

## **SUSTAIN Projects - Myanmar INC**

### **POLICY ON CHILD SAFEGUARDING**

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## 1.0 Statement on Commitment to Child Safeguarding Policy

SUSTAIN believe that all forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children are contrary to concepts of justice. We support the rights of children and will act without hesitation to ensure a child safe environment is maintained.

SUSTAIN believes that all children have a right to survival, development, protection and participation as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989 and will always seek to uphold these rights.

SUSTAIN is committed to helping alleviate the suffering of children. We do this because we have the means and the moral obligation to change the lives of children who are orphaned, homeless, living in emergency situations, affected by armed conflict, trapped in exploitative labour or who become victims of sexual abuse.

SUSTAIN recognises a child as someone under the age of 18. SUSTAIN also accept that steps must be taken to protect families and children from those who might seek to gain trust and access to young children through a development agency's work. The possibility of staff, donors or volunteers abusing or harming children is one which we take seriously and are committed to working to prevent.

We believe that child protection is a corporate and an individual responsibility. All SUSTAIN staff will be made aware of the need for a child protection concern in all that we do. Associations with anyone found to be engaging in abusive and exploitative relationships with children will be broken. SUSTAIN will take all possible steps to develop child protecting procedures and practices.

We recognise that amongst different cultures, contexts and legal systems it is difficult to define a universal standard and understanding of both child abuse and protection. This policy attempts to set out a standard that can be translated into different cultures and circumstances. This policy will need to be applied in ways that are culturally sensitive but without condoning acts of maltreatment that are universally described as abusive.

SUSTAIN is committed to:

1. Valuing, listening to and respecting children and young people as well as the promotion of their welfare and protection.
2. Safe recruitment, supervision and training of all those who will work with children in order to prevent abuse.

3. Procedures to deal with allegations of abuse quickly and effectively.
4. Supporting those who have been affected by abuse recently or in their past.
5. Evaluating the existence and effectiveness of local child welfare/judicial infrastructure and all child protection statutes that are prescribed by the local childcare authorities of the countries and cultures in which we work.

We believe that all children have equal rights to protection and that it is never acceptable for a child to experience abuse of any kind. SUSTAIN takes its duty of care seriously and will aim at all times to provide the safest possible programs and environments for children. This will be achieved by identifying and managing risks that may lead to harm and a commitment to undertake regular reviews of this policy.

## 2.0 Purpose of the Policy

As a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), SUSTAIN is committed to developing, implementing and reviewing guidelines and practices which promote the safety and well-being of all children accessing its services and programs, in particular to minimise the risk of abuse to children (See Commitment 1.4 of the ACFID Code of Conduct).

This Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP) has been developed to provide a practical guide to safeguarding children in SUSTAIN's programs. It will outline a range of risk management strategies that will be implemented which will reduce the risk of children being harmed. The CSP aims to develop awareness and training to educate staff, volunteers and others about child abuse and promote a child safe and a child friendly culture where everyone is committed to keeping children safe. It will provide guidance to staff, volunteers and others on how to work respectfully and effectively with children. This will provide all stakeholders, including staff and others with a safe working environment.

Additionally, the SUSTAIN CSP will provide a framework for accountability and guidance on how to respond to or raise concerns and allegations of child abuse. It aims to create an open and aware environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, which protects the rights of all.

SUSTAIN is resolutely committed to adhering to local and international child protection criminal laws, which prohibit the abuse and exploitation of children. These include local laws where SUSTAIN's programs exist, and international laws and Conventions in relation to all forms of child abuse and child exploitation, including: child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, child labor and child pornography. SUSTAIN will advocate strongly for the protection of children from all forms of exploitation,

especially sexual exploitation and actively incorporate CSP practices in all of our programs and activities.

### 3.0 Guiding Principles

SUSTAIN endorses The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as the universal foundation for child protection that takes as its fundamental principle that all children have their own indivisible rights. It is our conviction that any form of child abuse and exploitation is unacceptable and our stance is for a zero tolerance policy on all forms of child and sexual abuse. We also believe that all children should be equally protected and assisted regardless of their gender, nationality, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, physical or mental health or criminal background.

