



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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1. VENTO DI TERRA

Vento di terra is a non-discriminating non-governmental organization that works in the border territories defending human rights.

Together with interventions aimed at helping children in distress, abandoned or victims of abuses, VdT supports programs of emergency relief and sustainable development in the field of education, protection, livelihood, women empowerment, vocational training, strengthening of local communities, rehabilitation of schools and water and sanitation facilities.

Our mission:

Our mission is to defend unconditionally the rights of the weakest and the balance of our planet. VDT combines energies to spread a culture of peace, defend human rights and the environment, and giving citizenship to childhood, when it has been violated, especially where violence, weapons and exploitation prevail. We are committed to the idea of community development related to the concept of social, economic and cultural growth, and our projects always come from a proposal by the local community.

2. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Child or children: Anyone under 18 years of age.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 'abuse' VdT intends to prevent can be defined as follows:

Child abuse:

Anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of safe, dignity and healthy development into adulthood.

Emotional abuse:

Any humiliating or degrading treatment such as bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.

Exploitation:

Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labor and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical, mental health, education, spiritual, moral and social-emotional development.

Neglect and negligent treatment:

Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, for example by failing to provide adequate food, clothing and/or shelter; failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Physical abuse:

The use of physical force that causes actual or likely physical injury or suffering (e.g., hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture).

Sexual abuse/Sexual exploitation:

All forms of sexual violence, including incest, early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography, and sexual slavery. Child sexual abuse also may include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child and showing children pornographic material. Sexual Exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting economically, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. The sexual exploitation of a child who is under the age of consent is child sexual abuse and a criminal offense.

CoC: Code of Conduct

CPP: Child Protection Policy

CRC: Convention of the Rights of the Child

CP FP: Child Protection Focal Point

MOU: Memorandum of Understanding

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

VdT: Vento di Terra

3. SCOPE

This policy applies globally to all Vento di Terra Employees and related personnel both during and outside normal working hours. All representatives of Vento di Terra, including local partners, during project visits involving children are required to adhere to the CPP to make sure they will adopt a proper and fair behavior with the children of the projects and, more generally, comply with the rules of that document.

Compliance with the CPP guidelines is mandatory for local and international partners. Not acting in accordance with the CPP of VdT is a good reason for automatic rescission of the MOU / partnership agreement / contract.

Any person that comes in contact with children in the context of a Vento di Terra project (journalists, researchers, members of partners organizations, travelers, volunteers, donors, etc.) must comply with the CPP.

4. PURPOSE OF CPP

The CPP, in line with values and principles of Vento di Terra and in particular with the paragraph 2.11 - Protection of minors of Vento di Terra's Code of Ethics and conduct, establishes practical common base principles and rules to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children who benefit from VdT field work. The document aims to ensure the safety of all children beneficiaries of a VdT project and to prevent all forms of possible abuse from VdT or partners' staff.

It is also a first step to harmonize the approach and work of VdT in the field, with regard to the well-being and safety of children beneficiaries of its interventions, and a starting point for making partners aware of the need of ensuring an open and safe approach in dealing with children.

Moreover the CPP supplies the NGO with ad hoc simple and clear procedures to refer to in order to prevent child abuses and react promptly should an abuse occur to one of the children beneficiaries of VdT projects.

4.1 Guiding principles

Being aware that the risk of child abuse – in all its forms – may occur everywhere, in any context, VdT finds it essential to set forth in a Child Protection Policy document the principles, rules and procedures that make children beneficiaries of its projects feel always safe and enable the NGO to promptly react to any kind of violence against a child.

VdT is committed to ensure protection for all children regardless of their nationality, religion, ethnicity or gender.

Art.3 of the CRC is the inspiring principle of VdT Child Protection Policy: the superior interest of the child must guide any and every choice and action of the NGO.

The present CPP consequently aims at defining minimum standards to ensure well-being and safety of children beneficiaries of VdT field projects.



We are also aware of the harm careless communication strategies can cause to a child. We have a responsibility to the children we represent to tell their stories in a responsible and ethical manner. The child's best interest should always be our primary consideration. We work with some of the world's most vulnerable children and communities. We want people to be motivated to support Vento di Terra's work. To do this, we need to show the injustice children face in a way that creates an emotional response and compels people to act to make the world a better place for children. However, in doing so we must respect the dignity and humanity of the children we serve and we must not exploit their situation in order to raise funds or attract attention for our cause.

