



## **Child Protection Policy<sup>1</sup>**

**October 2018**

### **Introduction**

The Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) through its Intergenerational Women's Leadership Programme has begun to work increasingly with children, specifically girls. This Child Protection Policy updates policy was developed to provide FWRM with a Code of Conduct for staff, volunteers, members and other individuals who would come into contact with children through FWRM's activities.

This Policy updates and replaces the former FWRM Child Protection Policy as contained in the Employee Handbook. FWRM management should review and update the manual and policy at least every 5 years or earlier if warranted to ensure the safety of the child.

### **Definition of a Child**

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is an individual below the age of 18 years.

### **Guiding Principles**

The core principles of FWRM are feminism, democracy, good governance, multi-culturalism and human rights. In line with these principles FWRM practices zero-tolerance for violence against women and children

### **I. Code of Conduct**

1. FWRM staff must always acquire parents/guardians written consent before involving children in FWRM activities. Parent/guardian must also submit the Child Information Sheet before child attends event. *(See forms attached)*
2. Treat children with respect regardless of race, age, colour, gender, language, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, class or other status.

3. FWRM staff must be mindful of behaviour. Do not use language or behaviour towards children that is harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
4. Do not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts, where under the law(s) applicable to the child. Where the child is below the age of consent or the act(s) are an offence under relevant laws wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
5. Do not invite unaccompanied children into your homes, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
6. Do not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case obtain supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible. An example here such as they have had an accident and there is no-where else to take them or they are escaping from someone trying to hurt them.
7. Do not use computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras unless consent has been obtained for documentation purposes, and never to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium.
8. (See also 10. 'Use of children's images for work related purposes')
9. Do not use physical punishment or discipline of children.
  - a. FWRM should build the capacity of the GIRLS Programme Officer, GIRLS Support Officer and other staff members on working with children.
  - b. If a staff member physically punishes a child at an FWRM event – this will act as grounds for dismissal of the staff member.
10. Refrain from hiring children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental 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 Fiji legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour. Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures.
11. Use of children's images for work related purposes. When photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, follow guidelines below:
  - a. Before photographing or filming a child, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images
  - b. Before photographing or filming a child under 18, obtain consent from the child or a parent or guardian of the child. As part of this FWRM must explain how the photograph or film will be used. Parents/guardians should sign a consent form during Orientation.
  - c. 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.
  - d. Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
  - e. Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

FWRM Staff understand that the onus is on them as individuals, as a person associated with FWRM, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse.

12. Key FWRM staff in charge of an event where children are involved should be trained in basic first aid, and able to provide to first aid in life threatening emergencies.

## **II: Reporting of abuse (against staff member)**

1. If a staff member or volunteer is accused of assaulting, abusing or exploiting a child or young person, FWRM will immediately investigate the allegation and if required will cooperate fully with the relevant authorities – if a formal complaint is lodged with the police or welfare by the victim or the victim's family or advocate.
2. FWRM Management should be immediately informed of the allegation and will consult with the FWRM Governance Board within 2 days and make a decision as to which steps to follow based on the nature of the alleged assault/abuse/exploitation.
  - a. Staff member may be removed from activities where s/he comes into contact with children while investigations are carried out.
  - b. FWRM may suspend staff on full pay until investigations have been completed and the case is clear
  - c. The physical and or sexual assault or exploitation of children and young people are grounds for dismissal under FWRM's current Operations Manual.
3. In the case of the allegation being made against a partner (e.g. an invited facilitator) FWRM will cooperate with authorities and determine whether the partnership with the individual/organization should continue given the nature of the incident.

## **III: Disclosure of abuse by children**

Due to the nature of the work done by FWRM and general awareness in communities about the work we do around violence against women and children; there is a possibility children may relay experiences of physical, sexual and or emotional abuse/exploitation at FWRM activities. FWRM needs to build the capacity of staff who come in contact with children to deal with this situation should it arise.

### **Reporting Procedure**

If a child or young person participant discloses information to a FWRM Staff member or volunteer and the FWRM staff member or volunteer feels that the child is in a situation where he or she is in danger of being harmed or further harmed the following should occur:

1. The FWRM Staff member or volunteer will report this matter to the GIRLS Officer (in her absence the Officer in Charge) and the Programme Director (in her absence the Executive Director).
2. FWRM Management will assess the situation and the need to report the matter to the Police and or Social Welfare.
3. FWRM management should contact the GIRLS Counsellor and or Fiji Women's Crisis Centre counsellors to provide assistance to the child. FWCC has a 24 hour confidential counselling line: 3313 300.

