



SHAPLANEER = Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support

Safeguarding Policies for Children and Youths

## **Chapter 1 Objectives**

SHAPLA NEER = Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support (hereinafter Shapla Neer) works to realize a society where potential abilities of all people flourish through activities both overseas and in Japan aimed for solving various issues as symbolized by the North-South divide, especially issues occurring in the lives of the poor in South Asia, as described in Article 3, "Purpose" of the statute of Shapla Neer. Under the slogan "Leave no one behind," a promise to express our mission, we have set "Protecting Children's Rights" as one of the three pillars of our work to realize a society where no one is left behind and free from poverty.

All adults are responsible for ensuring all children's birthrights, i.e. the "right to live," "right to grow," "right to be protected" and "right to participate." Shapla Neer works to help children in difficult situations regain the rights they are deprived of.

However, in reality, child abuse and child exploitation are found almost everywhere, and NGOs that are working for children's rights are not an exception. Child abuse and child exploitation can occur not only intentionally but also by negligence and carelessness. We have to understand the risks so as not to overlook the subtle signs from children.

This policy is established as one of the basic documents to guide our organizational development and implementation of our projects. This policy's objective is to clarify our basic value and demonstrating our commitment to protecting children and youths from any kind of harm, that is, the risk of abuse, exploitation and danger, by our staff or related parties, in our activities. This policy is applicable not only to those under 18 years old who are defined as children in the United Nations "Convention on the Rights of the Child," but also to youths between 18 and 24 years old, bearing in mind the joint work with the members of Shapla Neer Youth team and others.

This policy shall be reflected in our rules and guidelines and used in combination with the attached document, "Code of Conduct on Safeguarding for Children and Youths." Necessary guidelines will be established for procedures and processes to ensure the implementation of this policy.

## **Chapter 2 Scope of Application**

This policy is applied to persons described below at any time, regardless of

business hours, whether in public or private.

- Shapla Neer staff (All staff members in Japan and other countries, regardless of employment status)
- Board members, Auditors and Members of Advisory Board
- Related persons of Shapla Neer: Persons related to activities conducted in the name of Shapla Neer, such as interns, volunteers and advisers. Those members and supporters of Shapla Neer and the press who visit its project sites.
- Partner organizations: Related persons such as members of the staff, board members and volunteers of the organizations that have official contract or cooperate with Shapla Neer on the project where they may have contact with children and youths. This policy is not applied to the organizations that have appropriate policies of their own regarding safeguarding or protection of children and that officially agreed to follow them at the time of concluding a contract with Shapla Neer.

### **Chapter 3 Statement**

We, at Shapla Neer, treat every child and youth with respect for their dignity and their value as an irreplaceable existence without distinction of any kind, such as age, gender/sexual orientation/gender identity, disability, ethnicity, race, language, religion, beliefs, national or social origin, or membership in a particular organization.

Whenever a problem threatening the rights of children or youths arises, we prioritize the best interests of children and youths in handling the problem.

We respect and make efforts to protect the “right to live,” “right to be protected,” “right to grow,” and “right to participate” described in the “Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

Shapla Neer and the officers, staff members and related persons of Shapla Neer build safe and protected environments for children and youths by understanding and implementing the “Organizational Responsibilities” and “Individual Responsibilities” described below.

Shapla Neer will promote these efforts together with those organizations and individuals who are in cooperation with us. We will urge people, community and society surrounding children and youths to work for safeguarding of children and youths.

## Chapter 4 Organizational Responsibilities

As an organization, Shapla Neer is responsible for the following:

