

# Kaya Responsible Travel Child Protection Document

One of the biggest challenges facing people around the world, is the ability to protect children and understanding how this is possible. Many people do not realise that they are an important part of this process. Kaya's volunteers will come into contact with children either directly or indirectly, especially when working on one of our community based projects. Children's Rights is important to Kaya and our partners and this document sets out why this is so, some of the ethics and issues and what Kaya is doing to incorporate these into its working practices, project and volunteer selection.

## Why is there a need for child protection?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was introduced in 1944, but it became clear that children should not be considered in the same way as adults, and that the world should focus on their needs. This was because there are fundamental differences between adults and children; their knowledge, skills, abilities and capacity are less and therefore a convention solely focused on children was needed. This led to the production of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, and its approval by the UN in 1992.

Whether we like it or not, there are bad people who do bad things, there is inequity in access and available resources and protection in place to ensure that children are kept safe. People abused children all over the world, in rich and poor societies. Abusers are not always easy to identify, and can be people who work with children, those who care for them, those that teach them and even those who say they are helping them.

## What is child protection?

The Convention has many sections but the main headings are seen to be:

- Rights to Survival - fulfilment of children's most basic needs, including food, shelter, health care and clean water, as well as a birth certificate ensuring their access to legal and social services.
- Rights to Development - ensure children's ability to reach their full potential, including education, play and freedom of thought, and religion.
- Rights to Protection - children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, have access to rehabilitative services, and are given fair treatment within the legal and justice system.
- Rights to Participation - children are able to express their views and meet with others, allowing them to take an active part in their families, communities and nations; to form their own ideas and religious beliefs, and to access information that is helpful to them.



Many of these principles were incorporated in the Millennium Development Goals

## Who does it protect?

Although primarily targeting children, who are less able to stand up for themselves, it also protects adults in a variety of ways. It protects:

- The communities - from people with wrongful intentions, from people within their own communities who are mistreating children outside of cultural norm, educates them about their rights
- The projects - from criticism, abuse, people with wrongful intentions
- The volunteer - from being accused of something, from putting themselves in a situation which they may not realise is inappropriate. Children can also use favouritism to get their own way.
- Kaya - from criticism, from association with people and projects with wrongful intentions
- Our overseas partners - from criticism, from association with people and projects with wrongful intentions

## How does it relate to volunteering placements?

Many volunteers may ask why does it affect me? For example, I am volunteering on a lion rehabilitation, so I'm working with animals not children. However, the reality is that we are working with vulnerable people in communities where we will come into contact with children. Many of the young people you meet will be under 18 and not yet adults. They are vulnerable and often open to abuse, even if they perhaps don't realise it.

Ways you may come into contact with children include:

- Volunteers may be staying with a homestay family where children live in the home.
- Volunteers may also become involved in community education regarding wildlife, environmental conservation etc.
- Your project might offer an after school programme for children

Specific examples where you may wonder about elements of the Convention of the Rights of the Child while volunteering include:

- Right to protection -
  - physical discipline of children in schools and at home
  - girls not going out by themselves and dressing modestly (although some could say that this is a problem for western societies)
  - children out in cities and towns at night without adult supervision (a problem in Siem Reap)
  - child labour - prominent in cities such as Accra, Cape Hanoi and many others
- Right to development -
  - chores at home – children will do them, and girls more so than boys
  - lack of access to education especially girls, particularly a problem in rural areas reliant on agriculture
  - lack of access to sex education
  - marriage being more important for girls, and at an early age
- Right to survival –
  - access to healthcare (can't afford treatment),

- lack of understanding about good nutrition for children,
- children may not be treated because of traditional practices
- Participation –
  - children not allowed to attend school, especially girls,
  - children are not allowed to participate in sporting activities, especially teenagers,
  - arranged marriage (right to chose)

For many of these issues the answers are not always straight forward. In this document we hope to provide some guidance as to what volunteers should be aware of and who to speak to if they have any concerns.