SUSTAIN recognises that all children have a right to be safe at all times, and thus understands their obligation to provide safe and protective services and environments and its duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe from harm. Adherence to this CSP is a mandatory requirement for all staff, volunteers and others and SUSTAIN will ensure that all staff and relevant stakeholders are made aware of the CSP and their responsibilities towards it.

As a member of ACFID, SUSTAIN is equally committed to the standards of ACFID's Code of Conduct and the principle that all decisions regarding the welfare and protection of children are made based on the Best Interests of the Child Principle. This principle requires that in making decisions, due consideration must be given so that the child receives maximum benefit possible from services provided, and that the positive impacts of any course of action outweigh any negative impacts.

### 4.0 Context

Child abuse is a global problem that affects both boys and girls. It has existed since the beginning of time and is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social practices. Children are abused physically, sexually, emotionally and through neglect. Children are forced to endure the most hazardous forms of child labour including sweat shops and prostitution. In some countries boys are kidnapped and forced into armed conflict as soldiers. In many countries children experience severe corporal punishment in schools. Children living in poverty are at an increased risk of child abuse and exploitation:

- According to the World Health Organisation (2016) a quarter of all adults worldwide report having been physically abused as a child.
- An estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked every year. (UNICEF 2006).

- In the world's poorest countries 1 in 4 children are engaged in work that is potentially harmful to their health (UNICEF 2018)
- Children with disabilities are four times more likely to suffer from abuse or neglect (WHO, 2017)

The responsibility for ensuring CSP and standards are developed and implemented within the Australian context will remain with the National Director of SUSTAIN with the support where applicable of SUSTAIN's Committee of Management.

In Australia, members and supporters of the Australian Delivery Organisation (ADO), SUSTAIN are engaged in public fundraising, advocacy and awareness raising events.

Overseas, SUSTAIN works in conjunction with the In-Country Development Organisation (ICDO), providing funding to carry out or implement local community programs, aid and relief activities mainly in the country of Myanmar. This may involve visits to refugee camps along the Thailand-Myanmar border or within Myanmar by approved SUSTAIN staff, volunteers, medical personnel or others to provide aid or assistance to children and their communities. Outside of the local context, the Child safeguarding practices of SUSTAIN are therefore to be consistent with the requirements set forth in this document and in accordance with the local laws of various jurisdictions of implementation and the CSP of our implementing partners.

While most child abuse occurs within families and communities, children also experience abuse and exploitation in organisations that provide them with support and services. Experience has found that physical, emotional abuse and neglect in child focussed organisations and institutions are less systematic and usually unplanned. It is usually the result of poor conditions, bad work practices and negligent management. However child sexual abuse in organisations is often planned and premeditated. Child sex offenders target organisations working with children in order to gain access to victims. They will seek work in organisations that provide opportunities to make contact with children and an environment where their abuse may go undetected. Child sex offenders will be attracted to organisations with inadequate recruitment practices and supervision. Over the last decade many Western countries have enacted tougher laws against child sex offending and many child-focussed organisations have implemented tighter screening practices for staff and volunteers. These improved child protection measures have led to increasing numbers of child sex offenders moving overseas to seek work in developing countries and development programs. They will seek work in countries with inadequate child protection laws and law enforcement as well as countries where children and their families are vulnerable to exploitation. During recent responses to natural disasters and emergencies it was widely reported that people who pose a risk to children (e.g. convicted child sex offenders) applied for positions in programs that brought them into contact with vulnerable children.

SUSTAIN is aware that the work that they are engaged in both in Australia and overseas may provide opportunities for child sex offenders and will continually work to minimise these risks.

## 5.0 Definitions

### Duty of Care

Duty of Care is a common law concept that refers to the responsibility of the organisation to provide children with an adequate level of protection against harm. It is the duty of the organisation to protect children from all reasonably foreseeable risk of injury.

### Child and young person

A child or young person is regarded to be any person under the age of 18 years, unless a nation's laws recognise adulthood earlier.

### Child Protection

Is the term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being abused or maltreated.

### Child Abuse

Abuse happens to male and female children of all ages, ethnicity and social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and political persuasion. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying, child labour and domestic violence. Both boys and girls can be the victims of abuse, and abuse can be inflicted on a child by both men and women, as well as by young people themselves. In some cases, professionals and other adults working with children in a position of trust also abuse children.

