



PIN Child Protection Policy

Introduction

People In Need (PIN) recognises that especially in situations of poverty, humanitarian crisis and/or conflict, children can be extremely vulnerable. Therefore, PIN acknowledges as its fundamental duty to protect children engaged within its programmes and activities from any forms of abuse and exploitation.

By determining PIN's commitment to protect children and setting the key thresholds of behaviour desired or unacceptable, this Policy has the following objectives:

- ◆ **To protect children** engaged in PIN's programmes from all forms of abuse and exploitation
- ◆ **To protect PIN staff** from false or malicious allegations of misconduct
- ◆ **To protect PIN's organisational integrity and reputation**, as well as that of its partners, by introducing sound Child Protection Policy that helps to deter from unacceptable behaviour

Terminology

Child means person under the age of eighteen (18) years as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Child protection is an activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly arising from child abuse or neglect.

Child abuse is the physical, sexual, emotional mistreatment or neglect of a child resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

For further descriptions of related terminology please refer to *Annex A – Forms of unacceptable behaviour, terminology*.

Policy statement and PIN commitments

PIN upholds the rights and obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ and so is dedicated to protect children engaged in its programmes from harm, exploitation and abuse. Accordingly, PIN is committed to implementing and maintaining child protection measures. These include:

- ◆ This Policy is introduced and further accessible to all new PIN staff and associates; regular refresher training is organized for PIN staff directly working with children.
- ◆ Analysis of child protection risks is included in PIN projects that involve direct engagement with children.
- ◆ Comprehensive child-safe recruitment is in place for personnel directly working with children (see details below).
- ◆ Reporting and responding procedures are in place for potential violation of this Policy.

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Monitoring and application of this Policy is the responsibility of all PIN staff, particularly the Country Directors, the senior managers, staff working with children and the Advisor for Child Protection. The management is responsible for the regular policy review and promotion among the target audience.

Standards of conduct and forms of unacceptable behaviour

Guidance for behaviour that should be observed by PIN staff and associates is described in the *PIN Code of Conduct* and other *Key PIN Policies*. By keeping in mind that behaviour and actions taken towards children need additional sensitivity, this Policy aims to complement the *PIN Code of Conduct* and highlight behaviour that should be observed and/or avoided **when in direct contact with children**.

Standards of conduct

- ◆ Treat children with dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, disability, or other status.
- ◆ When working in the proximity of children be visible and, wherever possible, ensure presence of another adult.
- ◆ Comply with all relevant legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour.
- ◆ While implementing PIN programmes that may affect children, allow them to be engaged in designing the action, listen to them.
- ◆ Raise voice (report) when having concerns about child's protection and safety.
- ◆ When collecting data from children (during assessments, monitoring and evaluation, etc.) reduce the risk of potential harm by using culturally appropriate ways of communication, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and not asking about painful experiences. If distressing data has to be obtained, try to use indirect data collection methods and be prepared to refer the distressed child to professional care.
- ◆ When getting and/or using **children's images** for visibility purposes (i.e. photographing or filming a child/children):
 - ▶ Comply with the standard approach as explained in the PIN Media Policy
 - ▶ Ensure that the products (e.g. photographs, films, videos) present children in a dignified and respectful manner, with children being adequately clothed and not in poses that could be misleading or seen as sexually suggestive
 - ▶ When taking an image of a particular child for a specific purpose (medialization, advocacy, fundraising, etc.), explain how the product will be used and for that obtain legitimate consent from the child, whenever possible also from a parent or guardian of the child
 - ▶ Ensure that images of children availed for public use do not reveal any identifying information

Forms of unacceptable behaviour

- ◆ Touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive manner (personnel in direct medical care positions are to follow International and/or local country industry best practice guidelines)
- ◆ Use language or demonstrate behaviour that is harassing, abusive, demeaning, sexually provocative, or culturally insensitive towards children
- ◆ Engage children in any form of activity that is demeaning, offensive, sexually provocative, abusive or culturally inappropriate or insensitive