## Some of the issues



Child Protection is not as straight forward as it sounds. Although many nations ratified and signed the Convention, in reality there are many interpretations of the rules. It's critics say that it has a strong western biased and doesn't take into account local cultural norms and beliefs plus the economic realities of different countries. Some key issues are:

### Transparency versus honour

In many western societies, transparency is seen as being very important. However, honour is highly valued by others. An example is that if a daughter is abused and the family speak out, the daughter is shamed for being "spoilt" not the abuser for his actions. Maintaining family honour is highly valued.

### Gender equality versus patriarchy

This is an issue being tackled by many women's rights activists and it affects girls in many ways. Women and girls are supposed to have the same rights as men and boys to education etc. However, in some societies much more emphasis is placed on roles such as looking after the family, cooking etc while the men have the responsibility for being what they can and hoping they can provide financially for their families.

### Empowerment versus patronage

In the modern western world, empowerment is a commonly used word where different groups and individuals are included in the decision-making processes and have access to spiritual, economic, political and social opportunities. However, there are many that do not have this and these are often ethnic groups and disadvantaged sections of society e.g. people with disabilities,

refugees etc. Patronage doesn't come without its criticisms as it can be seen as encouraging those in power to support / give charity to those less fortunate. It may seem as beneficial as it looks good for the patron and helps those in need. However, in reality the power remains with the powerful.

### Justice versus harmony

Peace in communities is regarded as being important above justice in societies. This is certainly the case in many communities where young girls have been raped but not reported. The perpetrator is often known to the family but nothing is done to keep the peace rather than seek justice for the victim.

### Individualism versus collectivism

In the west the rights of the individual are paramount. Sometimes individual interests collide with those of the family or group. In developing societies collectivism is seen as a priority especially within family units. This is true when considering the futures of children, especially girls.

It is therefore difficult to determine what is the right action or approach to children's rights when there are competing views. Kaya has tried to incorporate some common sense principles to help volunteers, projects and staff when confronted with child protection issues. However, there will be cultural variations and we encourage our volunteers to discuss these with their project and in-country representative to find out how children's rights and child protection are dealt with locally..

### What steps has Kaya taken to implement child protection guidelines?

Kaya always responds to concerns from volunteers, project partners and independent people about child protection. Any concerns are logged and investigated. Kaya has taken steps to raise awareness, prevent and investigate any reported concerns or incidents. Specific steps that Kaya has taken to implement child protection guidelines are:

#### Volunteer preparation

As part Kaya's Child Protection strategy, volunteers on all community, childcare and health placement projects are asked to obtain a police background check. Volunteers staying with homestay families are also asked to provide a police background check. Many of Kaya's partners also require a police record check so this will also appear on wildlife projects, for example. This information is included in each individual project summary.

For the majority of our community placements we ask for CV/resumes, interview potential volunteers and in some cases ask for references. If a volunteer is aged under 18, we obtain parental consent forms so that the parents are fully aware that their child will be treated as an adult, unless they are participating in a focused youth programme, or accompanied by their parents.

Kaya's orientation training includes information about the treatment of children in the country of the placement, as this will often be very different from the home country of the volunteer.



The orientation sets out guidelines for volunteers regarding appropriate treatment of, and relationships with, local children. These steps are put in place to protect the volunteer, the project Kaya and most importantly the child.

Kaya has produced a document for volunteers, that sets out some do's and don'ts regarding interaction with children and also a process to follow if they have any concerns regarding child protection at a project, homestay or community setting. When they are in-country, they will be able to report any concerns to their local coordinator as well as back to Kaya head office. All reports and incidents are taken seriously and followed up.