Children and young people have the same rights of adults. In addition, they have the right to be protected from harm. Reporting on children and young people carries this added dimension and restriction, especially in the current era when it is nearly impossible to limit a story's reach. This document is also meant to support the best intentions of ethical reporting – serving the public's interest for truth without compromising the rights of children.

5. RULES OF CONDUCT

The Code of Ethics and Conduct is an agreement signed by VdT and its staff, its partners and visitors as well as all people getting in contact with the children involved in the projects.

The Code describes a behavioral model that VdT finds appropriate to build a relationship between adults and children.

5.1 Responsible use of power and position

1. Each position should be used only for the benefit of the organization when dealing with government officials, donors, sponsors, suppliers and other people affiliated to VdT. Conflict of interest arising from personal interests and/or obligations will be avoided.
2. As a person in authority, never use the position for your own benefit or for the benefit of your own family or friends.
3. Never enter into any sort of business relationship on behalf of Vento di Terra with family members, friends or other personal contacts for the supply of any goods or services to VdT.
4. The employment of relatives, spouses and partners of existing employees and board members is strongly discouraged.
5. Never ask for or invite any personal payment, service or favor from others, especially participants in VdT services, in return for our help, support, goods or services of any kind. Never accept bribes or significant gifts (except small tokens of appreciation) from governments, participants in VdT services, donors, suppliers or others which have been offered as a result of my employment.
6. When involved in local political, religious, or community activities, ensure that VdT's mission and objectives are not compromised, and that VdT are not brought into disrepute.
7. Never work under the influence of intoxicating substances such as alcohol or any other substances that significantly impair the ability to work.
8. Ensure good and constructive working relationships with all co-workers. Never allow any personal relationships with the co-workers to have a negative impact on the work, other co-workers or the working environment in general. Any intimate personal relationship with the line-manager, or a co-worker in the same team, should be declared.

5.2 What VdT staff, partners and visitors getting in contact with children are required to do

- ✓ Treat them always respectfully and recognize them as rights holders;

- ✓ Never violate their rights;
- ✓ Approach children according to their context;
- ✓ Work with children on the base of a mutual relationship of respect and confidence;
- ✓ Promote and stimulate children's abilities and potential;
- ✓ Take children's point of view in high consideration and respect their opinion;
- ✓ Make children always aware of their rights;
- ✓ Take care of children's environment ensuring their safety and wellbeing;
- ✓ Encourage children to express themselves freely;
- ✓ Make sure that there is a witness when working with children;
- ✓ Avoid any ambiguous situation that may put him/her at risk of denounce;
- ✓ Prevent high risk situations and react promptly in case an abuse may occur.

5.3 What VdT staff, partners and visitors getting in contact with children must avoid to do

- ✓ Adopt any corporal punishment;
- ✓ Humiliate, discriminate children or treat them scornfully;
- ✓ Have any sexual relation with children;
- ✓ Behave with children and / or have any physical contact that may be considered inappropriate or lamentable according to their culture;
- ✓ Organize activities that may put children at risk of abuse;
- ✓ Build a relationship with children that may represent an abuse or even a form of exploitation;
- ✓ Use a language or adopt a behavior that can be provocative to children;
- ✓ Not respect children's privacy;
- ✓ Be aware or even take part in activities that can put children at risk;
- ✓ Take pictures or videos that may put children at any risk;
- ✓ Spend the night together with a child;
- ✓ Spend too much time exclusively with a single child of the project excluding the others;
- ✓ Host one of the children of the project at home and exploit him/her in any way (child labor....);
- ✓ Stay in a room alone with children with the door closed;
- ✓ Isolate yourself with a child;
- ✓ Put a child in a confined space and/or apply painful or noxious condition;
- ✓ Refuse biological necessities as a means of punishment;
- ✓ Criticize a child rather than the child's actions;
- ✓ Adopt any practice which instill fear or use fear or practices which cause a child to feel alienated as a means of controlling a child;
- ✓ Expose a child to material that contains adult concepts or themes that are inappropriate to the child's age.

5.4 In case of reporting from a child

- ✓ Any abuse (suspected or confirmed) must be treated seriously.
- ✓ Any person working for VdT has the responsibility to inform his/her line manager any time he/she is concerned with children's safety and well-being.
- ✓ The report must be treated confidentially and seriously.
- ✓ The child must be heard according to his/her needs.
- ✓ The child must not be forced nor influenced while giving his/her statement.
- ✓ Make the child aware of the importance of his/her statement.
- ✓ Protect the child by giving him/her all the needed psychological, medical, legal support.
- ✓ Avoid any contact between the accused person and the children .

