

SAFEGUARDING POLICY SHANTI VOLUNTEER ASSOCIATION (SVA)

(Background)

The Shanti Volunteer Association (hereinafter referred to as '**SVA**') is an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that has developed with its mission to build a society in which the people can "live together and learn together". SVA is committed to ensure the rights of the children as stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to guarantee the safety and security of all people who are involved in its programmes and activities. In order to achieve this objective, SVA formulated the Safeguarding Policy (hereinafter referred to as "**the Policy**"), in consideration of the best interests of children.

Article 1 **(Purpose and scope)**

- 1 SVA involves different organizations and individuals with various levels of commitments, including board members and employees (hereinafter referred to as '**staff**'), volunteers, interns and so on. SVA is an organization that brings together people of different nationalities, ethnicities, religions and cultural backgrounds, and works with children and vulnerable groups. Therefore, the staff and partners associated with SVA (hereinafter referred to as '**partners**', including advisors, volunteers, interns, and partnering organizations and individuals such as donors, contractors, consultants, and visitors and participants of our program including the press, celebrities and politicians) have diverse attitudes and values, and because of that, the environment of our activity is potentially conducive to abuse, exploitation, neglect and harassment (hereinafter referred to as "**harmful behaviour**") of children, beneficiaries of assistance and partners through the abuse of their position and power. All people with whom SVA comes into contact have the right to be protected from all forms of harmful behaviour, regardless of age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, place of origin, disability, political and religious beliefs, ethnicity, nationality or social status. SVA does not tolerate any harmful behaviour by its staff and partners.

- 2 SVA is committed to address safeguarding throughout its programmes and activities using three pillars of prevention, reporting, and response. The Policy clarifies SVA's responsibilities for preventing harmful behaviour by its staff and partners in the course of its activities, and how SVA shall respond to and resolve any problems that arise. For individuals and organizations with whom SVA collaborates in its activities but not with a contractual relationship, SVA shall notify them of its Code of Conduct and ensure their adherence to the Code, and the relevant staff shall take responsibility for its enforcement. By applying safeguarding to all of SVA's activities, SVA aims to create a safe and secure environment for all those involved in its activities, in which risks of abuse, exploitation, harassment and any other harmful behaviour are proactively identified, prevented and monitored.

Article 2 **(Definition of safeguarding)**

- 1 In this Policy, Safeguarding is defined as "commitment to protect people, including children and at risk adults, from any harmful behaviour such as exploitation or abuse, that arises from coming into contact with staff and partners through SVA's programmes and activities". In the event that a concern about the safety of the people arises in its

activities, it is the responsibility of the SVA to address it. Harmful behaviour is any violation of an individual's rights, whether psychological, physical or in any form, and is defined in the following section. However, if, in addition to the following, an event occurs that interferes with the achievement of the Purpose in the preceding the Article, or if it is deemed necessary to add new definitions, which will be added to this section of the Policy accordingly.

(1) Physical abuse

Actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult or child. it may involve hitting, shaking, poisoning, drowning and burning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

(2) Sexual abuse

Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities, saying anything that is sexually inappropriate or offensive, and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

(3) Sexual exploitation

A form of sexual abuse that involves someone being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, disguised affection, social status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves someone being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending someone, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where the victim's options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual.

(4) Neglect and negligent treatment

Allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet someone's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral and mental development. It includes the failure to properly supervise and protect someone from harm and provide for nutrition, shelter and safe living/working conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a disabled person.

(5) Emotional abuse

Persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts with children and adults include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Article 3 (Preventing breach of Safeguarding)

SVA will prevent the harmful behaviour that could breach the Policy by taking the following actions.

- (1) SVA will ensure all staff and partners have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy.
- (2) SVA will appoint staff in charge of safeguarding (hereinafter referred to as **Focal Point**) as indicated in Article 5, to enable monitoring of activities aimed at preventing problems and improvement of the prevention mechanism.
- (3) SVA will design and undertake all its programmes and activities in a way that protect people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with SVA. This includes the way in which personal information is gathered and communicated for publicity purposes in its programmes.
- (4) SVA will implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying its staff and partners. Prior to their engagement, the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct must be explained by the Focal Point and disclosure form needs to be signed by the staff.
- (5) SVA will ensure that the staff receive training on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in SVA.
- (6) SVA will follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process stipulated in this Policy. The past concerns are maintained internally as lessons learned in order to prevent recurrence of the past incidents.

