



Mekong+



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**Effective Date: October, 2014**  
**Date Due for Review: May, 2015**

**Child Protection Policy**  
**for**  
**Mekong Plus**  
**Mekong +**  
**Thiện Chí**  
**Anh Dương**

## Introduction

The 4 organizations, here called MPM+TCAD, are closely working together and share the same origin:

- Thiện Chí & Anh Dương are Vietnamese organizations created by the local teams of Mekong Plus. In turn they created Mekong + (formerly Mekong Quilts & Mekong Creations), a social enterprise.
- Besides Thiện Chí & Anh Dương are the sole shareholders of Mekong +. All management decisions of the 4 organizations are made together. Thiện Chí operates in Bình Thuận province, Anh Dương in Hậu Giang province. Mekong Plus is acting as a funder and advisor with no direct operational capacity.

The main goal of MPM+TCAD being community development, MPM+TCAD are committed to the safety, wellbeing and protection of children. This policy therefore articulates the rules and procedures that will guide MPM+TCAD staff and partners to ensure that our activities are always in the best interests of children.

MPM+TCAD will ensure that all people who are involved in MPM+TCAD activities are aware of the expectations MPM+TCAD have of them in their interactions with children. MPM+TCAD are committed to upholding this policy and will take all reasonable steps to safeguard children from unacceptable risks.

## Scope

This policy will apply to all people while engaged with MPM+TCAD's activities. This includes:

- Board Members;
- Staff full/part/contract;
- Independent contractors;
- Partners (including teachers while engaged in Support-a-School activities);
- Volunteers;
- Visitors.

## Definitions

- **Children:** For the purposes of this policy MPM+TCAD considers a child as any individual aged under 18 years.
- **Child abuse:** Both boys and girls can be the victim of child abuse, and abuse can be inflicted on a child by men, women and older children. It includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation. It results in actual or potential harm to a child's health, development or dignity.
- **Physical abuse:** the intentional causing of physical harm to a child. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, biting, strangling, poisoning or otherwise physical hurting a child.
- **Emotional abuse:** involves a pattern of behaviour by adults towards children, which includes threats, rejection, isolation, belittling, name calling or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment which erodes social competence or self-esteem over time.
- **Neglect or negligent treatment:** is the failure to provide a child - within the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caregivers - with the conditions essential for their physical and emotional development and well-being.
- **Sexual abuse:** occurs when someone uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity.
- **Sexually abusive behaviours** can involve fondling genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism or exposing the child to, or involving the child in, pornography. Both boys and girls can be victims of child sexual abuse.

## Code of Conduct for Working with Children

A code of conduct makes clear what is acceptable during their interactions with children. It gives adults confidence to know that their behaviours are approved if they align with the code of conduct.

MPM+TCAD expects that all people engaged with our activities will consistently abide by the following code of conduct. They will also consistently advocate that all children are treated in these ways by others. A record of their agreement to uphold the code of conduct will be retained by MPM+TCAD.

I understand that while involved with MPM+TCAD's activities, I must:

- treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status
- not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts;

- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children. Any one-on-one contact sessions will only occur with the knowledge of the CEO and appropriate risk mitigation strategies;
- not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible;
- use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- not use physical punishment on children;
- not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury;
- comply with all relevant local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;
- immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and breaches of the MPM+TCAD Child Protection Policy or Code of Conduct for Working with Children;
- immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with MPM+TCAD that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, I must:

- assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child;
- obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used;
- ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts;
- ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

## **Procedures**

The procedures listed in this policy are clear statements that describe how MPM+TCAD will address particular issues. MPM+TCAD is committed to consistently following these procedures.

### **Recruitment**

MPM+TCAD is committed to the following recruitment practices that aim to mitigate

unacceptable risk to children engaged in our programs. MPM+TCAD will:

- Provide all applicants, including volunteers, with a copy of MPM+TCAD's child protection policy during the recruitment process;
- Ensure a minimum of two verbal referee checks are conducted during recruitment of all staff and volunteers engaged in MPM+TCAD programs;
- Require a current police clearance certificate from the South African Police Services (or home country policy for foreign volunteers);
- Ask at least one question during recruitment interviews that presents a hypothetical scenario relating to child protection which the applicant must respond to;
- Require all staff and volunteers to sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understood the MPM+TCAD child protection policy, and will abide by the MPM+TCAD Code of Conduct for Working with Children.

### **Training**

MPM+TCAD is committed to educating all those engaged with our activities on their expected behaviours when engaging with children. MPM+TCAD will conduct training that helps our staff, volunteers and partners to identify and reduce risks and maintain environments that are safe for children, and promote the best circumstances to maintain their well-being.

MPM+TCAD will conduct an induction session with all new staff, volunteers and partners to familiarise them with our child protection policy, and in particular, the Code of Conduct for Working with Children.