5.5 In case of suspicion of abuse

When there is a complaint, concern or suspicion of harm perpetrated against a child who benefits from VdT programs or a child who is not directly involved in VdT activities, this needs to be handled in accordance with the procedures illustrated below (point 7).

6. PREVENTION

All Representatives of Vento di Terra on project visits involving children are required to adhere to the CPP to make sure they will adopt a proper and fair behavior with the children involved in the projects and, more generally, comply with the rules of that document. Once at the project, there should be a verbal presentation made to the guests regarding appropriate conduct.

In addition, to enable VdT promptly react in case of a child abuse, the following minimum procedures must be adopted at field level and included in the MOU signed by the partner (should the partner already have a CPP or ad hoc reporting procedure, the following measures can be adapted and / or substituted by those of the partner):

- ✓ Children's rights must be clearly reported and available to everyone.
- ✓ Children must be made aware of their right to be safe from abuse.
- ✓ Posters and leaflets must be put in strategic places to make it clear that behaviors such as bullying, racist language or threatening are unacceptable.
- ✓ Children must be made aware of what child abuse is thanks to ad hoc material that explains it – in a child friendly manner.
- ✓ A reference person must be clearly identified within the organization and children can refer to him/her easily.
- ✓ Children have to know very well who the reference person is and how to refer to her/him in case of concern
- ✓ The reference person in charge of dealing with complaints must receive ad hoc training in order to adopt appropriate behavior when dealing with children in such confidential way.

To make staff, volunteers, partners and others aware of the problem of child abuse in all its forms, VdT delegations in the field and/or partner organizations are required to organize ad hoc trainings according to the available resources.

The training must be planned according to time, strategy and available resources of VdT all over the world on the base of their official commitment.

6.1 Staff recruitment

Recruitment contracting as well as evaluation procedures must refer to the CPP and the Code of Ethics and Conduct as well as to the CRC.

Should a candidate not fulfill the requirements of those documents, VdT has the right to reject his/her candidacy.

a. Selection

The interviewer must conduct an individual interview focusing on previous experiences with children

To minimize the possibility of children being abused by staff people, VdT and its partners must include in their recruitment procedures at headquarter level as well as in the field, at least:

- Ad hoc questions to check the suitability of candidates to work with children.
- The request of at least two suitable references for all candidates who are supposed to cover positions who have regular contacts with children, evidence of identity and any relevant qualifications.

- A background check on the criminal record.

b. Contracting

Acknowledgement of VdT Code of Ethics and Conduct and CPP is compulsory while signing a contract with VdT.

6.2 Appropriate logistics arrangements

Activities of VdT will occasionally imply local and/or international travel. It is paramount to ensure that arrangements related to travel take care of the safety of involved children:

- Activities will be organized taking into account school-related requirements and calendars.
- A parent/legal guardian will accompany the child who is under-aged for travelling alone to long-distance intra-national or international destinations.
- Travel and pick-ups will be arranged for children under-aged travelling to short-distance intra-national destinations.
- Internal local transport (e.g., from activity venue to hotel) will be supervised by a VdT human resource.
- Social activities outside the program will be organized in groups and supervised by a VdT human resource.

6.3 Safety in online spaces

Some VdT's activities may require minors to use the internet and/or to connect with other people online. It's important to keep in mind that online spaces may be harmful to children, where they could be subjected to abuse, bullying or grooming. To avoid that it's important to keep in mind some general guidelines:

- Always make sure that children have an adult to supervise them when they need to use online spaces
- If you're planning to use the internet to provide or host activities that involve direct interaction with children online, you will need written consent for children to be involved. You should get this from parents/legal guardians and the children themselves as appropriate.
- Explain exactly what the activity is, why it needs to happen online and what the benefits and risks are.
- Do not accept friend requests on their personal social media accounts from children and families they work with (best practice);
- Make sure the children, young people, staff and volunteers know who to talk to if they see or hear anything upsetting or inappropriate in online spaces.

7. REPORTING PROCEDURES

7.1. Determining whether you need to make a report

Concerns and reports may be received from a number of sources – including VdT's human resources, partners' staff, volunteers, children and families/community members. Cases that need to be reported may differ, for example:

- A child or adult might make a direct allegation of abuse by a child.
- A child or adult might tell you they're uncomfortable with a child's behavior. They may not realize the behavior is abusive.
- A member of staff or volunteer might observe behavior that gives cause for concern and make a report following VdT's safeguarding procedures.
- VdT's staff may be informed that a child is the subject of an investigation as potential victim of abuse.
- A child might tell you they have harmed someone else or are at risk of doing so.