### Physical abuse

This occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

### Emotional abuse

This occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name-calling, being put down or continual coldness from parent or caregiver to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth.

### Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide the child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.

### Sexual abuse

This occurs when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification - regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including threats and exposure to pornography.

### Child-Sex Tourism

ECPAT International defines child-sex tourism as

*“ \_ the commercial sexual exploitation of children by men or women who travel from one place to another usually from a richer country to one that is less developed, and there engage in sexual acts with children, defined as anyone aged under 18 years of age.” (ECPAT International, 2006)*

### Bullying

- Bullying is the inappropriate use of power by an individual or group, with intent to injure either physically or emotionally. It is usually deliberate and repetitive. The bullying may be physical or psychological (verbal and non-verbal).
- Physically, bullying includes pushing, hitting, punching, kicking or any other action causing hurt or injury.
- Verbal bullying includes insults, taunts, threats and ridicules.
- Psychological bullying includes physical intimidation and ostracism.

### Particularly vulnerable children

Child abuse takes place not only within the family environment, but also outside the family, including: institutions, at work, on the streets, in war zones and emergencies.

### Children in emergencies

Children in emergencies are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. In an emergency or crisis situation, children are extremely vulnerable when they become part of a displaced or traumatised population.

## 6.0 Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all national staff and other key groups both in Australia and on-site at projects in Myanmar. 'Staff' refers to: full time, part time, international and national and also those engaged on short term contracts such as: consultancies, researchers, photographers etc. 'Others' refers to: visitors, volunteers, project donors, board members, trustees, staff in partnership agencies, and any other individuals or groups that have contact with the organisation both in Australia and overseas.

## 7.0 Child Protection Risk Management

SUSTAIN recognizes that there are a number of potential risks to children in the delivery of our programs to the vulnerable and disadvantaged. In recognizing these risks, SUSTAIN is committed to proactively assessing and managing these risks to children in our programs (and in the communities in which we work) to reduce the risk of harm. This is achieved by examining each program and its potential impact on children. Programs that involve direct work with children are considered a higher risk, and therefore require more stringent child protection procedures. However, as children are part of every community in which we work, we are always mindful of potential risks.

Risk management is an on-going part of every activity. A child protection risk assessment of the circumstances of children will be incorporated into all surveys conducted prior to any new or emerging SUSTAIN project (see Appendix 4). Where relevant, such assessments will include plans to work with community leaders, caregivers and communities to reduce risks facing vulnerable children and to address the needs of children who are in situations of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

SUSTAIN staff and others will be continually made aware of risks, and actively minimize opportunities and situations where children can be harmed. A child abuse incident reporting sheet has been developed and all SUSTAIN staff are to be made aware of its existence. (See Appendix 3)

## 8.0 Code of Conduct for Working With Children

Staff members and others are responsible for maintaining a professional role with children, which means establishing and maintaining clear professional boundaries that serve to protect everyone from misunderstandings or a violation of the professional relationship.

All SUSTAIN staff, volunteers and others are required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the organisation's child safe behaviour protocols and should conduct themselves in a manner consistent with their role as a representative of SUSTAIN and a positive role model to children. SUSTAIN has developed their child safe code of conduct primarily to protect children but also staff and the organisation from false accusations of inappropriate behaviour or abuse by providing clear behavioural guidelines and expectations.

SUSTAIN's child safe code of conduct includes:

## **I WILL:**

- Respect cultural differences and treat all children and young people with dignity and respect in attitude, language and actions.
- Be concerned with the reputation and perception of SUSTAIN and seek to reflect the organisation's Mission Statement, values and Core Beliefs in all of my relationships and activities with children and young people.
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers and have children and young people participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Report any concerns of child abuse to the appropriate people and speak up when I observe concerning behaviours of colleagues.
- Recognise that inappropriate behaviour towards children, including failure to follow SUSTAIN behaviour protocols, is grounds for discipline. (Disciplinary action will vary depending on the offence, and serious offences including sexual abuse will be considered gross misconduct resulting in instant dismissal from employment, volunteer/internship or board membership).
- Agree that at all times staff should be transparent in their actions and whereabouts.
- Take responsibility for ensuring that I am accountable and do not place myself in positions where there is a risk of allegations being made. (Where possible and practical, the 'two-adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where children are involved and are present at all times, should be followed. If this is not possible, SUSTAIN personnel are encouraged to look for alternatives such as being accompanied by community members on visits to children).

