

Introduction

Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland (Kinderpostzegels) is an organisation working for children's development. It supports children that are in, or at risk of becoming involved in, abusive, exploitative and dangerous situations. Kinderpostzegels works together with project partners. In most of their projects, adults come into direct contact with children.

The standard for children's rights and protection against harm is written down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The Convention demands that, in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child are the primary consideration (Article 3). According to the Convention, child abuse can be physical, emotional and sexual and can also include neglect, exploitation and harassment. Child abuse can occur in all societies, in all cultures and organisations. Any kind of abuse should be prevented or brought to a stop as soon as possible.

Kinderpostzegels has developed a Child Protection Policy with a Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children to serve as minimum standards for its projects: measures to promote well-being and safety for the optimal development of children. The Code of Conduct provides clarity on what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the presence of children.

The Policy and the Code of Conduct:

- define expectations when dealing with issues of child protection – providing guidance to staff and third parties;
- are a starting point for an open approach in promoting the well-being of children within the projects supported by Kinderpostzegels;
- are based on concepts from the Convention: taking the best interests of the child as the basis for all behaviour, promoting development of the child and preventing harm;
- are actively promoted by the staff of Kinderpostzegels and the project partners. Acting in contravention of the Policy and the Code of Conduct constitutes a reason for dismissal or termination of the contract;
- form part of the donor agreement and adherence is therefore a prerequisite for financial support.

Kinderpostzegels considers child abuse unacceptable (zero tolerance) in all circumstances and is committed to ensuring that, in all of its activities and those of its partners, all necessary steps are taken to protect the rights of children and to ensure their well-being. The Code of Conduct and the principles underlying it, are to be observed by all Kinderpostzegels staff, all project partner staff and those persons visiting projects for whatever reason, including volunteers, those persons providing any type of service or advice, reporters or journalists, and other representatives.

Kinderpostzegels and this Policy aim to raise awareness of child abuse; to prevent, denounce and react to child abuse through effective recruitment procedures, training staff on child protection matters, if necessary, and by developing an open and informed culture within the organisation.

Kinderpostzegels will not accept responsibility for abuse of or damage done to a child participating in a project of a partner. Kinderpostzegels will inform and help the management of the project partner to prevent and deal with child abuse.

1. Child abuse: definition

The universal categories of child abuse (see Article 19 of the Convention) are defined as follows and act as a reference for local environments:

Sexual abuse

Actual or threatened sexual exploitation of a child including all forms of sexual activity such as rape, incest and pornography.

Physical injury

Actual or threatened physical injury to any child or a failure to prevent physical injury or suffering.

Neglect

The failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger including cold or starvation, the failure to emotionally support a child, the failure to carry out important aspects of care resulting in impairment to the child's health or development.

Emotional abuse

Persistent or severe mental violence or rejection. All abuse involves a level of emotional ill-treatment.

Exploitation

Using a child for economic purposes, or for performing work that may be hazardous to or that interferes with the child's development. This includes educational programmes that focus on production rather than the acquisition of skills, asking children to perform excessive chores and tasks, asking children under the minimum employment age to perform paid work, and keeping a child out of an educational facility to perform other tasks.

2. Child protection strategies

Kinderpostzegels aims to create a protective environment for children in all areas of its work by raising awareness, empowering children, training staff in the prevention of child abuse and recognising the signs of child abuse and reporting and dealing with child abuse.

A. Raising awareness and prevention

Kinderpostzegels will ensure that relevant staff, project partners and others are aware of the problem of child abuse and child exploitation, the risks to children and the role and responsibility of staff and management in the prevention of child abuse. To this end, staff and project partners will be trained in child protection, if necessary, and as soon as possible. New staff will be required to read the Policy and Code of Conduct thoroughly and adhere to them. The Policy and Code of Conduct will be discussed in staff meetings on a regular basis. Kinderpostzegels encourages project partners to have open discussions about child protection matters. For this purpose, contact persons are appointed in Kinderpostzegels as well as in the partner-organisations.

Kinderpostzegels requires its project partners to sign its Code of Conduct. Project partners are encouraged to draft their own policy which allows a more detailed approach. If available, Kinderpostzegels likes to receive a copy of their own child protection policy. If a concern or a specific incident is reported to Kinderpostzegels, and partners have their own child protection policy which conflicts with the Policy of Kinderpostzegels, or with articles of that policy, the best interest of the child is the main consideration for any actions undertaken. Kinderpostzegels can provide assistance to the project partner in implementing a child protection policy.

Recruitment and selection procedures for relevant staff or volunteers should include questions and checks on suitability for working with children, the applicant's criminal record (national laws allowing) and checking job history and references.

