



PACIFIC LINKS  
FOUNDATION

# Child Protection Policy

## **Application:**

This policy applies to all Pacific Links Foundation (PALS) staff and all board members, volunteers, interns, donors, other employees, consultants, contractors, advisors, official guests of PALS, representatives of partner organizations, and local governments (hereafter referred to as PALS Associates) brought into contact with children while working for, or officially traveling with, PALS.

## **Definitions:**

*Child:* a person below the age of eighteen years.

*Child abuse:* sexual abuse, or other physical, mental, or emotional harm caused to a child, or gross negligence.

## **Policy Statement:**

Acting on behalf of the children's best interests, and in agreement with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, PALS strives to design and implement programs that protect children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation, including sexual exploitation. In this respect, in none of its programs does PALS support or promote the legalization of prostitution or trafficking in women, children or others for any purpose. PALS continues to work proactively with victims of prostitution or trafficking. PALS does not tolerate child abuse in any form. All children have equal rights to protection.

To this end, PALS staff should:

- Familiarize themselves with situations which may present risks to the children and learn how to protect and prevent such harm.
- Contribute to an environment where children are able to recognize or identify unacceptable and/or inappropriate behaviors toward them.
- Teach the children of their rights and let them know that their concerns will be heard and kept confidential;
- Wherever practical, ensure that all meetings with the children shall always be conducted officially and openly ;
- Immediately raise concerns of any suspected child abuse cases in accordance with applicable laws and procedures.

Further, as a common practice and in order to enhance a bond of trust between PALS and the recipient children and their families, PALS staff shall also:

- Refrain from disclosing information (including the use of children's last names and their community information, including name and location) that could be used to identify recipient children or their families to unauthorized persons, including the general public;
- Handle with sensitivity the use of images of recipient children on the internet. To ensure the protection and privacy of recipient children, PALS shall use children's first names only in correspondence if necessary and shall not release their exact dates of birth.

## **Purpose:**

It is the responsibility of Boards and Directors and management to ensure that all PALS staff in their area of responsibility are aware of and abide by this policy and applicable local procedures while working and volunteering for PALS.

The purpose of the standards contained within this document is to ensure that PALS has established procedures for preventing and dealing with child abuse cases.

## **PALS Board:**

Each member of our Board is responsible for considering child protection issues in all Board decisions.

### **1. Behavior Protocols/Codes of Conduct while working or officially traveling for PALS**

- 1a. PALS associates should not take a child or children into a private place out of view of other adults. PALS associates are encouraged to be accompanied by parent/legal guardians and/or community members on visits with children.
- 1b. PALS associates must not stay alone with one or more children who are not part of their immediate or extended family, whether in the house, project premises, or elsewhere.
- 1c. Where possible, and practical, the 'two-adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where children are involved and are present at all times, should be applied.
- 1d. PALS associates need to be aware that they may work with children who, because of circumstances and abuses they may have experienced, may use a relationship to obtain 'special attention.' The adult is always considered responsible for maintaining an appropriate relationship, even if a child behaves inappropriately. Adults should not place themselves in compromising or vulnerable positions.
- 1e. Inappropriate behavior towards children, including failure to follow PALS's behavior protocols, policy, and standards is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment, volunteer/internship, or board/advisory council membership.

### **2. Human Resources: Recruiting and Screening**

By the nature of our work, PALS holds personal details of children and their families. This information has been provided by individuals and families on the understanding that it will be used to find them Donors. It is our responsibility to establish and enforce the means with which to ensure that the information is used in this way and not abused:

- 2a. Not everyone has access to details of children; access is only given on the basis of role. Details are held securely and access to our computer systems are protected by passwords.
  - If such information containing details of children and their families needs to be destroyed, it should be done so in a secure manner.
  - Suppliers and agencies working on our behalf are made aware of our child and data protection policy and that they are expected to comply with the policy and standards.
- 2b. Established measures ensure that PALS staff do not put children at risk, either involuntarily or unintentionally from their action or lack of action:
  - All prospective employees are educated in PALS's Child Protection Policy and related child protection issues. The Child Protection Policy forms part of the orientation manual given to all new staff, who are required to acknowledge in writing understanding of PALS's Child Protection Policy.
  - PALS staff who will have contact with children or personal child information are to be notified of PALS's policy and guidelines for child and data protection and are to be made aware that they are expected to follow behavioral protocols/code of conduct.
  - PALS reserves the right to perform a criminal background check on current or prospective employees. In the best interests and safety of the children, PALS will not voluntarily or intentionally employ anyone with a conviction for child abuse, pedophilia, or a related offense.
  - The Managing Director of Donorship is the contact person for issues relating to child protection. All issues should be brought to this individual's attention, however minor the concerns.

