



## ACE Safeguarding Policy for Children and Youths

### 1. Objectives

The *purpose* (ultimate *raison d'être*) of ACE is: “Solving social problems which deprive the rights of the child and the youth, in order to create a world in which they can live their lives and participate in building a society of their own will.” We are also committed to “Children First” (putting children’s present and future as the first priority) as one of our *philosophies*. Thus, we conduct activities to ensure all adults be responsible for securing the rights of the child and for his/her life to be fruitful. Our activities are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which stipulates the child’s right to survival, protection, development and participation.

The ACE Safeguarding Policy defines the responsibilities of our organization, as well as board members, staff and concerned parties, to create an environment in which children and youths are neither exposed to any harm, including abuse and exploitation, nor deprived of any of their rights.

The aims of this Policy are stated as follows.

All concerned parties with ACE:

- understand their individual responsibilities and deal appropriately with any violation of the rights of the child and the youth.
- make utmost efforts to create an environment in which the rights of the child and the youth are protected, by reducing and eliminating risk factors in all our projects and operations.
- establish and maintain a system to raise awareness of the protection of the rights of the child and the youth, prevent the violation of their rights, and deal appropriately with problems, together with our local partners within Japan and abroad.

In addition to this Policy, “the ACE Code of Conduct Regarding the Safeguarding of Children and Youths” is used for its implementation, and “the ACE Guidelines Regarding the Safeguarding of Children and Youths” details the procedures and practices.

This Policy will be regularly reviewed and revised according to international standards and lessons learnt from our activities.

### 2. Fundamental Values

#### 1) Respecting the dignity of every person and equal rights

We recognize that “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth....., 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,” as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Any form of discrimination, inequality, and exclusion is unacceptable.

## **2) Respecting the rights of the child**

We recognize that children are able to actively exercise their rights, while also having the rights to special protection and support. We respect the child's right to survival, protection, development and participation stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Policy is implemented by placing the best interest of the child as a first priority.

## **3. Scope of Application**

This Policy applies to the following people.

- 1) ACE board members and staff (regardless of type of employment contract such as full-time and part-time)**
- 2) Concerned parties with ACE (those who conduct activities under the name of ACE such as interns and volunteers)**
- 3) Organizations and individuals, as well as their concerned parties under the official contract with ACE**
- 4) Other organizations and individuals, as well as their concerned parties, that are involved in ACE's activities (e.g. donors, supporters, journalists, celebrities, and politicians)**

1) ACE board members and staff are required to observe this Policy in both their public and private lives. Others, 2), 3), and 4) are required to observe this Policy when interacting with children and youths directly or indirectly in ACE's activities.

The scope of application of this Policy, i.e. 1), 2), 3) and 4) are referred to below as the parties concerned.

## **4. Principles**

This Policy is to be achieved by adhering to the following principles.

### **● Responsibilities of individuals**

All concerned parties involved in ACE's activities must understand this Policy and their individual responsibilities, and must not violate the rights of the child and the youth. In the case they find any violation or risk of violation of this Policy, they are required to report such violation or risk of violation to ACE and respond to the situation appropriately.

### **● Responsibility of the organization**

ACE has special responsibilities to protect the rights of children and youths involved in our all projects and operations. No harm should come to them directly or indirectly and intentionally or unintentionally. We are, in particular, responsible for vulnerable children and youths to protect them and ensure no harm comes to them. In the case any concern or problem regarding abuse, sexual exploitation, or violation of the rights of the child and the youth, arises, we will respond to the situation promptly and appropriately in order to mitigate the situation.

ACE, as a whole, promotes the implementation of this Policy to ensure the protection of the

rights of the child and the youth in all processes of management, programs, projects, and operations. Specifically, the measures include:

- screening during recruitment;
- disseminating information and providing training to the parties concerned to ensure their understanding of their responsibilities and roles;
- conducting risk assessment and devising measures for the reduction and elimination of risks at the time of planning all projects;
- monitoring and evaluation to prevent and protect against the violation of the rights;
- establishing a reporting mechanism;
- investigating all cases of concerns related to the violation of rights;
- providing protection and support to affected children and youths; and
- building a transparent decision-making system.

“The ACE Guidelines Regarding the Safeguarding of Children and Youths” specifies details of these implementation measures.

- **Cooperation with partner organizations to fulfill their responsibilities**

When ACE conducts projects, events, campaigns and other activities in cooperation with other organizations, we agree on the responsibilities to be assumed by each organization, in order to ensure the implementation of this Policy.