- ◆ Physically assault or punish children
- ◆ Engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts
- ◆ Access child pornography through any medium
- ◆ Invite unaccompanied children without their and parent's or guardian's approval into solitary; places, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger
- ◆ Sleep in close proximity to unsupervised unrelated children
- ◆ Hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage and which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which puts them at risk of injury
- ◆ Exclude or favour a particular child

Reporting on child abuse

PIN strives to create an environment in which victims and persons concerned about the child's safety within PIN programmes feel free to report on it. PIN therefore requests all PIN staff and associates to report to PIN about any suspicion or disclosure of child abuse within PIN programmes.

- ◆ For feedback and complaints that can come from beneficiary communities, PIN has in place a functional **Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM)**.
- ◆ For cases of reporting from PIN staff or associates, utilize the whistleblowing mechanism as described in the *PIN Whistleblowing Policy*.

All incidents must be recorded and managed in accordance with the relevant investigation procedures and standards.

Responding to child abuse allegations

While PIN takes all allegations of child abuse extremely seriously, at the same time will employ the presumption of innocence while pending an official investigation of the incident. All allegations must be thoroughly investigated. Specific steps that should be reminded and taken into account while investigating child abuse allegations are:

During the investigation process:

- ◆ All efforts will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and rights of the victim and accused person and information related to the incident will only be shared on a "need to know basis", but where allegations will amount to a violation of laws of a respective country, privacy will no longer be applicable unless deemed necessary to uphold the rights of the victim.
- ◆ The views of the alleged child victim will be considered in light of the documented evidence and that children rarely lie about abuse.
- ◆ The accused person will be always given an opportunity to express their views/opinions/version of the facts.
- ◆ Where appropriate in investigations, PIN will obtain the legal advice and/or advice from any responsible authorities.

- ◆ If appropriate (e.g. the incident involves a breach of this Policy), the accused person may be suspended pending an investigation.

Where the incident is proven to have occurred:

- ◆ Appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken, including, but not limited to: (a) warning; and/or, (b) suspension; and/or (c) dismissal. The disciplinary measure will depend on the nature and severity of the offence.
- ◆ Where the allegation involves a violation of either the laws of the country in which the incident occurs, or the laws of the Czech Republic or the country where the accused person is a citizen, the incident will be immediately reported to the appropriate authorities and the person will be suspended from employment pending an investigation.

Where an allegation is found to be false or unfounded, all efforts will be taken to ensure the rights of the accused person is upheld.

Recruitment of personnel working with children

PIN will not knowingly employ or engage in its programmes, and especially in those including regular and direct engagement with children, persons that could pose a risk to children. PIN will also respect a local applicable legislation.

Candidates applying for **positions that will include regular direct and/or unsupervised work with children** will be – before being appointed by PIN – checked as follows:

- ◆ Two verbal reference checks with former employers / professional referees
- ◆ Selected applicants will provide written disclosure regarding whether they haven't been charged with child exploitation offences in the past (see Annex C)
- ◆ **In projects addressing the child protection and child rights issues**, the candidate should preferably have a specific qualification in a childcare, psychological or social field

Analysing risks to children in PIN programmes

Prior to commencement of activities involving children, PIN will analyse potential risks to children that can arise as part of the implementation of PIN programmes. These activities can include training attended by children, working in hospitals or schools, data collections including discussions with children etc.

In case risks to children were identified, the project team shall prepare an action plan that will address those risks with the aim to reduce them as much as possible. **In case risks cannot be reduced** to the required level and the project activities would cause harm to children, then the project team shall bring this issue to the country programme management that should decide whether further measures can be taken in order to address the risk(s). **Activities that would harm children must not be carried out.**

Annex I.

Disclosure on child exploitation offences

I, signed below, hereby declare that I have never been charged with child exploitation offences.

Name:

Date:

Place:

Signature: