



# Mirror Foundation

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## Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct

*...for Volunteers, Interns, Groups and  
External Visitors*



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# 1. Child Safe

## 1.1 Commitment to protect children

The Mirror Foundation (TMF) is committed to the wellbeing of the children with whom it works with and their protection from abuse and exploitation. TMF endorses and supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In particular, for the purposes of this policy statement, TMF endorses article 19, which says that ‘State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child’.

## 1.2 Duty of care

It is the Mirror Foundation’s duty of care to take whatever steps are reasonable and practical to protect the well-being of the already vulnerable communities of children with whom we work. The aim of this policy is to promote good practice, providing children with appropriate safety/protection whilst providing support for volunteers, and external groups to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

## 1.3 Definition of a ‘child’

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (Children’s Act 1989; CROC 1991)

## 1.4 When and to whom this policy applies

This policy applies to all Mirror Foundation volunteers, intern students, groups and external visitors *at all times*; both during and outside normal working hours when they are representing the agency.

## 1.5 What is child abuse and neglect?

Child abuse is a global problem that is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social problems. Types of abuse, exploitation and neglect, include, but are not limited to the following; physical, emotional, sexual, neglect and social (Benson & King, 2006).



The Thailand Child Protection Act (2003) defines ‘abuse’ as: ‘any commission or omission of acts which cause the deprivation of freedom of, or mental or physical harm to, a child; sexual abuses committed against a child; inducement of a child to act or behave in a manner which is likely to be mentally or physically harmful to the child, unlawful or immoral, regardless of the child’s consent’. Further, ‘neglect’ is defined as ‘the failure to care for, nurture or develop a child in accordance with the minimum standards as stipulated in ministerial regulations, to such an extent that it appears likely to be harmful to the child’s physical and mental well-being’.

## 1.6 Common myths about child abuse and neglect

- Strangers are the biggest threat to children
- Women never abuse children
- Child abusers are always ‘dirty old men’
- Boys are not really at risk of being abused
- Most abuses are unintentional and happen on the spur of the moment
- Child abuse is not a problem in my community – it happens somewhere else

(Child Safe Organisations, 2006).

## 2. Mirror Foundation Child Safe Policy for Volunteers, Interns and External Groups

### 2.1 Policy statement

**Mirror Foundation is committed to the following:**

- the welfare of the child is paramount
- all children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in any activity in a fun and safe environment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately



- all Mirror Foundation volunteers will be recruited with regard to their suitability, and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures

## **2.2 Recruitment and volunteering :**

*The Mirror Foundation is committed to child safe recruitment, selection and screening practices.*

*These practices aim to recruit the safest and most suitable people to work in our programs.*

- All volunteer advertisements refer to TMF's child safe policy and screening processes
- Our child-safe commitment will be promoted on our website and in promotional materials
- All volunteers and interns must undergo a criminal history check before commencing their placement (excludes trekkers and external groups).
- All volunteers (excluding trekkers and external groups) are required to sign a Mirror Foundation Child Safe Code of Conduct immediately upon arrival
- TMF reserves the right to refuse or terminate any person's volunteering time with TMF that may pose a risk to children.
- All Mirror Foundation visa and passport information are digitally stored in the Mirror Foundation online database

## **2.3 Education and training**

- Upon the volunteers arrival, information is provided concerning TMF's child protection policies and procedures in clear and simple language
- A hard-copy of the Mirror Foundation Child Safe Policy document is stored in the volunteer office
- All Mirror Foundation representatives must be familiar with the policy and be aware of the problem of abuse and risks to children
- TMF ECOTours staff are accountable for ensuring that all work-sites are risk-assessed and all steps taken as necessary to minimize risks to children



## 2.4 Professional code of conduct

- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- TMF representatives must not fondle, hold, hug or touch children in an inappropriate way.
- TMF representatives must never sleep in the same room or bed as a child while they are representing Mirror.
- TMF representatives should never discriminate against, show differential treatment towards, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Where possible and practical, the 'two-adult' rule applies, wherein two or more adults supervise the activities of children.
- TMF representatives, whilst teaching children offsite must be accompanied by a Mirror Foundation staff member
- TMF representatives must be concerned about perception and appearance in relation to language and actions in their relationships with children.

## 2.5 Reporting and responding to suspected abuse and neglect

*The Mirror Foundation considers the abuse and exploitation of children to be completely unacceptable. We will take all concerns and reports of child abuse seriously and act on these reports immediately.*

- **Definitions: Types of Abuse**
  - Physical abuse – when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person.
  - Emotional abuse – an attack on a child or young persons' self-esteem e.g. through bullying, name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child.
  - Sexual abuse – any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child or young person.
  - Neglect – where a child or young person is harmed by the failure to provide the basic physical or emotional necessities.



- TMF representatives must notify an ECOTours staff member as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been or is being abused or neglected.
- TMF is responsible for ensuring that TMF representatives are aware how to make appropriate reports of abuse or neglect.
- A person does not necessarily exhaust his or her duty of care to a child by making a report – they may still have a role in supporting the child or young person or to ensure that TMF takes all reasonable steps to keep the child and others safe.
- TMF reserves the right to refuse or terminate any person’s volunteering time in circumstances where TMF has a reasonable suspicion such person poses a risk to children.
- An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue. In following this policy, it is important that all parties maintain confidentiality. Sharing of information which could identify a child or alleged perpetrator should be purely on a “need to know basis”. Unless abuse has actually proved to have occurred, one must always use the term “alleged abuse”.

