

# HO CHI MINH CITY CHILD RIGHTS' WORKING GROUP

**Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2009, at 10.00 hours, at the offices of  
Terre des hommes Foundation - Lausanne**

(9/2 Dang Van Ngu, Ward 10, Phu Nhuan District, Ho Chi Minh City).

## MINUTES

### **1) Welcome and Introduction to the CRWG – Paul Finnis, Chairman (Saigon Children's Charity) and Johanna Risse (Terre des hommes Foundation - Lausanne)**

**Introductions** were made – see contact list for those present.

Organisers are very happy to see so many people attending. In particular, the attendance of many Vietnamese organisations is a positive sign.

Vietnam state signed the Convention for the Rights of the Child, and NGOs, local authorities and INGOs are responsible to make it part of reality.

To achieve that, it is crucial to work together to ensure a safer environment for children.

**Terms of Reference** (<http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/?q=content/hcmc-crwg-terms-reference-english>)

The purpose of the group is to enhance and develop communication and coordination between INGO's, NGO's and Local Authorities in the field of Child Rights. During last meeting in June, the group has decided to focus its work on Child Protection Policy.

*Specific objectives*

- To share practical experiences, successes and lessons learned for the mutual benefit of organizations and associations involved.
- To facilitate networking among child focused organizations and associations, and serve as a focal point in HCMC for consultation, policy dialogue and common statements.
- To liaise with the CRWG in Hanoi in contributing towards a national focal point.
- To organise joint activities related to the rights of the child.
- To collaborate in responding to opportunities for input on various documents, government policies and laws as well as to support the implementation of relevant government programmes.

### **Background**

The HCMC INGO Discussion Group agreed 4 thematic groups: HIV/Aids; Disability; Rights of the Child; Administration

While the INGO Discussion Group is reserved to INGOs, all of the thematic groups are open to local NGOs and local authorities too.

The Child Rights Working Group (CRWG) has agreed to focus on Child Protection Policy. The group is still available for information exchange and problem solving on other subjects.

### **Focus of this work**

To understand more about Child Protection Policy, to enhance communication and coordination between stakeholders on the subject and to provide support to each other to keep children safe at all times.

With this objective in mind, on September 21<sup>st</sup>, Paul and Johanna attended the CRWG in Hanoi for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time. Hanoi CRWG has also decided to work on the issue of Child Protection, so the intention is that both groups coordinate their actions and exchange information.

*Brief feedback from the meeting in Hanoi:*

The group is interested in the work done in HCMC. Paul and Johanna will attend their next meeting on Monday November 9<sup>th</sup> to update them and consider the options to collaborate.

Hanoi CRWG also discussed the finalisation of the NGO report to the CRC Committee.

When Vietnam signed the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child, it committed to report regularly to the Child Rights Committee (Geneva) on the implementation of the Convention in Vietnam.

The State has recently finalized its report for the period 2002-2007. The Hanoi CRWG has been working on a NGO report to complement the State report and it is about to be finalized too. Both reports will be sent to the members of HCMC CRWG.

### **Key Objectives of the work on Child Protection Policy**

- To provide a platform for Child Rights organisations to share experiences and support each other
- To develop a common understanding on Child Protection inside institutions and agree on a set of joint principles that organisations can use to support discussions with the media, government and other organizations
- To create a stronger voice
- To enable organisations to develop their own Child Protection Policy by translating relevant chapters of Keeping Children Safe toolkit (see below) into Vietnamese and exchanging experience.
- To run workshops or else to support the development of a policy by organisations to ensure that children are safe inside institutions

## **2) Introduction to child protection policy using "Keeping Children Safe" tool kit - Why is it important to have a child protection policy?**

Upon the increasing awareness that abuse can take place everywhere and that there are potential risks to children from adults in position of trust, a coalition of INGOs has decided to work on how to keep children safe, since 2003. Our work will be based on a tool kit that has been developed by this coalition, to support organisations in the area of Child Protection policy. It is available in English and French. Useful tools need to be identified and translated into Vietnamese.

A video from the toolkit was shown.

The main messages were:

- From Children - What makes them feel safe / unsafe
- For organisations – The impact of having (or not having) a Child Protection Policy within an organisation and its ability to protect children and deter potential threats to their safety (from people). Organisations are protected; staff is protected (they know how to behave with children and how to deal with concerns); children are protected (risks are minimised).

The toolkit comprises documents on “standards for child protection”, how to implement the standards” and “training material for child protection. There is also video material available.

Downloadable documents here: <http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk>

### **Feedback and comments from the group:**

*Functioning of the group*

- It is important that we all work together to protect children.
- It was also suggested that the group develops a network with clear lines of roles and responsibilities.
- Each organisation is different, so common principles should be general.
- Working conditions are different within organisations but the context (of safe guarding) and principles are the same.

- Need for common agreed principles to ensure consistency and better accountability across all organisations

#### *Understanding Child Protection Policy*

- There is a lack of common understanding about Child Abuse / Child protection
- Need to ensure that the environment and facilities are recognised as part of principles / policy to ensure the safety of children
- It is not sufficient to just have a policy in place. Staff need to understand it and be able to apply it to suit the circumstances
- A policy should be used to avoid violations but also to be creative in programs.
- Need to think about partners as well
- Child Protection policies should be made in writing as it is more professional and ensures that everyone can access the information.
- Any guidelines / principles need to be simple initially and develop as understanding develops.
- Recognition that there are different issues between rural and urban settings
- Recognition needs to be given to the different types of abuse and not only sexual abuse

#### *Child Protection policies in participants' organisations*

- Only a few organisations have policies in place although several are working towards having one.
- UNICEF and Save the Children are working with individual organisations on Child Protection systems. They cover 3 steps to protection: 1) Prevention through life skills training 2) Intervention (rescue), 3) Recovery ( Support for the child post incident)
- UNICEF implements its Provincial Child-Friendly Programme which seeks integrated interventions regarding children issues. Ho Chi Minh City is one area of intervention. They intend to bring together NGOs and INGOs to share experiences.
- One organisation includes it as part of induction for all staff and they must sign a code of conduct.
- Some organisations have signed a policy via partners that have policies in place (condition of partnership working) but the staff and children might not be fully aware of it.
- Funding agencies require child protection policies

## **2) Next steps**

→ HCMC CRWG works with Hanoi CRWG to create a common way of working for a safer environment for children

→ The contact list of participants will be sent to all with the minutes and a mailing list for the group will be set up.

→ The agenda will be circulated prior to each meeting to allow for feedback

→ The frequency of meetings was agreed to be every 6 weeks:

The next one will be on **Friday 13 November 09, 9am**

→ The participants will take turns in hosting the meeting with a contribution by each participant to share the costs of food and / or translation.

It can be a great opportunity to visit the various organisations.

The venue for the next meeting has not been decided yet. Suggestions are welcome.

Ho Chi Minh City / Caroline Mayger – Johanna Risse - Paul Finnis – Nguyen Thi Hong Yen / Nguyen Thi Thanh / 25.10.09