



Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to document the commitment of Gillett, Preston and Associates Inc. (GPA) to the 'do no harm principle', and address the key risks identified within GPA activities and key procedures on how they are managed.

Scope

This policy applies to GPA workplaces and other places of work under the control of GPA, as well as GPA employees, workers, visitors, and others who access GPA premises or may be impacted by GPA activities.

Policy Statement

GPA provides consulting services, runs meetings, community consultations, workshops and activities within the sphere of education and school age children and youths. All persons under eighteen (18) years of age and children have a right to feel and be safe. We want children to be safe, happy, and empowered.

GPA applies its work toward child protection by following the National Child Protection Policy guiding principles.

1. Welfare of the child;
2. Non-discrimination, inclusion, equal rights to protection;
3. Shared responsibility;
4. Best interests of the child;
5. Influencing and positive role of religious and Kastom practices and systems;
6. Do no harm; and
7. Meaningful and relevant participation of children.

Responsibilities

GPA is committed to protecting the rights of all children to live safely, without fear of abuse or exploitation and for young Members to have equitable access to GPA Programs and support services. It is GPA's goal to ensure an environment where children are safe and protected from all forms of abuse and harm.

As a child safe organisation, GPA:

- Has established a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of young people are respected and valued.
- Informs and empowers children and young people about their rights, supporting participation in decisions affecting them.
- Informs and involves families and communities in their child's activities relating to GPA.
- Maintains child-focused processes for services delivery and the management of complaints and concerns.
- Has inclusive approaches for children with a disability and children from diverse backgrounds.

- Ensures people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
- Ensures employees and relevant workers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness needed to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
- Has actively considered the risks of abuse within the organisation.
- Ensures physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
- Regularly reviews and improves processes for the implementation of child protection and safeguarding.

GPA has a zero tolerance of child abuse or harm. All allegations and safety concerns are treated very seriously and managed consistently with our robust policies and procedures. We have moral obligation to take action when we are worried about a child's safety and wellbeing.

GPA:

- Does not employ or engage a person under the age of 16.
- Ensures this policy and its associated procedures align with legislation, government policies and the corporate goals and values of GPA.
- Ensures that this policy and its associated procedures are implemented, monitored and reporting is provided on the policy commitments.
- Provides sound governance to meet the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy commitments.
- On an ongoing basis, ensures GPA identifies and addresses risk to or breaches of child safety.
- Responds promptly and effectively to any report of child abuse or harm, including measures to prevent recurrence.
- Ensures that this policy and its associated procedures are reviewed regularly to make sure they continue to be relevant and are achieving what they are intended to achieve.

All workers:

- Participate in providing a safe environment for all children.
- Identify and report any potential or actual breaches of child safety.

GPA:

- Ensures this policy and its associated procedures align with legislation, government policies and the corporate goals and values of GPA.
- Ensures this policy and its associated procedures are implemented, monitored and reporting is provided on the policy commitments.
- Ensures this policy and its associated procedures are reviewed regularly to make sure they continue to be relevant and are achieving what they are intended to achieve.

Families and communities

GPA recognises the important role of families and involves parents and carers when making significant decisions about their child. Parents, families, and communities are welcome to provide feedback at any time through our consultation processes and contact email address and are encouraged to raise any concerns they have with us.

Reporting

Reporting child abuse is a community-wide responsibility. And within GPA all incidents or suspected child abuse is to be reported to the Project Manager.

If a person 16 years or older provided the information and they do not have an intellectual disability they may decide themselves if they want the information reported to the police or not.

Vanuatu reporting mechanisms and support systems include:

- GPA Project Manager (Safety Officer)
- Police
- Kastom leader
- Church leader
- NGOs that specialise in child welfare

GPA Project Manager ensures that any child related incident is investigated and reported to MFAT.

GPA ensures communication of this policy statement to staff, members, partners, contractors and visitors through digital communication, induction processes and training activities.

Definitions

Child

Anyone under the age of 18.

Child abuse

All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, 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.

Child Protection

The term used to describe the responsibilities and activities or initiatives designed to protect children from violence, or prevent or stop them from being abused, exploited, neglected, injured, or otherwise maltreated.

Child Protection System

A set of coordinated formal elements (such as national legislation, policies, institutions) and informal elements (community, chiefs, families and churches) working together to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence.

Child Safeguarding

The set of internal controls that an organization puts in place to ensure that children are protected from any intentional and unintentional abuse, exploitation, violence, injury or other serious harm in relation to the organization's operations or the conduct of its personnel. It includes putting in place mechanisms to ensure that concerns of abuse are reported and responded to appropriately.

'Do No Harm' Principle

Implementing all reasonable measures to ensure that children (individually and collectively) are not put at risk or greater risk of harm as a result of any actions, interventions or decisions made in relation to their protection, safety, health, wellbeing or general welfare.

Emotional Abuse

Involves isolated incidents and/ or a pattern of failure over time on the part of the parent/ caregiver to provide an environment, including the availability of an attachment figure, to help the child develop his/ her full range of emotional and social competencies in line with the child's potential. Examples include: belittling, blaming, threatening, frightening, discriminating against or ridiculing; and other non-physical forms of rejection, isolation or hostile treatment. Such acts have a high probability of damaging the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Harmful Practices (against children)

Violations of children's rights that are based on tradition, culture, religion or superstition. Many involve mental violence, or extreme physical violence and pain and can lead to death or serious injury. Examples include: forced or early marriage, betrothal, exorcisms, accusations of witchcraft, virginity testing, branding, scarring, ritualistic abuse.

Neglect

An act of omission which includes both isolated incidents as well as a pattern of failure over time on the part of a parent/ caregiver to provide for the child's basic physical and emotional needs where the parent is in a position to do so. Neglect causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

It includes both physical neglect (failure to adequately meet the child's needs including nutrition, clothing, health care, and protection from harm through adequate supervision) and emotional neglect (denying the child an appropriate level of affection, care, and security)

Reasonable belief

A 'reasonable belief' is not the same as having proof. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds. For example, a 'reasonable belief' might be formed when:

- A child states that they have been sexually abused.
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
- Someone who knows a child states that the child has been sexually abused.
- Observations of the child's behaviour or development leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.
- Signs of sexual abuse leads to a belief that the child has been sexually abused.

Physical Abuse

The intentional use of physical force against a child that results in – or has a high likelihood of resulting in – harm for the child's health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting,

beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating. Much physical violence against children in the home is inflicted with the objective of punishment.

Sexual Abuse

The involvement of a child in any sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared. Children can be sexually abused by adults as well as other children.

References

NZ Aid Programme Health and Safety Information for Partners and Contractors
MFAT Health and Safety Acknowledgement Form
MFAT Technical Advisor Code of Conduct
MFAT Human Rights Analysis Guideline
Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu
Vanuatu Health and Safety at Work Act – Consolidated 2006
Vanuatu Employment Act - Consolidated 2019
Vanuatu Education Act – Consolidated 2006
Vanuatu National Youth Authority Act 2018
Vanuatu National Child Protection Policy 2016-2026
Vanuatu National Youth Policy 2019-2024
UNICEF Child Rights Guidance Note
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Procedures

Procedure 30 Managing child protection
Procedure 31 Where a child discloses an incident of abuse
Procedure 32 Where a parent/carer says their child has been abused or raises a concern

Communication

GPA ensures communication of this policy statement to employees, members, partners, contractors and visitors through digital communication, induction processes and training activities.

Version Control

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