## **2.6 Guidelines for photographing children**

*At all times, TMF volunteers must adhere to TMF photography guidelines for gathering photo resources, storage of such communication materials and transmission of such materials. Every picture tells a story. The power of photographs is indisputable. They play a vital role in illustrating who we are, our values and our work with children. It is the responsibility of everyone using or taking photographs at TMF to exercise judgment within the framework of these guidelines.*

- Be extremely sensitive to a person’s vulnerability at times of trauma or grief, and always assess how a photo/story will impact on the rights, especially the safety and wellbeing of the person being portrayed.
- In photos children and adults should be adequately clothed and not in sexually suggestive poses.
- Photos and stories should respect human dignity. Do not portray people as helpless victims. Balance human needs with positive language about what people are doing to help themselves.
- Obtain explicit permission to use real names and locations in situations where disclosure could *result in harm*. If advisable, consider changing names and locations (and indicating why) to tell the story.



## 2.7 Access by external visitors (donors, media, other NGO's) and communications

- All visitors must receive authorization prior to entering the Mirror Foundation site.
- A Mirror Foundation staff member must accompany all visitors if they travel offsite in relation to Mirror Foundation activities.

## 2.8 Policy and procedures

- The Mirror Foundation believes that the abuse of children is an abuse of their rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- A child means every human being below the age of 18 years
- Child abuse means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm deliberately caused to a child
- Sexual exploitation is any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting ,monetarily , socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another
- Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliation, degradation or exploitation is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries
- TMF staff at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain an environment which prevents exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of it's code of conduct
- TMF (ECOTours) are accountable for ensuring that an open and responsive management culture is developed so that representatives and others are able to discuss the issue of child abuse and be confident of a positive response to any concerns that may arise.
- TMF recognizes it has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that children are protected from exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect from staff members, volunteers, trekkers and external groups, within and outside the programs – directly or indirectly.





### 3. Mirror Foundation Child Safe Code of Conduct (for Volunteers and Interns)

The Mirror Foundation (TMF) wishes to protect the children we come into contact with as well as protecting staff, volunteers and those associated with TMF programs and activities.

**As a representative of TMF you must sign and abide by this code of conduct which requires you to:**

1. Operate within the rules and policies of the Mirror Foundation and its activities.
2. Follow organisational policy and guidelines around the safety of children as outlined in the Child Safe Policy.
3. Conduct yourself in a manner consistent with your position as a positive role model to children and as a representative of TMF.
4. Be respectful of children's rights, background, culture and beliefs
5. Comply with specific organizational guidelines on physical contact with children: If as part of your role you are required to work with children in any capacity, you should ensure that you are not placed in a position where you are alone with children, by ensuring that there is always another adult present when working in the proximity of children.
6. You use language and topics appropriate to the situation avoiding suggestive comments to a child, even as a joke. Avoid any actions or words intended to humiliate or belittle children.
7. Treat children and young people with respect, listen to and value their ideas and opinions and protect their wellbeing.
8. Resolve conflicts fairly and promptly and report and act on any breaches of these standards of behavior through established procedures
9. Maintain strict impartiality.
10. Respect the privacy of children and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.
11. Maintain a child safe environment for children and young people.
12. Photographs of children/adults must not be taken without following TMF's Guidelines for Photographing Children as outlined in the Child Safe Policy.

**Volunteers will not:**

- Use prejudiced oppressive behavior or language with children.
- Discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality.
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.
- Develop "special" relationships with specific children for their own needs.
- Show favoritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.
- Have contact with children outside the organizations' programs

***Any breaches of this code of conduct by Mirror Foundation Representatives or others, including all concerns regarding suspected child abuse and exploitation must be reported directly to Mirror Foundation staff as soon as possible.***

\*To be read in conjunction with the Child Safe Policy.

I have read this Policy and Code of Conduct and agree to abide by it at all times to protect myself and the children I may come in contact with through my work for the Mirror Foundation.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## References

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# The Mirror Foundation

## Child Safe Policy Brief

### Key Points for Incoming Volunteers

#### WHY THE POLICY?

- We have a *duty of care* to protect the already vulnerable children we work with . This is why we have asked for a background check, as well as now asking you to sign our Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Child abuse is a reality across all countries and cultures. Child abuse means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm caused to a child.
- The policy aims to protect children, as well as provide support for you – to report any abuse
- The policy applies *at all times*, both during and outside normal working hours

#### WHERE IS THE POLICY?

- A hard-copy of the Child Safe Policy is located in the volunteer office
- The policy can be found on the Mirror Foundation website

#### POLICY KEY POINTS:

- For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18
- Volunteers must never sleep in the same room or bed as a child
- Wherever practical, the 'two-adult' rule applies, where 2 or more adults supervise activities of children
- While teaching offsite, volunteers must be accompanied by a Mirror Foundation staff member
- The Mirror Foundation reserves the right to refuse or terminate any person's volunteering time in circumstances we deem appropriate
- Sexual activity with children is prohibited, and mistaken age of the child is not a defense.
- The volunteer will not touch children in inappropriate ways.
- The volunteer will not show differential treatment towards children



## REPORTING

- The Mirror Foundation considers the abuse and exploitation of children to be unacceptable. We will take all concerns and reports of child abuse *seriously*.
- Volunteers must notify a EcoTours staff member (Thellie, P'Aye or P'Moo) as soon as practicable if they have a reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused or neglected.
- An allegation is a serious issue, so it is important to maintain confidentiality. Unless abuse has actually been proved, one must always use the term 'alleged abuse' – and share information on a 'need to know basis'.

## TAKING PHOTOS?

- Every photo tells a story and thus volunteers must ensure they are respecting human dignity when they take and share photographs.
- When taking photos, be sensitive to a person's vulnerability – always thinking about how the photo will impact on the rights of the person being portrayed. (for example, not as helpless victims)
- In photos, children and adults should be adequately clothed and not in sexually suggestive poses.