Staff and project partners are encouraged to share any concerns they have concerning child safety and development with the responsible management.

B. Reporting, protection and response

Kinderpostzegels encourages its own staff, the staff of project partners and others to know what steps to take when concerns arise regarding the safety of a child. There are different reporting levels:

a) At the level of the project partners

When child abuse occurs in a project implemented by a project partner of Kinderpostzegels, the reporting procedures set out in the policy of the project partner should be followed. If such procedures have not been set out or there is no policy, general complaints procedures can be followed or information can be given to the management. The management of the project partner should always immediately inform Kinderpostzegels about the child abuse and the steps that the management of the project partner has taken to deal with it.

If, for any reason, reporting to the management of the project partner is not possible, concerns should be reported directly to Kinderpostzegels (see procedure below).

b) At the level of Kinderpostzegels

For activities implemented by Kinderpostzegels itself the reporting procedure of Kinderpostzegels should be followed. If, for any reason, reporting to the management of the project partner is not possible, concerns should be reported directly to Kinderpostzegels.

Kinderpostzegels management and the management of the project partner should respect the following principles:

- Take any concern raised seriously;
- Take steps to ensure the protection of the child who is the subject of concern;
- Support children, staff or others who raise the concern;
- Act appropriately and effectively. Communicate to staff and others that they should not start an investigation or question anyone after an allegation or concern has been raised. This is the job of the management or the local authorities. Staff should just record the facts and report these to the management;
- Listen to the views and wishes of the child and take these seriously;
- Reports and information are to be treated with confidentiality;
- Always report properly.

3. Role of the management of Kinderpostzegels

Management in the Netherlands is responsible for the proper implementation of the policy throughout the organisation and appointed an Integrity Officer to perform the necessary activities. All individuals, whatever their status and role, who come into contact with children must be fully informed about this policy. Records of staff training should be compiled and filed for subsequent monitoring purposes and will, among other things, be used to determine the effectiveness of the policy implementation during evaluation.

When concerns about child abuse arise, management is to take a leading role in protecting the child, ensuring correct reporting and that the right course of action is taken. In all cases the “best interest of the child” is paramount.

Staff should be informed that in the case of any questionable behaviour that is incompatible with the Policy of Kinderpostzegels, the organisation will take measures against them. These measures may be administrative and/or legal.

The organisation also reserves the right to terminate the employment contract or any other contract.

4. Special role of programme officers at Kinderpostzegels

Programme officers are responsible for collecting the signed Codes of Conduct and supporting project partners in having a policy in their own organisations and for making sure that the content of that policy is in line with international standards. A copy of the policy of the project partner should be filed in the project administration system, as should the signed Kinderpostzegels Code of Conduct.

All project partners are required to sign the Kinderpostzegels Code of Conduct, in addition to the donor contract. Each project partner of Kinderpostzegels has to abide by the Kinderpostzegels Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Policy. If necessary, the programme officer will facilitate training on child protection for project partners.

Annex A) Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children

All project partner staff, Kinderpostzegels staff and third parties involved with Kinderpostzegels projects must follow these rules to prevent, stop and report any and all abuse to children in Kinderpostzegels projects.

For the purposes of this policy and reporting procedure, children are considered to be persons below the age of 18 years.

DOS:

1. Know about the existence and content of the Code of Conduct.
2. Treat children with respect regardless of race, gender, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability or other status.
3. Be aware of children's vulnerability to being abused – generally, the children taking part in Kinderpostzegels' projects are more vulnerable or already a victim – and be aware of your position.
4. Be aware of situations which may present risks (for example being alone with children at therapy sessions, taking films/photos or holding interviews for work purposes/reporting). You may only proceed if the situation is within the boundaries of this policy and after obtaining authorisation from management, parents/guardians (if known) and the child.
5. Plan and organise the work, workplace or visit to mitigate risks.
6. As far as possible, be visible when working with children or visiting children.
7. Participate in achieving a culture of openness to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
8. Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not stay unaddressed.
9. Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.
10. Empower children - discuss their rights with them - inform them about what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.
11. Report concerns or incidents of child abuse to the designated persons (see report procedure child abuse).

DON'TS:

1. Do not develop physical or sexual relationships with children or any other relationship that could in any way be deemed to be exploitative or abusive.
2. Do not act in a way that may be abusive, exploitative, physically or emotionally harmful or act in a way that places a child at risk of this.
3. Do not spend time alone with children away from others. This includes taking a child away from the project on its own or having meetings with a child on its own. If privacy is needed, other staff member(s) must be aware of what is going on and a door must be left open. In therapeutic situations, the door must contain a glass window through which others can observe what is going on.
4. Do not condone, or participate in, behaviour by children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
5. Do not behave in a manner that is physically inappropriate (for example fondle, hold, kiss or touch children in a culturally insensitive way) or behave sexually. Do not sleep in the same room or bed as the children.
6. Do not use corporal punishment or otherwise physically assault children.
7. Do not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.