- **Open discussion and transparency**

ACE discusses any concern regarding the violation of the rights of the child and the youth openly, responds to the concern, and prevent any concern from arising in the future, in the case of any violation of their rights.

- **The best interests of the child and the youth**

ACE protects and ensure the safety of children and youths, placing their best interests as our first priority and taking into consideration their physical, psychological, and mental needs, in case of any violation of their rights.

- **Respecting the participation of children and youths and expressing their opinions**

ACE has the responsibility to provide children and youths with information regarding their rights to be protected from any threat to their security and safety and to ensure that they can exercise their rights. ACE enables children and youths to understand this Policy and its implementation measures, and how to report any violation of this Policy to ACE. When decisions on matters related to children and youths are made, we ensure that children and youths participate in the decision-making process and express their opinions, taking into consideration their age and developmental stage.

- **Accountability**

ACE aims to make our organization accountable to and reliable for children and youths, as well as their families, communities and societies, by continuously improving the implementation of this

Policy.

- **Confidentiality obligation**

Concerns regarding one's words and behaviors which are considered to violate the rights of the child and the youth, and all information collected by our investigation regarding the concern, are shared amongst the minimum number of parties concerned. All records are securely stored, abiding the confidentiality procedures determined by ACE.

- **Disciplinary action**

ACE conducts investigations and determines disciplinary action to a violator under the employment contract, in case of the violation of this Policy. The violator may be subjected to disciplinary actions, including disciplinary dismissal and cancellation of contracts and partnerships, or may be referred to the relevant law enforcement authority for investigation and be liable to punitive action under the law.

When a person reports a concern of the violation of the rights of the child and the youth but it is found not to be a violation, the person is not subject to any disciplinary measures. However, if a person reports a concern which is found to be a false accusation, or reports a concern with bad intentions, the person will be subject to disciplinary action according to their acts.

- **Promotion of this Policy**

Based on this policy, ACE promotes the creation of a safe environment for children and youths in wider communities and societies than our project areas, in cooperation with other organizations and individuals.

## 5. Definition of terms

**Safeguarding of Children and Youths** is the responsibility that organizations have to make sure their staff, operations, and projects do no harm to children, and take responsive measures when incidences of harming children arise. They have to protect children and youths related to the organizations from any violation of their rights, such as abuse and exploitation. Since children and youths have special needs, they need to be paid special attention, and be under special protection. Following this definition, ACE works to be an organization which ensures the safety of children and youths when they participate in projects and activities conducted by us and jointly with partner organizations. We take prompt and appropriate measures, when the safety and welfare of children and youths are at any risk, and continuously improve and maintain its system in order to protect and ensure the rights of the child and the youth.

**A child is** a person below the age of eighteen years, as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and **a youth** is a person aged between fifteen and twenty-four, as defined by the United Nations. Therefore, **children and youths** in this policy are meant to be those of the ages between zero and twenty-four.

**Sexual exploitation** means “any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.” (*Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, 2003*)

**Abuse** is any act of, intentionally or unintentionally, harming children and youths directly or indirectly, violating their safety and healthy growth. Forms of abuse are categorized into four, as below.

- ✓ **Physical abuse** refers to physical violence to the human body, to hurt or injure a person, or any act which could lead to it. (e.g. beating, kicking, slapping, throwing down, shaking severely, burning, drowning, strangling, female genital mutilation<sup>(1)</sup>, and torture)
- ✓ **Sexual abuse** refers to the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature. (e.g. having sexual intercourse, forcing to engage in sexual intercourse with others, touching or forcing to touch genitals, using a child for pornography, saying lewd words, showing sexual activities or pornography, and forcing to send nude self-portraits)
- ✓ **Psychological abuse** refers to words and behaviors that cause psychological trauma. (e.g. abusive words, dismissive attitude, looking down, humiliating, criticizing, threatening, forcing, discriminating, ignoring, and using violence against family members in the presence of the child, i.e. domestic violence)
- ✓ **Neglect** refers to not giving enough care or attention to the child (e.g. not providing food, clothing and shelter, confining a child in a house, leaving a child alone at home or in a vehicle for a long time, not keeping a child clean, and not taking a child to hospital)

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<sup>(1)</sup> Mutilation of a part of the female genitals. A custom mainly carried out in Africa, as a rite of passage.