## **I WILL NOT:**

- Engage in discrimination, prejudice, inappropriate or offensive language or oppressive behaviour of any kind that is intended to shame, humiliate or belittle children.
- Stay alone overnight with one or more children, understanding that it is unacceptable behaviour to take a child under your care to your home to stay overnight unsupervised or to sleep in the same bed as a child with whom you are working.
- Hire children as 'house help' Even though providing employment for a child may be culturally acceptable and provide benefits not otherwise available to the child, it may lead to misunderstandings and is inconsistent with SUSTAIN's work to ban exploitative child labour.
- Hold, kiss, hug, fondle or touch children in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way. Whilst touch can be healthy and good, it is never appropriate if it is meeting the needs of the worker rather than the needs of the child.

- Smack, hit or physically assault children or young people.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assisting with toileting or changing clothes.
- Act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children. (SUSTAIN personnel need to be aware that they may work with children, who because of circumstances and abuses they have experienced may use a relationship to obtain special attention. The adult is always considered responsible even if a child behaves seductively. Adults should avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position).
- Develop sexual relationships with children or relationships with children that may be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child.
- Condone or participate in, behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians.
- Seek to make contact and spend time with any child or young person outside the program times.
- Use my own or SUSTAIN's computers, mobile phones, video and digital cameras inappropriately, nor use them for the purpose of exploiting or harassing children.
- Use any disciplinary measures towards children that are violent or intended to humiliate the child.

## 9.0 Development program planning and implementation

SUSTAIN will maintain its commitment to work with our ICDO to ensure that they, and any locally field based partners, implement child protection measures. This will include:

- Working together to build our child protection capacity through regular training
- Being aware of each others Child Safeguarding Policies and being accountable to each other to maintain the standards within the policies
- Child Safeguarding clauses in partnership agreements and child protection measures, including risk assessments, outlined in all project proposals and reports
- Regular monitoring of the ICDO Child Safeguarding Measures by SUSTAIN

## 10.0 Team or Individual Visits to Projects

SUSTAIN recognises the need to implement specific guidelines to manage the child protection risks within its sponsorship programs and visits. These guidelines include ensuring that:

- All team and individual visits are arranged in advance through SUSTAIN.
- On receiving a request from a team or individual to visit a project, the SUSTAIN will issue all relevant application forms for approval.
- All teams must attend a briefing meeting prior to contact with children.
- All visitors - teams or individuals - to any projects must be advised of behaviour protocols that should reflect national and local sensitivities. They should also read a copy of this CSP policy and sign the Working with Children Code of Conduct before going to the projects.
- While visiting projects, teams or individuals must be accompanied by a member of SUSTAIN staff and will not normally be allowed to stay overnight. Under no circumstances should an individual be allowed to visit a project alone.
- SUSTAIN will retain the right to cancel a team or individuals visit at any time. Accompanying staff must inform the relevant person/s if they have any suspicions, so that the situation can be monitored.
- Actual or suspected cases of abuse or inappropriate behaviour must be reported immediately and appropriate action taken. This may include criminal investigation and potential severance of the relationship with SUSTAIN.
- Children should not be invited to leave or taken away from their communities, nor invitations to the visitor's country issued.
- All gifts and correspondence must be screened and approved by SUSTAIN.

## 11.0 Use of Children's Images

SUSTAIN will at all times portray children in a respectful, appropriate and consensual way. Our guidelines on the use of children's images, in line with the ACFID Code of Conduct Commitment 6.2.2 are:

- A child should always be portrayed 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.
- A child and its family must always be asked for consent when using their images. When asking for consent to use the image, details should be given as to how and where this image will be used.
- There should be no identifying information of the child used in the publication of images with their location, and GPS tracking turned off.

