



Roma Resource Center  
Ромски Ресурсен Центар  
Romano Resursno Centro

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## *Child Protection Policy*

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### Introduction

The best interests of the child, should always be the guiding principle when working with children or making decisions about them.

According the Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a “child” means “every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”

RRC is a non-profit and nongovernmental organization founded in 19-th of January 2010 which aim is to contribute to achieving the multiethnic and transparent society, improvement of the educational structure of the citizens in North Macedonia especially of Roma, protect human rights, promotion of social inclusion of marginalized groups, gender equality and strengthening of personal capacities of youth, Roma women and CSOs, active citizenship of Roma and political empowerment of the Roma community.

### Our Vision and Mission

**Vision:** The Roma Resource Centre is an independent professional organization with the aim of contributing to the development of the community and the European integration of the Republic of Macedonia.

**Mission:** RRC is a non-governmental and non-profit organization with fully developed human resources that has achieved self-sustainability that contributes to a multi-ethnic and transparent society, social inclusion of marginalized groups and gender equality, improvement of personal capacities of youth and promotion of RRC as a facilitator and provider of consultancy services of governmental and non-governmental organizations and the business sector.

RRC is experienced organization in managing of EU projects and implement activities on a local, national an international level. RRC has cooperation with more than 30 NGOs, Roma and non-Roma NGOs, 18 municipalities, 40 primary schools, 5 University in North Macedonia. Additional, RRC has international cooperation with NGOs from Greece, Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Italy and Turkey. RRC is leader organization of two non – formal networks: 1) Network for inclusive education of Roma in North



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Macedonia and 2) Network for improving of the equality of the minorities in North Macedonia.

### Activities and experience of RRC

RRC main focus is the improving the status and inclusion of Roma in the society in North Macedonia. RRC has implemented a several actions and projects related to children and youth such us: education projects, child right protection, inclusion of Roma children in preschool and primary education, etc. In addition the focus of RRC is also to enhanced the capacities of the parents for supporting of proper growth and development of children as well as provision of a healthy environment for good well-being of children.

In our portfolio of completed and ongoing projects related to Roma children, we single out the following projects where the children are the main target group:

1. *The first one is "Tutorial support for Roma students who study in the primary school in the Republic of North Macedonia".*

The main goal of the project is to contribute to increasing the enrollment rate and educational results of Roma students who study in the second, third and fourth grades in primary education in 18 municipalities in North Macedonia.

While the specific goal of the project is the provision of additional educational (tutoring) support for 3300 Roma students who show poor educational results and are included in the second, third and fourth grades in around 40 Primary schools in 18 municipalities in North Macedonia.

2. *The second project is "Building stronger local networks to enhance protection of Roma children rights".*

The aim of the project was to establish a strong network on a local level for protection of the Roma children rights. The project was implemented in seven municipalities in North Macedonia. The project was designed to provide a mechanisms and tools for monitoring of the level of respecting of the children rights and providing a systematic solutions for intervention for protection of the Roma children rights as the most vulnerable category;

3. *The third project is "Increasing the access and participation of Roma children to quality early childhood development and primary education".*

The project was implemented in three municipalities in the Republic of North Macedonia: Shuto Orizari, Tetovo and Gostivar. The project is designed to contribute to improving the access of Roma children in preschool education, to facilitate the access and enrollment of Roma children in primary schools, to support the educational progress of enrolled



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children, to strengthen the capacity of parents and the relationship between parents and educational institutions in North Macedonia. This project has two main components :

- a) Supporting the inclusion of Roma children in pre-school upbringing and education and early childhood development;
- b) Supporting the basic education of Roma students by providing tutoring support for students in the first, second and third grades, students who show poor results in the subjects of mother tongue and mathematics. The target of this project was

In addition, the project is focused on raising the awareness of parents about the importance of early involvement of their children in the educational process, as well as strengthening the skills of positive and good parenting such as to support the educational process of their children.