### Project standards

- We only work with projects that we or respected partners have vetted
- We work with valued partners who share our concerns about child protection and have good practices in place
- We work with a handful of orphanages and children's homes that have a genuine need for support. We request information about
  - The need for the orphanage
  - Steps taken to reunite children with family, or to spend time with family members
  - The different elements of care offered by the orphanage
  - How it is funded

### Staff knowledge

All Kaya staff receive child Protection training and are aware of the need for good child protection practices. If any staff member becomes aware of any concerns regarding child protection, these are flagged with management and investigated.

### Kaya communications

Kaya will ensure that it protects the identity of children by not including their names in any communications, unless this has specifically been agreed prior to doing so with their parents or guardians and in no way puts the child at risk. Kaya will change the names of any children referenced in articles to protect their identity.

### Summary

Child Protection is a huge and complex issue and Kaya Responsible Travel is committed to implementing standards and materials necessary to ensure that volunteers, projects and staff are aware of the issues, as well as a process to follow should concerns be raised. Kaya will do it's utmost to stay abreast of issues relating to child protection through it's contacts in international development, it's project partners, news and global initiatives. regular reviews will take place, especially if any concerns are raised by Kaya's volunteers about projects in its portfolio.



# Child Protection Guidelines for Kaya Responsible Travel Volunteers, Interns and Students

One of your duties as a responsible volunteer, intern or student with Kaya, is to be aware of Child Protection guidelines and issues and make sure you know how to act and what and when to report when you are overseas. Kaya also sets out ethical and unethical behaviour and communications, in an effort to establish the boundaries of acceptable relationships with children. If other volunteers, staff or other people are displaying any behaviours that appear to contravene what is expected volunteers are required to report this to their project contact in-country in the first instance.

## What guidelines are you expected to follow?

- Consider these points before taking photographs of children:
  - Are the children appropriately dressed - avoid picture of naked children, or children sitting showing their underwear
  - Do you have permission to do so from an adult, either their parent or the project/teacher?
  - Why are you taking their picture?
  - Do you need to show their face?
  - What are you going to do with the photograph?
- Think before buying anything from a child
  - Should this child be selling you anything?
  - Why aren't they at school?
  - Will they really keep the money, or will they have to give it to someone else?
  - Is there a project you could donate to instead?
- Do not take a child away from the project
  - Are you authorised to do so?
  - What happens if there is a problem?
  - Do you speak their language?
- Do not act in ways to shame, humiliate or degrade children
- Do not use force when dealing with children, even if local people do so
- Do not take responsibility for children when under the influence of alcohol
- You are responsible for your actions and failure to act in a responsible way that falls in line with Kaya's code of conduct will result in you being dismissed from the Kaya programme.
- Do not take child back to your accommodation with you and certainly never have them in your room
- Conduct all activities where you are visible to other people. Do not spend time alone in a room with a closed door, and if you need to do so, ensure another adult is present.
- Do not give presents to one child, without prior consent of the project or in country coordinator as this leads to favouritism and can lead to resentment. It is preferable that volunteers make contributions to the projects and discuss this Kaya before doing so.
- Minimise physical contact with children, unless it is for health and safety reasons

## What can I do to help?

- Ask your in-country coordinator about children's rights and child protection in your destination
- Read about Children's Rights and Child Protection before you travel

- Display appropriate language and behaviours when dealing with children, especially reflecting male-female relationships taking into account local culture
- Support children's development by organising and supporting projects that arrange activities to help children build their self esteem and encourage independence
- Include all children in your activities
- Respect child protection policies in place with the partner organisation and project
- Be a positive role model by refraining from drinking or smoking around children
- Report issues to your local coordinator to find out if it is something that is culturally normal.
  - Do not panic the child.
  - Do not make any promises
  - Tell the appointed contact at the project and your in-country coordinator as soon as possible
  - Do not take any further direct action at the project unless you are asked to
  - Feedback your concern to Kaya once it has been dealt with, included any action that was taken by you and the project
- Email us if you are still concerned and don't think your concerns are being taken seriously. We will take the matter seriously and explore it further.