### **3. Protection of Children in PALS Program Communities**

To ensure that we do not allow harmful relationships to develop we have the following safeguards in place:

#### Donor Communications:

PALS has procedures in place for ensuring appropriateness of content in communications between Donors and children. We ask all Associates to respect the privacy of the children and their families by refraining from posting personal information about their specific child on the internet, such as the child's full name, date of birth, and community information (e.g. name and location).

#### Visits to recipient children:

PALS has a firm policy in place to ensure that children being visited are safe from all visitors, donors, and other governmental officials. Prior to the recipients' home visit, all visitors are required to read and sign the visit guidelines and confidentiality policy provided by PALS. Recipient children and their families shall also be informed in advance of such visit.

Prospective visitors should take note that:

- Ideally, all visits should be arranged at least six to eight weeks in advance through PALS.
- Visitors are required to sign a statement which says that they understand and agree to comply with (behave by) both the PALS Child Protection Policy and visit policy as well as the Confidentiality Agreement. According to the local security rules, all visitors are also required to provide PALS with their full names, passport numbers, name of organization and occupation as proof of identification at the minimum two weeks to secure permission to visit the location.
- At least one PALS staff and/or a community volunteer, school official, must be present throughout each visit to a child's home.
- Recipient children and their siblings must not be invited or taken away from their communities unless the child/children are accompanied by a parent/guardian and PALS Staff member.
- We reserve the right to screen, including conducting criminal background checks as deemed necessary donors and other PALS supporters prior to field visits.

#### Allegation/Incident Management Plan:

PALS has measures in place to inform PALS Associates of our Child Protection Policy. In cases where the associates intentionally or unintentionally fail to comply with such requirements and policies, PALS reserves the right to take follow-up action with external bodies including police and public security people as appropriate.

For the benefit, protection, and well-being of the children and their families:

- PALS will immediately cease any activity that shows or leads to a situation that puts a child at risk, or at potential risk, and in making this decision, PALS will err on the side of caution.
- For our projects to achieve results, it is vital that we retain the trust and confidence of the children and the families with whom we work.
- PALS will cease affiliating or facilitating a relationship with any entity knowing that it does not respect basic human rights.

### **4. Communications about Children**

When communicating to others about children, PALS should use pictures and language that are decent and respectful. We will not provide children's personal addresses or contact information to Donors, unless under the approved visitation policy. We will not disclose children's personal information to non-Donors, or disclose information that could be used to identify the location of children within their country on our website or in other mass communications. We expect the same respect for children's protection and privacy from our Donors and supporters.

**5. Dealing with Child Abuse Cases:**

Alleged cases of child abuse should first be reported to the relevant directors depending on the location of the alleged abuse. They will refer the matter to the local authorities and decide on other appropriate steps, including informing relevant PALS offices and/or supporting criminal prosecution.

If an employee raises a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse case, which later proves to be unfounded upon investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. Any employee who intentionally makes false or malicious accusations; however, will face disciplinary and legal action. PALS will take appropriate legal or other action against other PALS staff who voluntarily and/or intentionally make(s) false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

An alleged perpetrator of child abuse will normally be suspended from his/her normal relationship with PALS during investigation of allegations. PALS will sever all relations with any PALS Associate who is proven to have committed child abuse.

**6. Confidentiality:**

An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue. In compliance with PALS' Policy on Child Protection and local procedures, it is essential that all parties maintain confidentiality. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or an alleged perpetrator, should be purely on a "need-to-know-only" basis. Unless abuse has actually been proved to have occurred, one must always refer to "alleged abuse."

**7. Prohibition on the Promotion or Advocacy of the Legalization or Practice of Prostitution or Sex Trafficking:**

PALS is committed to reducing stigma and ensuring that its HIV/AIDS programs improve access to needed prevention, treatment, care and support services. It does not promote or advocate for the legalization or practice of prostitution and is opposed to all forms of trafficking in persons. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to preclude the provision to individuals of palliative care, treatment, or post-exposure pharmaceutical prophylaxis, and necessary pharmaceuticals and commodities, including test kits, condoms, and microbicides.

PALS recognizes that all children have a right to protection from commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution and trafficking. In this respect, the children shall always be treated as victims of a crime and not offenders and that the child's best interest shall be the primary consideration as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. Nothing in this policy shall conflict with these rights.

My full name is \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print full name)

I hereby acknowledge receipt of this document on Child Protection Policy:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Having read this document, I hereby agree to abide by this Child Protection Policy in my association with children and child recipients in Pacific Links Foundation's activities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)