4. *The fourth project is "Expanding the access and the inclusion of the Roma children to Early Childhood Development services and Primary education in North Macedonia".*

The project is implementing in three municipalities in the Republic of North Macedonia: Shtip, Tetovo and Debar. The project is designed to contribute to improving the enrolment of Roma children in preschool education, to facilitate the access and enrollment of Roma children in primary schools, to support the educational progress of enrolled children, to strengthen the capacity of parents for positive parenting and their enrollment in the process of education of their children, such as enhancing the relationship between parents and educational institutions on a local level. Target group of this project is: 261 children in pre – school education, 330 in primary education and more than 1000 parents.

### Term definitions used in this Policy document

In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), a “**child**” is defined as anyone under the age of 18.

1. , “**Child abuse**” or “**maltreatment**

According to the World Health Organization” 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.



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## 2. “Child protection”

Is defined as the policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

## 3. “Child participation”

Children and young people have the right to freely express their views and that there is an obligation to listen to children’s views and to facilitate their participation in all matters affecting them within the family, schools, local communities, public services, institutions, government policy, and judicial procedures. World Vision considers child and youth’s meaningful, safe, and appropriate participation a key strategic priority for ensuring sustained child well-being and creating democratic societies with informed and engaged citizens.

### Statement of commitment

***One of the key priorities of RRC`s work is to protect and promote the rights of all children falling under its mandate.***

- *the work of RRC is guided by the principle that children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation, regardless of where he lives, what language he speaks, what religion he is, what he thinks or says, whether he is male or female, rich or poor or what his parents work*

***Also RRC pays attention to the following principles within its activities***

- to act at all times in the best interests of the children, young people and vulnerable adults for whom it provides a service.
- the primary role of the family in the care and protection of the child should be valued and maintained.
- preventing abuse and the welfare of members, children, young people, vulnerable adults and their families.
- timely handling of abuse, suspected abuse or detection of abuse.
- support for families is important in cases of suspected child abuse,
- harmonization of relevant national and international legislation
- Procedure and procedures for responding to child abuse
- working in accordance with this policy requires staff to be trained and supported.

### Assessment of risk and mitigation



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If, during the work of the RRC, it is determined that a project or activities related to children, influence on children or work with children are being carried out, then an assessment of the risks for the protection of children is required and depending on the level of identified risk, it must be risk mitigation strategies are developed.

In implementing such activities, the RRC applies an approach based on reducing, eliminating the risk for children and will be involved in the analysis, design, implementation and evaluation of projects or activities that involve or affect children.

There must also be regular monitoring of any change in risk and reporting on the effectiveness of child protection risk management.

### Code of conduct according to this Policy

RRC staff in activities involving work or contact with children adhere to behaviors intended to provide guidance and raise awareness of the importance of maintaining professional boundaries between staff and child participants.

All RRC staff and/or other associates who work and are involved in any activity and contact with children are expected to adhere to the following behaviors:

- *always put the child's welfare and safety first*
- *treat all children with respect*
- *not use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate*
- *respect a child's personal space*
- *not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services*
- *involve children and young people in decision-making, as appropriate*
- *ensure that any personal details relating to children are kept confidential*
- *wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working near children*
- *not invite unaccompanied children into private residences, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger*
- *not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case the supervisor's permission must be obtained, and ensuring that another adult is present if possible (noting that this does not apply to an individual's own children)*
- *never use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media 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 labor 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*



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- *comply with all relevant national legislation, including labor laws in relation to child labor*
- *immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy noncompliance in accordance with appropriate procedures*
- *immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, which occurred before or occurs during association with RRC*
- *be aware of behavior and avoid actions or behaviors that could be perceived by others as child exploitation and abuse.*

### Media, communication & information

The standards and principles set out below must be respected in activities involving the media and the use of images (including photographs and recordings) and stories for children.

The same principles are taken into account in activities that include visits by external photographers, film crews, journalists or visitors within the framework of RRC projects, activities and publications.

1. Journalists, photographer's/film crews must be fully briefed about RRC' child protection policy before they meet the children, who will be interviewed, photographed or filmed, and sign their commitment to adhere to this policy (see Annex 1)
2. At a minimum, obtain and document verbal consent from children and/or their parent or guardian and explain how the photograph or film will be used. Informed consent means that children are told how RRC may use the information or image/film and that they are under no obligation to agree to its use. They should also be reassured that locations and other identifying information that might lead to the location of residence of children will be changed. They will need to be asked whether they give consent that their first name is shared with the information or image/film. Written consent should be obtained, where possible (see consent forms in Annex 2)
3. Ensure photographs, films, videos etc. present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner
4. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be perceived as sexually suggestive
5. Ensure images are honest representations of the situations and the facts
6. Ensure the identities of children in photographic and electronic images are not disclosed
7. Ensure these files are stored securely and access is limited on a needs basis to relevant staff only.