- Children should be portrayed as part of their community. We recognise that the children we work with are in reality victims, however, the child's dignity should still be preserved whilst presenting the reality.
- Local cultural traditions should be assessed regarding restrictions for reproducing personal images. Images should be an honest representation of the context and the facts. SUSTAIN's standard is that web sites and other promotional materials should not use scanned images of children that do not ethnically portray their true circumstances. In liaison with people supplying images to SUSTAIN, every effort should be made to ensure that all photographs used in publicity comply with the standard.
- When sending images electronically, file labels should not reveal identifying information.
- All photographers will be screened for their suitability, including police checks where appropriate.
- Language that implies a relationship of power should also be avoided.
- Individuals or organisations requesting the use of SUSTAIN resources such as DVDs or photographs are expected to use materials in a manner that portrays SUSTAIN values and mission regarding our work and the children we work with. Furthermore, failure to adhere to the agreed upon use of the material will result in the immediate termination of our permission to use the subject materials and/or require immediate return of all materials provided by SUSTAIN as well as any copies of such materials.

These guidelines will be available and given to all visitors to project sites.

## 12.0 Employment of Staff and Volunteers

SUSTAIN is committed to child safe recruitment, selection and screening practices. These practices aim to recruit the safest and most suitable people to work in our programs. Recruitment procedures will differ slightly depending on whether the role involves contact with children or working with children.

Our child safe practices include:

- Promoting our child safe commitment on our website, in other promotional materials and in all job advertisements.
- All applicants will receive a copy of SUSTAIN's CSP and be informed of the screening requirements when they are sent the application form.
- Applicants will be required to submit a detailed application form when applying for a position. This form will ask for extensive information about the applicant's background such as dates and places of employment, education and other activities.
- All positions will be assessed for the level for risk in relation to contact with children. Positions working directly with children will require the highest level of screening and the applicant must possess relevant qualifications and experience in working with children.

- Job descriptions are required for all positions (staff, volunteers, consultants - short long term etc.), which describe key selection criteria and outline tasks and accountabilities.
- Interviews will be conducted for all positions, ideally face-to-face, but telephone interviews may be necessary in the international context.
- For personnel working with children, behavioural-based questions will be used to ask for examples of the candidate's past behaviour and experiences. In positions working directly working with children, the panel will explore the candidate's motivations for working with children, which will include value-based questions seeking information about the candidate's attitudes to children, professional boundaries, accountability, team work and how they have responded to ethical dilemmas.
- A minimum of three reference checks will be required for all preferred candidates. This would include short and long term positions, volunteers on placement and consultants. The candidate's most recent employer/supervisor must be one of these referees. SUSTAIN will verify the identity of the referee and the nature of their relationship between the candidate and the referee. All referees will be contacted directly. Written references will not be accepted. SUSTAIN reserves the right to request additional references.
- All staff and all others involved with the organisation will be required to have a police clearance or relevant criminal history checks depending on the country of origin.
- Where the candidate is working directly with children in Australia, they may require a Working with Children Check or similar (depending on the jurisdiction for each state or territory).
- All staff will be required to provide proof of identify including birth certificate, passport, drivers licence and relevant qualifications. Original documents are required.
- All positions will be subject to a probationary period and on-going screening depending on the length of the contract.
- Issues relating to child protection will be included in staff performance reviews.
- All staff and others will be required to read and sign the SUSTAIN's CSP Declaration of Understanding (Appendix 2).
- SUSTAIN reserves the right to refuse employment to or terminate any person's employment that may pose a risk to children. If at any time a SUSTAIN employee or volunteer should display unusual behaviour giving rise to concern, this should be discussed with the National Director who will decide upon which action to take. If there is any evidence that any person working with SUSTAIN has physically or sexually abused a child will not be permitted to continue their work in any capacity.

## 13.0 Child Abuse Reporting Processes and How to Respond to a Child Who has been Abused

The abuse and exploitation of children is completely unacceptable and the possibility of staff, volunteers or others abusing children is something that SUSTAIN will not tolerate in any form. We will take all concerns and reports of child abuse seriously and act on these reports immediately. We are committed to working to prevent such incidents and will take all possible measures to stop abuse and hold accountable those who abuse children.

Any staff, volunteer or other SUSTAIN member who discovers or suspects abuse must report these concerns or allegations immediately to the appropriate SUSTAIN staff as outlined below (see Appendix 1- Recognising Possible Signs of Abuse). If a child reports an incident to you, the allegation must be taken seriously and listened to carefully. At no time should the child be returned to the environment where the incident has occurred. These concerns may relate to a child or a staff member involved in the organisation or a concern about a child or person/s outside of the organisation's programs. If you do have a concern you should immediately follow SUSTAIN's child abuse reporting procedures as outlined in this section.