4. FWRM will actively encourage the child or young person to seek counselling from FWCC;
5. FWRM will need to disclose this to the parents/guardians unless they are the perpetrators.
6. FWRM Management may consult with Governance Board and the FWCC on a way forward.
7. The staff members involved in the incident themselves will have a de-briefing session with FWRM Management and if required will be directed to a support service if they need to seek to engage with a counsellor or get further psychological support.

#### **IV: FWRM volunteers, consultants, partners and friends**

1. FWRM Staff members in charge of an event where children are present must ensure that FWRM volunteers, members and partners invited are given a copy of the FWRM Child Protection Policy before the event.
2. FWRM will ensure all volunteers, consultants, members that will be involved in the activity and are in close contact with the child or young person to sign the child protection agreement and get a police clearance. (See attachment A)
3. No individuals should be present at the event without the prior knowledge of FWRM management, if volunteers/members bring along friends at the last minute, the OIC should ask them to leave the premises.

#### **V: FWRM Recruitment Process**

1. FWRM should work towards setting up procedures such as acquiring security/criminal clearance (relevant to a child's safety) for consultants and staff members as part of the recruitment process. FWRM will ensure to get further verbal referee checks and interview plans that incorporate behavioural based interview questions.

#### **VI: Informed Written Consent**

1. For ALL images of children, informed consent is required from the child and their parent/legal guardian. A teacher or community leader does not qualify as a legal guardian.
2. Informed consent includes a full understanding by the child and their parent/legal guardian of how their image and its corresponding information will be used and in what form.

#### **VII. Images and Identity of Children: Appropriate Usage**

Once informed consent is obtained:

1. Images may show the faces of children
2. NO NAMES are to be used when identifying children
3. If school/uniform/community name are shown in the image, program staff must assess the risk involved in publishing the image. (Example: "A Class 3 student in Suva"; if you believe that referencing a student level does not identify them then

that is fine.)

4. If the MEDIA have been invited to cover an event by DFAT and/or the Contractor/NGO for a DFAT funded aid activity, the requirements of taking and distributing photographic images as outlined in our Code of Conduct would apply to the media representative, as it does to our DFAT representatives. The media must be briefed prior to the event so they clearly know what is acceptable if they intend to take photographic images and reproduce them in local press, web site and additional electronic distribution such as Social Media. They must also gain informed consent.

The following apply even if informed consent has been obtained:

5. The full name, school, specific location of school/community must NOT be used in photo/video file labelling or captioning. Providing this information online, in print or through digital distribution could place children and schools at risk of opportunistic child abuse and/or child exploitation.
6. File labels, meta data or text descriptions must NOT reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

#### **VIII. Informed Consent Form – Sample attached (This informed consent only applies to that specific photographic opportunity)**

An informed consent form reflects that the subject understands how their image will be used and in what format. An appropriate informed consent form gives children and guardians the option to agree to the following:

*“I agree that [Program Name] and the Australian Government can use:*

- i *My name – FIRST NAME ONLY FOR CHILD / FULL NAME FOR ADULT*
- ii *My picture – WITH INFORMED CONSENT*
- iii *Video of me – WITH INFORMED CONSENT*
- iv *Things I said – WITH INFORMED CONSENT”*

Attachment A:

## **Child protection code of conduct**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, engaged by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, agree that while implementing FWRM funded activities, I will:

1. 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.
2. Not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
3. Not engage children in any form of sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts, as applicable to the child under the laws of the Republic of the Fiji Islands;
4. Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
5. Not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
6. 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.
7. Use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit nor harass children nor to access child pornography/exploitation material through any medium (see also 'Use of children's images for work related purposes', below).
8. Refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children in my care in the course of an FWRM initiated activity or event.
9. Refrain from hiring children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
10. Comply with all relevant local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour.
11. Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures.
12. Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with FWRM, that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

### **Use of children's images for work related purposes**

When photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, I will:

13. Assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child
14. Obtain consent from the child or a 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.

15. 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
16. Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts
17. Ensure file labels, metadata or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.
18. I understand that the onus is on me, as a person engaged by FWRM, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse when implementing FWRM activities.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_