### <Prevention>

- Inform all Shapla Neer staff, board members and other related persons of this policy, educate them about its content and ensure that they understand and abide by each individual's role and responsibility.
- Establish a system to implement this policy, formulate necessary guidelines etc., reflect this policy in documents such as a contract of employment and an agreement of the project, and inform the related persons of their content. Establishment of the system includes assignment of persons in charge, clarification of their duties and the development of a reporting system.
- Incorporate and reflect the implementation of the safeguarding when formulating organizational strategies, activity plans and budgets.
- When hiring staff members and interns, ensure that they understand this policy, including the code of conduct, and have them sign the pledge.
- Ensure that the staff, board members and related persons receive training on safeguarding of children and youths so that they can gain a clear understanding of why they need to protect children and fully understand the steps to report any concerns promptly.
- Prioritize the dignity of children and youths as well as their families and the communities in the use of any communication media and avoid as much as possible the risks in the activities at project sites, visits, communications and public relations.
- Conduct risk assessments from a safeguarding perspective of all projects and activities including emergency relief, and avoid or mitigate risks using all methods practically possible.
- In the contract with a partner organization that implements a project, specify the responsibility for safeguarding. For organizations that do not have their own guidelines for child safeguarding, compliance with this policy shall be included as a condition of forming a partnership. We will also provide training on safeguarding to partner organizations.
- Explain to, and gain understand of, children and youths involved in activities of Shapla Neer about safeguarding.

### <Consultation / Report>

- Establish a system that allows the staff and people involved in Shapla Neer's activities (including partner organizations and beneficiaries) can consult and

report safely and appropriately in a way practically possible when children and youths are suspected of being at risk of abuse, exploitation or danger.

- When receiving consultations and reports, take care to protect the whistleblower from further damage and unfair treatment.
- Treat whistleblowers from outside in the same way as those from inside the organization.
- The channel and process of consultation and report, as well as the procedure of investigation and reporting after receiving consultation and report are provided separately as “Procedures for consultation/reporting/informing, roles and flows” (hereinafter “Roles and Flows”).

#### <Response>

- When violation of this policy arises, Shapla Neer will respond to it promptly by following the process stipulated in "Roles and Flows," while setting a time limit and complying with the laws and regulations of the country concerned. Set up a response team and cooperate with related organizations such as partner organizations, as well as specialists including lawyers, the police, medical institutions and welfare service providers, if necessary.
- When abuse, exploitation or infringement of children's rights is suspected, confirm the safety of the victim, and if the safety is not confirmed, protect the victim as soon as possible, even before an official decision is made (for example, during an internal investigation). In doing so, the will of the victim shall be respected.
- Strictly respond to employees, board members and related persons who violate this policy, and take appropriate action based on the rules of employment, contracts, etc.

## **Chapter 5 Responsibilities of Individuals**

Shapla Neer staff, board members and related persons are obliged to:

- Do their best to contribute to establishing an environment where children and youths feel that their rights are respected and that they are empowered, safe and protected.
- Comply with this policy including the attached document, “Code of Conduct on Safeguarding.”
- Report to or consult with appropriate staff members or board members, if children are feared to be in danger or if any suspected case is heard of.
- Follow the separately provided “Roles and Flows” at the time of consultation and

reporting.

## **Chapter 6 Record and Confidentiality**

Information collected through reports and investigations regarding safeguarding will be recorded as a written report. All the reports and correspondences regarding safeguarding must be stored appropriately and confidentially. In handling such documents, the safety and best interest of children and youths should always be the highest priority. Information that identifies children and youths will be shared only on the need-to-know basis.

## **Chapter 7 Monitoring and Accountability**

Secretary General will report to the board meeting on a quarterly basis regarding the progress of efforts to implement this policy. The board will confirm that safeguarding is being properly implemented and functioning. In addition, the annual report will include a report on the efforts for the purpose of record-keeping and ensuring accountability. We will also draw lessons from the practice and experience and use them to prevent further cases from occurring and strengthen measures.

## **Chapter 8 Terms and Definitions**

The terms used in this policy are defined as follows.

“Safeguarding of children and youths” means to endeavor not to cause any harm to children by the staff, board members and related persons and in activities, that is, to strive not to expose them to the risk of abuse, exploitation or danger. In case a concerning case threatening children’s safety occurs through activities, it shall be reported to the appropriate responsible organization and responded to as the responsibility of the organization.

