BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

INSTITUTE FOR POPULATION AND HUMAN STUDIES

1113 Sofia, Acad. Georgi Bonchev Str., Bl. 6, Fl. 5 / 6, tel.: +359 /2/ 8705303, +359 /2/9793030

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Background

The Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IPHS - BAS), hereinafter referred to as "IPHS - BAS", recognizes the value of children and their intrinsic rights to life, to be protected from abuse and exploitation and to have their privacy protected, among others.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children, without any exception, have equal rights to survival, health, education, participation, and protection. According to Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights children shall have the right to such protection and care as is necessary for their well-being. They may express their views freely. Such views shall be taken into consideration on matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity. In all actions relating to children, whether taken by public authorities or private institutions, the child's best interests must be a primary consideration.

IPHS - BAS is thus invested in protecting and ensuring the safety and dignity of all children and securing their rights. To that end, IPHS - BAS is committed to this Child Protection Policy, hereinafter referred to as "the Policy", which consists of a set of policies, procedures and practices employed by everyone at the IPHS – BAS to ensure it is a child-safe organization.

2. General Principles

- In drafting this Policy, IPHS - BAS refers to and consults relevant EU, international and national laws related to child protection, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- This Policy should be reviewed at a minimum of every three years and adapted if needed to better fit the needs of the organization, the children, and the international standards and laws.
- All employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees of IPHS - BAS have a duty to protect the children they encounter in the performance of their duties. They must take all necessary steps to provide the children with the care and support they need and contribute towards a protective environment.
- All employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees of IPHS - BAS are obliged to follow the ACT principle if a child safeguarding concern is brought to attention i.e., act on the concerns in a Child-centered and Timely manner to ensure effective, confidential, and appropriate response to the child safeguarding issue.
- All children participating in work activities of IPHS - BAS are protected against violence, harm, and harassment. IPHS - BAS ensures that children are not exposed to risks by adopting the common understanding of respecting children's rights and complying with the support and protection practices in place in their role of responsible adults.

- Children are actors in their own protection and development, which does not exempt parents from their responsibilities and obligations.
- In situations where IPHS - BAS is working with partner organizations, all employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees of both organizations must comply with both organizations' child protection policy.
- There is a designated staff member (a Child Protection Officer) who is responsible for answering any questions pertaining to child protection and documenting reports of abuse and violations.
- All research regarding participation of children comply with the Ethical Code of IPHS-BAS and is subject of approval from the internal Ethical Committee of IPHS-BAS.

3. Definitions:

Child

A child is defined as any human being under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Child protection

Child protection is a broad term used to describe standards, guidelines, and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the context of this policy, child protection concerns the duty of IPHS - BAS to make sure that its staff, operators, and programs do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse and that any concerns the organization has about children's safety within the activities and programs in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities. All research work of IPHS - BAS is compliant with the Meta Code of Ethics of the European Federation of Psychologists Associations (EFPA) and the Ethical principles of research of IPHS-BAS.

Direct contact with children

Direct contact with children means being in the physical presence of a child/ children in the context of the work of IPHS - BAS, regardless of whether contact is occasional or regular, short, or long-term.

Indirect contact with children

Indirect contact with children means having access to information on children in the context of the work of IPHS - BAS such as children's names, locations (addresses of individuals), photographs etc.

Child abuse

According to the World Health Organization, "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes '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'. The understanding of abuse in context of this Policy and according to IPHS - BAS includes, but it is not limited to:

- **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. In the case of direct interaction with a child (given our research activity), this interaction and participation in an experiment or research activity takes place at a time that does not interfere with the child's regime, there are no negative consequences for his emotional well-being.

- **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is defined as the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as causing severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless and unloved, inadequate, or valued only so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

- **Neglect/Negligence**

Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, such as by failing to provide adequate food, clothing, or shelter, failing to prevent harm, failing to ensure adequate supervision, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

- **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, regardless of whether the child is or is not aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g., rape) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic materials or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children

Commercial sexual exploitation of children comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children and amounts to forced labor and a contemporary form of slavery.

Child pornography

Child pornography means any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily

sexual purposes. This can include photographs, negatives, slides, magazines, books, drawings, movies, videotapes and computer disks or files. There are two categories of pornography: soft-core which is not sexually explicit but involves naked and seductive images of children and hard core which relates to images of children engaged in sexual activity and use of children in the production of pornography is sexual exploitation.

Child Labor

Child labor is regulated by such instruments as the International Labor Organization's Minimum Age Convention, which are sets the following age limits:

- The minimum age for admission to employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years.
- The minimum age for admission to any type of employment or work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardize the health, safety, or morale of young persons, shall not be less than 18 years. This age limit may be reduced to 16 years, on condition that the health, safety, and morals of the young person concerned are fully protected and that young persons have received adequate specific instruction or vocational training.

4. Procedures

4.1. Signing and introducing the Policy

All employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees of IPHS - BAS, who have direct or indirect contact with children must be introduced to and required to sign and adhere to this Policy, using the Acknowledgment of compliance in Annex A.

4.2. Continuous training and awareness

4.2.1. IPHS - BAS clearly communicates expected and appropriate behavior towards children, as well as subsequent consequences for violating any policies and standards.

4.2.2. All employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees of IPHS - BAS who have direct or indirect contact with children have regular opportunities to update their knowledge on child protection to maintain the necessary skills to keep children safe.

- how often these training sessions will occur: IPHS - BAS is committed to maintaining a high level of awareness and knowledge among its employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees regarding child protection. To ensure this, regular training sessions once per year will be conducted for all staff members of IPHS-BAS.
- Training sessions will occur at least once in a calendar year to update participants on the latest child protection practices, policies, and procedures. The frequency of training sessions may be adjusted based on emerging needs and developments in child protection.

4.3. Recruitment process



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All employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees of IPHS - BAS, who have direct or indirect contact with children will have to be vetted by the Director of IPHS-BAS. The vetting process will include background checks and criminal record certificates from all countries where a candidate/ person has worked. These certificates and records will be attached to the profile of the candidate/ person and will be made available at the request of audit authorities or other involved institutions.

4.4. External staff

Any external communication with journalists, photographers, film crews, etc. that contains sensible data of children (videos, pictures etc.) could only be done following an explanation to the children and their parents/guardians of the purpose of collecting and distributing such media, and an informed consent of the parents/ guardians, using the Parents/ guardians consent form in Annex B. The external staff (third parties) that will be handling this sensible data will be required IPHS – BAS to sign this Policy before any sensible data is sent to them and always ensure that the content about IPHS – BAS and the children is accurate, not sensationalized, and respectful.

Non-compliance Consequences: IPHS – BAS takes adherence to its Child Protection Policy with utmost seriousness. Failure to comply with this policy, including any violations related to the handling of sensitive data, may result in disciplinary actions and, if necessary, legal measures. IPHS – BAS is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of the children it serves and expects all parties involved to uphold the highest standards of child protection.

4.5. Child protection officer

The Child protection officer of IPHS – BAS is assoc. prof. Maria Trifonova. Email: maria_trifonova@iphs.eu

4.6. Procedure for abuse or neglect

4.6.1. All employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees of IPHS – BAS are responsible for, and obligated to immediately report any suspicious or confirmed cases of child abuse or child protection concerns and keep the parents/ guardians of the children informed.

4.6.2. All reports of allegations must be reported directly to the Child Protection Officer and the management of IPHS – BAS, using the Reporting form in Annex C.

4.6.3. The Child Protection Officer and the management of IPHS – BAS will act immediately on reports of child abuse and consider this the highest priority until the investigation is completed and the matter is closed.

4.6.4. If suspicions, or denunciation of abuse or neglect are reported, the following procedure applies:

- An internal investigation has to be launched immediately.
- If the person accused is an employee, a staff member, a volunteer, or a trainee of IPHS – BAS, he or she must be immediately restricted from further interactions with children until the matter is concluded and appropriate measures taken. In other cases, IPHS – BAS must

immediately prohibit access to its premises, materials and activities until the allegations have been investigated and appropriate measures taken.

- Disciplinary measures are taken against the employees, staff members, volunteers, and trainees of IPHS – BAS in accordance with the gravity of the misconduct and applicable provisions, notably the law applicable to the contract and internal rules of procedure.
- In any case, should a member of its local or international staff be accused, IPHS – BAS must not obstruct local legislation and must take all necessary steps to ensure fair judicial proceedings.
- If there is information provided by children and/ or other individuals about any form of child abuse, IPHS – BAS has an obligation to immediately report this information to the local authorities and to the relevant government child services agency. In this process, IPHS – BAS must act in a confidential manner in accordance with the best interests of the child and keep all the information regarding the report in secure files. Reports made by IPHS – BAS (that will serve the police investigation) must be as precise as possible, giving an exact account of what happened, how it happened etc. and including the sequence of events and all subsequent actions taken.

4. Attachments

5.1. Annex A: Acknowledgment of Compliance

5.2. Annex B: Parents/ guardians consent form

5.3. Annex C: Reporting form

5.4. Annex D: Background Check Authorization Form

Date: ..11.01.2024

Approved:

БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ * Институт за изследване на населението и човека София

/ Prof. Antoaneta Rousinova-Hristova, Director of IPHS-BAS /

/ Child Protection Officer' Name: Maria Trifonova /

I, _____, have read and understood this Child Protection Policy and agree to comply to it in its entirety.

Position: _____

Sign: _____

Date: _____

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Annex B: Parents/ guardians consent form

I give consent to The Institute for Population and Human Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to:

a. Use my child's first name;

b. Interview, film, photograph, video record my child;

c. Use my child's image, interview statements, excerpts of statements and original creations (i.e., child's stories, poems, or artwork) in IPHS-BAS`s publications (print and online).

This consent, indicated by my signature below, will not expire nor does it require additional permission from me.

Name and signature of parent/guardian: _____

Child's name: _____

Child's age: _____

Date: _____

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Annex C: Reporting form

Name of the person, submitting the report	
Date of incident	
Time of incident	
Location of the incident	
Type of incident: (physical, emotional, neglect or sexual abuse)	
Brief description of the incident	
Relevant actions that are currently taking place	
Date of report submission	

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Annex D: Background Check Authorization Form

I hereby give consent to IPHS - BAS to conduct a background check with regards to child abuse. I understand that should I have any history of child abuse, I will not be granted employment with IPHS - BAS.

Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____