In any case all concerns and reports must be taken seriously. However, unless abuse has been proved to occur, it is recommended to consider the reported facts as “alleged incident”

7.2. Reporting procedures

In case of acts of child harm involve VdT’s personnel, partner’s staff or other NGOs’ workers, the complaint or incident suspicion/concern must be reported to the CP Focal Point (FP) within 24 hours from when the suspicion/concern arises. The CP FP will work with VdT concerned human resources to determine the necessary appropriate action.

A Complaint/Incident Reporting Form (Annex 1) should be filled in as soon as possible and submitted to the CP FP.

8. COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING CHILDREN

- Do not harm any child. Avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental or insensitive to cultural values, that place a child in danger or expose a child to humiliation, or that reactivate a child’s pain and grief from traumatic events.
- Ensure that the child and guardian know they are talking with a reporter. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.
- Assess any potential risks to the child or children, including: reprisals, stigmatization, rejection or attacks by family or communities, legal prosecution, misguided or malicious attempts by outsiders to “rescue” the child from a difficult situation.
- No staging: Do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history. Do not ask children to promote products contributed by corporate supporters.
- Obtain permission from the child and her or his guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and understand they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually ensured only if the permission is obtained in the child’s language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the child trusts.
- Pay attention to where and how the child is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to make certain that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including pressure from the interviewer. In film, video and radio interviews, consider what the choice of visual or audio background might imply about the child and her or his life and story. Ensure that the child will not be endangered or adversely affected by showing their home, community or general whereabouts.
- If a child discloses bad practice during an interview (such as abuse, criminal activity or a violation of VdT policy), the person carrying out the interview should know the local procedures for reporting this. Staff should also be familiar with VdT’s CoC.
- No payments or any other form of compensation are to be provided to children or parents in exchange for their interview, photo or consent.

9. COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ON CHILDREN

- ✓ Do not further stigmatize any child. Avoid categorizations or descriptions that expose children to negative reprisals – including additional physical or psychological harm, or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities.
- ✓ Always provide an accurate context for the child’s story or image.
- ✓ Do not give any information that could lead to a child being identified or traced. For example, if the child is from a small village, it might be easy for the child to be identified by another villager. Provide the region or district where the child lives, rather than naming the village. Do not name the school the child attends. Use first names only.
- ✓ Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:
 - a) A victim of sexual abuse or exploitation,
 - b) A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse,
 - c) Charged or convicted of a crime,
 - d) A current or former child combatant,
 - e) HIV positive, living with AIDS or has died from AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent,
 - f) Or any child who does not wish to be named and identifiable, or whose parent/guardian does not wish the child to be named and identifiable.
- ✓ Always change the name and consider obscuring the visual identity of a child identified as:
 - a) An asylum seeker, a refugee or an internally displaced person,
 - b) A beneficiary of VdT’s domestic programs,
 - c) Orphaned, abandoned or separated from parents/guardians. In the case of orphans, please be sure to mention when they are in the care of relatives or guardians.
- ✓ Do not change a child’s identity when it is important to the child and the story
In certain cases, using a child's identity – name and/or recognizable image – is in the child’s best interests. However, when a child's identity is used, he/she must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatization or reprisals. Some examples of these special cases are:
 - a) When a child initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise his/her right to freedom of expression and to have his/her opinion heard.
 - b) When a child is part of a sustained program of activism or social mobilization and wants to be so identified.
 - c) When a child is engaged in a psychosocial program and is claiming his/her name and identity as a part of his/her healthy development.
 - d) When a child has died and the parent/guardian wants the child’s name to be used in order to raise awareness of a problem or change policy.
- ✓ When changing a child’s name to protect their identity, ask them at the time of the interview what name they would prefer to be known as. If the child does not state a preference for a certain name, work with someone from the community to select a name that is culturally appropriate given the child’s gender, ethnicity, religious background, etc. Whenever possible, choose a name that is short and easily pronounced/understood by an audience that may be unfamiliar with the child’s culture.
- ✓ Confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.
- ✓ When in doubt about whether a child is at risk, report on the general situation for children rather than on an individual child, no matter how newsworthy the story.
- ✓ Do not invent a tragic future the child may face “if we don’t help”. If the child’s image or story are to be used in this way, the child and parent or guardian must see the creative treatment and give additional consent.