## Interviewing Children

When conducting interviews with children, the following basic principles must be taken into account:

- To ensure consent for the interview from the parents/guardians of the children, as well as from the children themselves
- Appropriately and fully inform the children and their parents/guardians about the topics and content that will be covered in the interview and whether there will be notes/recording of the interview and clarification of the child's right to withdraw his consent at any time.
- Providing support/accompanying, ie having someone else present during the interview, with whom the child already knows and has a closer relationship. Whenever possible, the child should be given a choice as to who accompanies him during the interview.
- let the child know that he can stop the interview at any moment if he thinks he can't/doesn't want to continue. That is, he can withdraw his consent at any point during the interview.
- During the interview, the gender of the child should be taken into account and, accordingly, their needs. That is, whether boys and girls would be more comfortable talking to a man or a woman.

## Child Abuse Response Procedure

Any question of suspected child abuse must be taken seriously and handled in an appropriate manner that ensures the safety and protection of the child.

At meetings and/or activities where children are directly involved, they should be informed about policies and protection mechanisms in a way that is understandable and suitable for children.

Staff should normally discuss with supervisors and the director of the RRC any suspicion or situation that suggests child abuse or harm. Any information forwarded to the responsible persons in the Child Protection Organization will be treated with strict confidentiality and will focus on the following points:

- *evidence that the protection of the child has been violated;*
- *the identified risks for the child/children;*
- *measures to protect children and minimize risk;*
- *taking next steps and measures*





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Reporting suspected or actual child abuse is mandatory for all employees, consultants, contractors, experts and volunteers employed or working with RRC. Information about suspected abuse must be accurate and a detailed record should always be made at the time of knowledge/occurrence or when concerns arise (Incident Report form).

If the child's personal safety is currently at risk and/or when any form of criminal behavior is suspected to be occurring in the program, the appropriate local authorities should be informed immediately and their advice and/or other appropriate services followed. (the list of relevant contacts is given in the Annex). Information sharing will be limited to those who need to be informed to protect children and every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

### **Role and responsibilities of staff according to the Policy**

The persons engaged in the RRC as well as the collaborators of the RRC are actively involved in the promotion of children's safety, specifically in the context of the protection of children from abuse, as well as in the protection and easier access to their rights.

The RRC ensures that all staff working with children, (both those in receipt of income and those voluntarily involved in activities) are properly selected and vetted.

All staff are expected to read the Child Protection Policy which will be provided to them, undertake to comply with it by signing a commitment form and attend child protection training at a level appropriate to their position.

The RRC will enable such knowledge to be constantly updated and relevant. As part of the training and provision of information on child protection, the RRC will enable:

- RRC's comprehensive written documents on the Child Protection Policy, to all new employees/partners;
- make the Child Protection Policy available on the organization's website;
- provide child protection training for staff assigned to projects where they will work directly with children.

If a RRC's member, associate or representative contravenes the policy, whether within or outside the context of our work, in ways that are criminal, grossly infringe children's rights, or contravene the principles and standards contained in this document, RRC will take immediate disciplinary action and any other action appropriate to the circumstances.

### **Monitoring of implementation of the Policy**

The RRC President and Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for this policy and responsible for its implementation.





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The monitoring of adherence to this policy is carried out through mandatory monitoring of the standards for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy by all authorities/superior persons in the organization.

The policy and practices will be reviewed annually or when there is a change in national legislation that also covers children. Progress, performance and lessons learned will be reported to the Board of Directors and included in the organization's annual reports.

Monitoring and evaluation will be carried out by checking whether the standards of the Child Protection Policy have been implemented and whether the protective measures are working. This will be done by conducting a survey among staff and/or interns and volunteers on how they are fulfilled, how effective they are and what needs to be improved.