“Children” means all people below 18 years old, based on the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. “Youths” means all people aged between 15 to 24 years old, as defined by the United Nations. That is to say, “Children and youth” means every person between 0 to 24 years old. It does not mean that all people above 18 years old have mature ability to cope with any issue, but they are often excluded from official support and protection from governments, and the

responsibilities required for them increase. It is considered that specific protection is needed for those young people and that special consideration should be given to them that is different from that for younger children and the older adults.

“Commercial exploitation of children” means exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but is not limited to, child labor.\*

“Sexual exploitation” means a form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending children, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol. Although perpetrators sometimes claim that there was consent, the abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim’s options are limited and therefore it is deemed that the victim did not consent to it.\*

#### About “Abuse”

- Physical abuse: Actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. It may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning and burning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or caregiver fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.\*
- Sexual abuse: Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This is not limited to penetrative acts. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.\*
- Emotional abuse: Persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child’s emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying, threatening, scaring, discriminating and ridiculing.\*
- Neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child’s healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled child.\*

\* Definitions by Keeping Children Safe, an NGO specializing in safeguarding

## **Chapter 9      Review and Revision of Policy**

This policy and attached documents are reviewed along with other regulations and activity guidelines at the timing of the formulation of a mid-term vision. However, if new issues related to safeguarding are identified and need to be addressed, a revision can be made as they arise. The revision or abolition of this policy will be resolved by the board meeting and reported at the general assembly.

## **Chapter 10    Related Documents**

The following documents will be prepared as Annex to this policy.

- Code of Conduct on Safeguarding/Pledge
- Procedures for consultation/reporting/informing, roles and flows
- Risk analysis table

This policy shall come into effect on 20th November, 2020.

End

SHAPLA NEER = Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support  
Code of Conduct on Safeguarding for Children and Youths

As an employee/inter /board member/related person of Shapla Neer, I pledge to act in accordance with the following norms, in public or private:

I do not do the following:

- Hit children and youths or physically hurt them by violence.
- Give corporal punishment to children and youths.
- Have sexual or physical relationships with children and youths who are involved in the activity.
- Create a situation where children and youths are vulnerable to abuse.
- Use inappropriate language before children and youths, or take insulting or aggressive attitudes or actions.
- Hurt children psychologically by embarrassing or looking down on them.
- Engage children and youths who are beneficiaries of the activity into any form of sexual relationships and activities.
- Discriminate against specific children and youths, treat them by favor or differently from other children, or exclude them from the group.
- Personally contact or try to reach out to children who are involved in the activity.

When dealing with children and youths, I behave as follows:

- Treat every child and youth with respect for their dignity and their value as an irreplaceable existence without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- We help children and youths understand their rights and, depending on their age, maturity and development of abilities, participate in decision-making and discuss if there is any concern.
- When working with children and youths, try to avoid a place without others' eyes as much as possible.
- I will not invite only children and youths to private places such as homes and hotels without their parents, except when they are in urgent risk of injury or danger.
- I do not sleep in the same room as children and young people participating in the activity. However, this does not apply in exceptional circumstances with the prior permission of the responsible officers such as Director, Country Representative, Secretary General.

When communicating with children and youths, or using the social media, I keep the following in mind.

- Use computers, mobile phones, cameras, etc. and social media properly, and never infringe upon the rights of children and youths.
- Before taking a picture, explain how to use the photo or video and obtain the consent of the person and the guardian of the child.
- When using photos and videos, make sure that children and youths are not in a provocative posture that are associated with sexual acts and children and youths are clothed properly.
- When using images, videos and texts, make sure that information that identifies individuals is not leaked.
- Do not ask unnecessary questions about past experiences. Be careful when it is necessary for investigations, etc., and do not force them to talk about things they do not want to.

To prevent exploitation and abuse, I will comply with the following:

- I do not hire children as a household servant or to make them do other labors.
- I comply with laws related to child labor and other relevant laws in each country.
- I will promptly respond to concerns and reports regarding exploitation and abuse of children and youths, and violations of safeguarding guidelines, in accordance with “Roles and Flows.”
- I will disclose all allegations and criminal records related to child exploitation and abuse to Shapla Neer, whether before or after being involved in Shapla Neer's activities.

End

Date:

Name: