RAN Policy on Prevention and Protection of Children against Abuse and Exploitation in the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

1. Introduction:

RAN's vision is a world in which no one has to suffer from leprosy, tuberculosis and other neglected diseases which in association with poverty and its consequences could lead to disability and exclusion. We put people at the heart of our work and are committed to serving those in need by helping them to live a healthy life with dignity. This encompasses RAN's work with children, as children are in particular need of protection. We feel obliged to ensure that children live a life free from all forms of violence, are protected in conflicts and disasters, and thrive in a safe environment.

RAN recognizes the need to ensure that children are protected from abuse and maltreatment within its own organization as well as with partners abroad. That is why RAN has introduced a Child Protection Policy aimed at standardizing child protection measures both within the organization and within sponsored projects to minimize the risk of violence and abuse. A well-defined policy supported by a functional and transparent complaint mechanism ensures children a high degree of protection.

2. Scope of the Child Protection Policy

The policy applies to all officials and staff for the entire duration of their official assignment irrespective of the location. In this context, 'staff' includes RAN employees worldwide, members of the boards, project partners, consultants executing short- or long-term assignments, trainees and volunteers and all those who travel to project countries in the name of RAN.

Therefore any actions and behaviours which are in violation of the Child Protection Policy are not tolerated by RAN. All RAN employees and partners must sign this Child Protection Policy and comply with it. Any breach will result in disciplinary actions and might lead to immediate dismissal from the organisation and claims for compensatory damages.

3. Definitions under the Child Protection Policy

CHILD

For the purposes of this document, a "child" is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

CHILD ABUSE

According to the World Health Organisation, "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."[1]

[1] World Health Organisation. (1999, March 29). *Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention, 29-31 March 1999, WHO, Geneva.* Retrieved from http://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/65900

This includes any sexually motivated activities or behaviours, whether actual or threatened. It includes all forms of sexual contact and interference and (commercial) sexual exploitation as well as activities that do not involve physical contact.

CHILD PARTICIPATION

We engage in developing environments that empower children to participate in matters of their concern and in which their views are valued.

CHILD PROTECTION

It's a broad term used to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to prevent and protect children from abuse. In the current context, it applies to all RAN projects in which adult individuals come in contact with children in various settings either directly or indirectly. It includes the responsibility to ensure action is taken to prevent and address abuse and to analyse incidents for continuous learning and growth in the field of organisational child protection.

4. Declaration of RAN's commitment[2]:

1) We engage in preventing and protecting children from sexual, emotional or physical abuse and exploitation, following a zero-tolerance policy.
2) We support children regardless of their ethnic, national and social origin, their religious and political background, their sexual identity and orientation, gender and disabilities as well as status, in their rights and responsibilities and involve them in matters that concern them by taking into account their needs and interests in planning and implementing project activities.
3) Within our scope, we create a safe environment for children in which the rights of children and all human beings are upheld.
4) We raise awareness within RAN, amongst partners and among the people we work with, about child protection.
5) We develop, implement and comply with suitable instruments including clearly defined responsibilities and approaches in the areas of prevention, crisis management and monitoring.
6) We ensure that children's dignity is always maintained in our program interventions, press, educational and public relations work.
7) We raise awareness amongst relevant stakeholders and in networks about child protection.

5. Responsibilities of those covered by the Scope of the RAN's Child Protection Policy

1) To follow a 'No closed-door' policy in our interaction with children, whereby when an adult is engaged with a child it shall be ensured that both of them can be seen by a third person/s at all times.
2) To comply with the behaviours detailed in RAN's Code of Conduct.

[2] Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs (VENRO). (2011, January). Code of Conduct for Children's Rights: Protecting children against abuse and exploitation in development co-operation and humanitraian aid. Retrieved December 6, 2018, from https://www.dahw.de/fileadmin/redaktion/PDF/Organisation/Partner/VENRO_Code_of_Conduct_Child_Rights.pdf

3) Not to tolerate or facilitate illegal, dangerous or abusive conduct toward children.
4) To prevent anyone with a proven history of child abuse, from being inducted / involved in program implementation at all levels.
5) To take appropriate measures to prevent abuse or exploitation of any kind in all our program interventions.
6) To report any child abuse and child protection concerns we have in accordance with applicable local office procedures and this Policy.
7) To respond to a child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local laws and procedures.
8) To cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns or allegations of child abuse internally and vis-à-vis local and national authorities.
9) To always treat children respectful of their rights, integrity and dignity, consider their best interests and do not expose them to, or place them at risk of harm.

6. Communication Standards for Protecting Children:

Depending on the individual factors, protective measures are undertaken to protect the identity and dignity of the child, to avoid risk of violence and stigmatization.

- All media content respect and preserve the dignity of the people described.
- Children are portrayed as multi-faceted individuals with a diverse range of potentials. Reducing children to a victim or other stereotypical role is avoided.
- We only take pictures and stories when we have the consent of the children and their parents/caretaker. Its intended purpose should be explained in an easy to understand way.
- Pseudonyms are always used for children unless stating it is in the interest of the child and consent has been obtained from the child and his or her parents or guardians.
- Utmost caution is required in taking and selecting pictures in countries in which children do not wear much clothing. Pictures and images should portray children with adequate attire.
- In line with DAHW operational standards it is guaranteed that all the pictures/images selected for DAHW publication are reviewed by several persons.
- When describing the children's living situations, one must account for the social, cultural and economic context in order to demonstrate the complexity of the development situation.

7. Implementation:

1) Copies of all RAN Policies including Child Protection Policy are provided to each staff member, members of RAN Boards and they is also published on our website.
2) All RAN Policies including Child Protection Policy are annexed to all contracts of employment and assignments as well as contracts with project partner organizations. Our partners are obliged to have or to develop a Child Protection Policy.
3) All RAN Policies including Child Protection Policy are explained to all staff and each staff member is required to sign an acknowledgement of their commitment to comply with the Guidelines.
4) The Child protection team which is constituted at the HQ shall investigate, in cooperation with the regional RAN structures, all the complaints raised and take timely and appropriate action and follow-through the procedures till the case is concluded and closed.

All RAN Regional Representatives and Heads of program and Heads of partner organizations must ensure that the program beneficiaries know about RAN's Child Protection Policy and its structure for addressing child protection concerns. This awareness raising should be done in local and easy-to-understand language/medium. All the information materials should be in a child-friendly format and should be easily accessible to the beneficiaries.

It is the responsibility of the respective Regional Representative (or HQ Regional Team if there is no Regional Representative) to initiate capacity building of the regional/program structures and to send out regular updates and information materials related to child protection. All actions should be part of the annual progress reports.

8. Reporting the incidence

It is mandatory for any allegation, belief or suspicion of child abuse, child exploitation and policy non-compliance by a RAN employee or others as covered under section 2 (Scope of Child Protection Policy) to be reported immediately to the respective RAN Regional Representative or to the Head of Program who then immediately informs the Child Protection Team at RAN HQ, or directly to the Child Protection Team at RAN HQ.

Child Protection Team:

For the time being the child-protection team is constituted only at the HQ, who work in close collaboration with the regional and program offices. It is expected that the structure is extended and established at the regional/country program level in the future.

The Child Protection Team consists of the Ombudsperson and another person (following four-eye principle) who has knowledge on child protection. The team is assigned a specific email address ombudsman@dahw.de to which complaints/concerns should be sent. The procedure for raising a concern about any perceived or actual breach of the Child Protection Policy either by RAN staff or externals within RAN project locations is as outlined in RAN's Internal Complaints Management Mechanism. The team ensures that the reported cases of suspected abuse and maltreatment are thoroughly investigated, prosecuted and appropriately documented. In the investigation and prosecution process, the team involves internal and/or external experts on a case-to-case basis to deal with it professionally and efficiently.

Throughout the process, the team ensures that necessary steps for protecting the affected children are initiated. If necessary, they facilitate links to professionals (lawyers, psychologists, etc.). However, RAN do not necessarily involve national courts/jurisdiction if we have any doubts about justice being served.

The team is required to handle the reported cases in the strictest confidence and to protect the identities of the concerned child, informant and the accused appropriately. And if a member in the team has a personal relationship with anyone suspected of child abuse, they are replaced by the deputy to avoid any conflict of interest. The officers have the duty to document each case of suspected abuse in writing, up until it is closed and shall regularly report to CEO and the Supervisory Board of RAN.

We ensure that the person/institution which has reported child protection concerns or abuse are given appropriate care, support and protection in dealing with all aspects of the case including any safety concerns and potential reprisal which may arise from the incident or from the reporting of such concerns.

Any situation in which staff members may be in doubt about issues covered under RAN's Child Protection Policy is to be discussed with the Head of Program or Regional Representative and needs to be brought to the notice of the team.

9. Amendments

Periodic (every 3 years) review of the Child Protection Policy is convened by the CEO to proof its relevance (earlier, if deemed necessary). Amendments to the policy must be discussed and approved by RAN CEO and the official Boards of RAN.

Functional Area: Administration and Human Resources Management

Owner: CEO-RAN

Approved By: CEO/Board of Trustees 2017

Date of next Review: When deemed necessary

Language: English

Applicable to: All RAN staff, Members of the Board of Trustees, Project partners, Consultants, Trainees and Volunteers

Related Policies: RAN Code of Conduct, RAN Internal Complaints Management Mechanism, Guidelines for the fight against and prevention of corruption, conflicts of interest, and Whistle Blower Policy.

Contact: CEO RAN