### **Who should report?**

All SUSTAIN staff and others, including people in the community and partner organisations.

### **What should be reported?**

- a) Any disclosure or allegation from a child/community member or staff regarding the safety/abuse exploitation of a child.
- b) Any observation or concerning behaviour exhibited by a SUSTAIN staff, volunteer or other relevant stakeholder that breaches the SUSTAIN's code of conduct for working with children.
- c) Inappropriate use of the organisation's photographic equipment or computers including evidence of child pornography.
- d) Staff or volunteers engaging in suspicious behaviour that could be associated with sexual exploitation or trafficking.

### **Who to report to?**

Overseas:

Child abuse reports should be made directly to the SUSTAIN Child Protection Officer (CPO) , Stephanie Jones  
[stephj89@gmail.com](mailto:stephj89@gmail.com)

In Australia: In the first instance,

Child abuse reports should be made to the National Administrator of SUSTAIN  
Joy Dyer

[info@sustainmyanmar.org](mailto:info@sustainmyanmar.org)

In the case where the National Administrator is in question, the incident should be referred to President of SUSTAIN, Dr Rob Kilpatrick

[rob@traidmission.com](mailto:rob@traidmission.com)

### **Reporting of child abuse in Australia**

As directed above, Child abuse reports should be made directly to the CPO and/or National Director and/or President of SUSTAIN in Australia. Reporting child abuse in Australia is a clearer process compared to responding to incidents that occur overseas. In all Australian states and territories, sexual and physical abuses of children are crimes. The age of consent in most Australian states and territories is 16. However it is important to check in each jurisdiction as the age limit may be different. Additionally, in some jurisdictions it is a criminal offence for persons who are in positions of power and trust (e.g. teacher, parent, carer) to engage in sexual activity with children under the age of 18.

Reporting child abuse can either be made to the local state police or the state child protection authorities. If there is an allegation or suspicion of child sexual abuse by a staff member or volunteer in the organization, these matters will be reported to the state police. In most Australian states there are specialised units dealing with child sexual crimes. If there are concerns that a child is being sexually abused by someone external to the organization, SUSTAIN will contact the state police and/or child protection authorities. Concerns about the welfare of the child in relation to neglect and/or emotional abuse will be reported to the child protection authorities in each state or territory.

Contact details of these authorities are:

Queensland:

Department of Child Safety –

Freecall- 1800 811 810 or after hours/ weekends 1800177 135 24 hours a day.

Website: Department of Child Safety

New South Wales:

Department of Community Services,

DoCs Helpline 132 111 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Website: Department of Community Services-

Victoria:

Child Protection Crisis Line Tel. 131 278 - 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Website: Department of Human Services-

South Australia:

Child Abuse Report Line 131 478 (24 hours)

Website: Department of Families and Communities-

Western Australia:

Office hours: (08) 9222 2555 or your local DCP office outside Perth \_ After hours: (08) 9223 1 11 1 or 1800 199 008 (outside Perth)

Website: Department of Child Protection-

Australian Capital Territory:

1300 556 729 (24 hours)

Website: Office for Children, Youth and Family Support-

Northern Territory:

1800 700 250 (24 hours)

Website: Department of Health and Community Services-

Tasmania:

1300 737 639 (24 hours)

Website: Commissioner for Children

Concerns about people engaging in child sex tourism, child sex trafficking and child pornography should be reported to the Australian Federal Police (Transnational Sexual Crimes Squad).

Contact details are:

Australian Federal Police Sexual Assault Unit (02) 6256 7777.

Reporting of child abuse allegations overseas

Child abuse reports should be made directly to the Australian based Child Protection Officer. An initial assessment will be made based on the quality and reliability of the information and a decision will be made (in consultation with the National Director) on what steps to take. A local reporting procedure will guide the process based on whether the allegation constitutes a criminal offence in the country, or whether it is a breach of the SUSTAIN code of conduct and will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

The first step will be to gather all the relevant information and address any health and protection needs of the child. The matter may be directly referred to the local police and or authorities if the allegations are considered to be criminal offences. If the incident has occurred outside of the program the matter will be referred to an external body or agency dealing with child protection matters in the country.

When to report?

Child abuse concerns should be raised immediately.

How should it be reported?