Article 4 (Adherence and enabling reports)

All SVA staff and partners are required to adhere to the Policy, and shall not engage in any behaviour that can constitute a suspected or actual safeguarding concerns.

- (1) SVA shall create and maintain an environment that supports compliance with the safeguarding policy.
- (2) Staff and partners who became aware of a safeguarding concern must not tolerate it and should report it immediately to the Focal Point or the manager. If the staff or partner does not feel comfortable reporting to the Focal Point or the line manager, they may report to any other appropriate managers in SVA or the person in charge at General Affairs and Human Resources Division. If there is a possibility of physical harm, it has to be reported to the police immediately.
- (3) SVA will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff, partners and the communities we work with, including children.
- (4) Any staff reporting concerns or complaints through whistleblowing channels or confirming the facts will be protected by SVA's Compliance and Ethics Regulation. Any partners or beneficiaries of assistance reporting concerns or confirming the facts will be protected by Article 9.
- (5) SVA will also accept complaints from external sources such as general public including the beneficiaries of assistance, partners and official bodies through channels indicated in (3).

Article 5 (Appointment and rotation of Safeguarding Focal Point)

Focal Point shall be appointed at the Secretariat and each overseas office as a point of contact (consultation desk) to receive and manage the reporting of harmful behaviours that constitute safeguarding violations (including suspected cases), and to promote the implementation of the Policy. At the Tokyo office, the Anti-harassment committee members shall serve concurrently as the Focal Point.

Article 6 (Confidentiality in safeguarding concerns)

SVA shall impose a duty of confidentiality on its staff and others who come into contact with the information at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be protected at all times. SVA will put the interests of the survivor first, and will act in a neutral manner, explaining that privacy will be observed and that the survivor will not be treated adversely for consulting SVA, and taking measures to prevent information disclosure to outsiders.

Article 7 (Response by Executive Committee, the Representative Director and the Director in charge of Human Resources)

The Executive Committee (or Representative Director and Director in charge of Human Resources) shall respond to consultations from staff or partners about harmful behaviours that can constitute a suspected or actual safeguarding concerns as follows

- (1) SVA will conduct a fact-finding investigation in line with the Compliance and Ethics Regulation.
- (2) Based on the consultation among the Executive Committee (or Representative Director and Director in charge of Human Resources), the fact of the safeguarding violation is determined and a course of action is decided.
- (3) Respecting the opinion of the survivor and in the survivor's best interest, SVA will make decisions regarding support for the survivor who has been subjected to harmful behaviour by the staff or partners.

Article 8 (Disposition)

Following the decision by the Executive Committee (or Representative Director and Director in charge of Human Resources), SVA will decide on the disciplinary action to be taken against any person who has engaged in harmful behaviour that constitutes a breach of safeguarding policy, in accordance with the Board Meeting Operation Rules and the Rules of Employment. Necessary measures will be taken to improve the working environment, such as the temporary suspension of the person suspected of committing the harmful behaviour which constitutes a breach of safeguarding policy, and the dismissal or transfer of the staff or partners who has committed the harmful behaviour.

Article 9 (Prohibition of Adverse Treatment)

SVA shall not treat any staff or partners adversely because he or she has reported concerns regarding a safeguarding violation (including suspected cases) or has cooperated in confirming the facts.

Article 10 (Obligation to Prevent Recurrence)

When a case of safeguarding violation (including suspected cases) arises, the Executive Committee shall reiterate its commitment to safeguarding and take appropriate measures to prevent recurrence. In order to prevent recurrence, the Executive Committee shall give due consideration to the privacy of the survivor when disclosing the case to anyone other than the Executive Committee and staff and others outside the Committee members.

Article 11 (Revision and Abolition)

Amendment or abolition of this Policy shall be made with the approval of the Board of Directors.

Appendix: Code of Conduct, Flow of reporting and consultation

Drafted on November 11, 2021

Flow of reporting and consultation

