has occurred and he will take any appropriate measures in consultation with the FADV management bodies.

Any alleged violation of the Policy must be reported and investigated in accordance with the Policy. Any violation of the Policy constitutes a disciplinary offence that may be sanctioned, in the most serious cases, even with the termination of the employment contract in accordance with the applicable labour legislation.

The procedural steps taken by the Focal point include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Collect information and documentation;
- 2) Conduct an internal investigation (including interviews with witnesses);
- 3) Temporarily remove the reported person from his/her activities, if related to projects with children and vulnerable adults, during the course of the investigation;
- 4) Inform the person concerned about the alerts that have been raised against him;
- 5) Give to the person involved the opportunity to present his or her version of the events before any determination of guilt or innocence is reached;
- 6) Ensure that the victim receives protection and psychological and socio-economic support (if and to the extent necessary);
- 7) Ensure that the person who issued the alert is kept informed of the progress of the activated procedure;



8) Where an offence is suspected, report the case to the appropriate Authority.

All persons to whom this Policy applies have an obligation to report abuse and no form of coercion, intimidation or retaliation against them is tolerated, even when providing information or assistance in an investigation.