Verbally and by completing the SUSTAIN child abuse incident reporting sheet (Appendix 3).

What will happen next?

The SUSTAIN National Director and the CPO will discuss the allegations and then decide upon the next step. This will involve either:

Interviewing the person/persons who made the allegations or other witnesses to gather more information with which to make a decision;  
Report to local police and or child protection authority;  
Report made to the Australian Federal Police;  
Concern handled internally if it is not a criminal matter;  
No further action taken.

SUSTAIN will treat all concerns raised seriously and ensure that ***all parties will be treated fairly and the principles of natural justice will be a prime consideration***. All reports will be handled professionally, confidentially and expediently.

All reports made in good faith will be viewed as being made in the best interests of the child regardless of the outcomes of any investigation. SUSTAIN will ensure that the interests of anyone reporting child abuse in good faith are protected. Any employee who intentionally makes false and malicious allegations, will face disciplinary action.

The rights and welfare of the child is of prime importance. Every effort must be made to protect the rights and safety of the child throughout the investigation. Children and community members with whom SUSTAIN works will be provided with information about how to report any child protection concerns about SUSTAIN staff members and others.

### **How to respond to disclosure by a child.**

- Above everything else listen carefully and keep calm.
- Show acceptance of what the child says and show care and concern (however unlikely the story may sound).
- Look at the child directly and do not outwardly show outrage, disgust or anger.
- Be honest.
- Tell the child you will need to let someone else know - don't promise confidentiality.
- Even when a child has broken a rule, they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell.
- Never push for information. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know that you are always ready to listen. Your role is to listen to what the child / young person wants to tell you and not to conduct an investigation (beware of asking any leading questions as this may prejudice any subsequent investigation).
- Tell the child they have done the right thing in telling. Some helpful responses may include: "That must have been really hard," "I am glad you have told me," "It's not your fault." "I will help you..."

- As soon as possible write down what has been shared and include as much detail as possible as to where the abuse took place, is it still currently occurring, where it occurred in the past, the name of the perpetrator if possible. Write down exactly what the child has said and what you said in reply and what was happening immediately beforehand (e.g. a description of the activity). Record dates and times and when you made the record. Keep all handwritten notes for an indefinite period in a secure place.

### **Things Not to Say or Do:**

- Why didn't you tell anyone before?
- I can't believe it!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Bombard then with questions e.g. Why? How? When? Who? Where?
- Never make false promises such as not to tell anyone.
- Never make statements such as "I am shocked, don't tell anyone else"
- Indiscriminately discuss the circumstances of the child/young person with others not directly involved.

### **Other Actions to Take:**

- Reassure the child that they were right to tell you and show acceptance. Let the child know that you are going to do something, what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
- Protect the Child - Once an allegation is made there should be an immediate response that protects the child from further potential abuse or victimization. The child may require medical assistance or counselling support. Where possible the child should remain in the place of residence or relevant program. Exceptions may be made where the child is deemed to be at risk of victimization by peers as a result of the allegation or because the alleged abuse has occurred in home-based care. If the child is in immediate danger you should make arrangements for the child to go to a safe place.
- Distance the alleged perpetrator -The best interest of the child may warrant the standing down of a staff member or volunteer. The manager should recommend the appropriate action in writing to the CEO. Any staff member stood down in this manner continues to receive full pay –this measure recognizes that that the member is entitled to a just process that does not pre-judge guilt or innocence. Any volunteers who are stood down should similarly receive any reasonable reimbursement of costs.
- Maintain Confidentiality - All reports, the names of people involved and the details are to remain confidential. Only the Australian National Director, CPO, SUSTAIN President, and the people involved will be informed of the report. Details will be released on a "need to know" basis or when required by relevant local or Australian law or a notification to police or child protection authorities is made.

## 14.0 Involving Children and Young People

SUSTAIN is committed to child and youth participation. We will do this by providing opportunities for children's views to be heard and incorporate their views into our policies and programs. Children will be asked for their feedback about staff and services. They will be consulted in the development and review of the CSP and will be asked to contribute to the child safe code of conduct in regards to what they consider to be appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Children will also be informed about SUSTAIN's child abuse reporting process and who to contact if they are at risk, have been abused or are concerned about another child. The Children's Programmes Coordinator of PRAD Operations will be responsible for ensuring aspects of participation.