8. Do not discriminate against, show unfounded differential treatment to, or favour particular children.
9. Do not let children do domestic or other work which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their education, or which places them at risk of injury.
10. Do not allow a child to be systematically neglected and do not fail to protect a child from any harm that you are aware of.
11. Do not abandon your professional distance by taking on a personal caring role such as by becoming a personal donor or a godparent.

Attention: Although many situations that can cause harm have been covered, the above-mentioned list is far from exhaustive. The main principle is to consider and act in the best interest of the child. In cases of doubt, contact a manager or other responsible staff member.

About photographs, videos/films, other images and messages

1. Obtain the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians before taking any photographs or films etc. and explain clearly for what purposes the material might be used.
2. Do not make promises to the child in return for images.
3. Take images of children that are dignified and respectful and that do not present them as victims or submissive.
4. Ensure that images cannot be interpreted as sexual or that they seem to condone any other situation of abuse.
5. Protect the safety and privacy of children and their families by carefully balancing the use of identifiable images in the media or on the internet, and do not use them in any way which reveals their location.
6. Images and messages may only be used with the consent of Kinderpostzegels Netherlands.
7. As well as observing this Code of Conduct, journalists, reporters, photographers, filmmakers and other media/marketing professionals must also observe the Kinderpostzegels guidelines on ethical reporting about children that are set out in Annex B.

Reporting procedure for child abuse

If you are concerned about the safety and welfare of a child, please immediately report this to the project management, or to Kinderpostzegels. Act immediately, because a child may be at risk of serious harm if you don't.

The contact details at Kinderpostzegels, for reporting concerns or incidents of child abuse are:

Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland
Integrity Officer and/or Safeguarding Officer
Schipholweg 97
2316 XA Leiden
The Netherlands

Phone +31 71 5259800
Email: hr@kinderpostzegels.nl

I,(name and surname)

hereby declare that I have received and taken note of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and I will observe this Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Policy of Kinderpostzegels.

.....(date).....(place)

(signature)

Annex B) Guidelines on ethical reporting about children

Guidelines for interviewing children

1. Do not harm any child; avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgemental, 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 about traumatic events.
2. Do not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, age, religion, status, educational background or physical abilities when choosing children to interview.
3. No staging: do not ask children to tell a story or do something that is not part of their own history.
4. Ensure that the child or guardian knows that they are talking to a reporter. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.
5. Obtain permission from the child and his/her guardian for all interviews, videotaping/ filming and, when possible, for documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. This always applies to individual photos and videos/films of children. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually only ensured if the permission is obtained in the child's own language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the child trusts.
6. Pay attention to where and how the child is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to ensure that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer. In video/film and radio interviews, consider what the choice of the visual or audio background might imply about the child and his/her life and story. Ensure that the child is not endangered or adversely affected by showing his/her home, community or general whereabouts.

Guidelines for reporting about children

1. Do not further stigmatise any child; avoid categorisations or descriptions that expose a child to negative reprisals - including additional physical or psychological harm, or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by his/her local community.
2. Always provide an accurate context for the child's story or image.
3. Always change the name and disguise the visual identity of any child who is identified as:
 - a. A victim of sexual abuse, exploitation or violence including domestic violence
 - b. A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse
 - c. HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent
 - d. Have been charged or convicted of a crime
 - e. A current or former child soldier.
4. In circumstances where there is a risk or potential risk of harm or retribution, change the name and disguise the visual identity of any child who is identified as an asylum seeker, a refugee or an internally displaced person.
5. In some special cases and as long as this is clearly explained to and approved of by the child and his/her guardian, and only when comparable with the examples below, using a child's identity (name and/or a recognisable image)- may be in the child's best interests. However, when the child's identity is used, he/she must still be protected against harm and supported against any stigmatisation or reprisals. Some examples of these special cases are:
 - a. When a child initiates contact with the reporter, because he/she wants to exercise the right to freedom of expression and the right to have his/her opinion heard

- b. When a child is part of a sustained programme of activism or social mobilisation and wants to be so identified
 - c. When a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and claiming his/her name and identity is part of a healthy development.
6. Confirm the accuracy of what the child has said, either from other children or an adult, preferably both.
 7. 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 is.
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I,(name and surname)

hereby declare that I have received and taken note of the Kinderpostzegels Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and the Guidelines on ethical reporting about children and will observe the policy of Kinderpostzegels.

.....(date).....(place)

(signature)