## 15.0 Educating the Organisation on Child Abuse and the Child Safeguarding Policy Training and Education:

SUSTAIN will maintain its commitment to educate staff and others in the CSP in how to reduce risks and create child safe environments. We will promote child safe practices which keep children safe in the organisation and in their own community, and provide information about child protection to the children and communities in which we work. This information will include reporting child abuse if they have concerns about a SUSTAIN member of staff or other representative in the organisation.

All staff, volunteers, members of the Committee of Management and others will be given a copy of the policy and will be required to sign a declaration (Appendix 2) stating that they have received and fully understand its content. All prospective employees, volunteers and others will be informed of SUSTAIN's CSP during the application process. All new employees, volunteers and others will be taken through a compulsory overview of the CSP during the induction phase by CPO and made aware of their individual responsibility to uphold the SUSTAIN Child Safeguarding Policy guidelines at all times.

## 16.0 Reviewing the Child Safeguarding Policy

SUSTAIN's Child Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated when necessary, with a formal review every two years. The CPO will manage the review of the CSP and the National Director and members of the Committee of Management will be consulted in the process.

## USEFUL WEB LINKS

DFAT -

Child Protection

<http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/safeguards-risk-management/child-protection/Pages/child-protection.aspx>

Building Child Safe Organisations - Child Wise:

<http://childwise.net/downloads/12Steps.pdf>

Convention on the Rights of the Child:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Keeping Children Safe- A toolkit for child protection

<http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/resources.htm>

Setting the standard - A common approach to Child Protection for international NGOs:

<http://tilz.tearfund.org/webdocs/Tilz/Topics/Child%20Protection%20Policy.pdf>

## Appendix 1: Recognising Possible Signs of Abuse

The following signs may or may not point to abuse that has taken place, but should be considered as possible indicators to detecting abuse.

### Signs of Physical Abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them- Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc.
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Neglect - under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc.
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse/ itchiness/ soreness /discharge or unexplained bleeding.
- Difficulty walking or sitting

### Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters e.g. public masturbation and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age-inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia
- Torn, stained or bloodied underwear
- Unexplained pain in the genital area
- Pregnancy in adolescence where the identity of the father is vague or secret
- Excessive bathing

### Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy. Also depression/aggression, extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

## Appendix 2: SUSTAIN CPP Declaration of Understanding.

Full Name: .....

Address: .....

Contact Number/s: .....

Position within SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc:

.....

DECLARATION (Please read this carefully before signing.) I have read and fully understand the requirements of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc Child Protection Policy and my responsibility towards it. I agree to be bound by these standards and code of conduct of the CPP of SUSTAIN and to uphold the behavioural guidelines and expectations of the organisation in the performance of my services on their behalf.

I declare that I have no criminal record or associations which would prejudice my work with children and SUSTAIN.

Signed:

Date:

Witness:

Parent or legal guardian's signature (if applicant is under 18 years of age)

Name & Relationship to Applicant:

Signed:

Date:

## Appendix 3: SUSTAIN Child Abuse Incident Reporting Sheet

Date of Report : ...../...../.....

Name/s of Reporting Party: .....

Position within SUSTAIN (e.g. volunteer, staff etc.): .....

Contact Details: (address and telephone) .....

.....

### **Incident Information:**

Name of Alleged Victim: .....

Address: .....

Male/ Female: .....

Date of Birth (if known) and Current Age: .....

Name/s of Parent/ Guardian: .....

Incident Description:- .....

Incident Date(s) : ...../...../.....

Age of alleged victim at the time of the incident .....

Location(s) where incident took place: .....

Name/s of alleged perpetrator of abuse: .....

Witnesses: .....

Circumstances and nature of alleged misconduct including the frequency and duration:  
(give as much detail as possible, use victims' own words and your responses) - attach  
additional pages if required.

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## Appendix 4: SUSTAIN CPP Risk Assessment Log

For new and existing programs and activities

Date:

Activity/ Program:

<b>Risk/Factors</b>	<b>Probability</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Exposure</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>
What could go wrong? What are the risk factors?	What is the likelihood that something would go wrong?	What would the consequences be?	Where could the children be exposed to risk? How?	What actions could be taken to eliminate or reduce the risk?	Has the action been taken or still pending