



Date Effective: June 2015

Date for Review: June 2018

Centre for Sustainable Development Studies (CSDS)

Child Protection Policy

Policy Statement

CSDS is committed to protecting children from harm and upholding their rights to be treated with dignity and respect.

Context

CSDS volunteers and staff work with young people in a number of projects. We also work with very young children in projects that include childcare, teaching, English language tuition, special education, physical therapy/ personal development and organising recreational activities including the following projects:

- Friendship Village – a residential, health and education centre for children and young people aged 4 to 26 years living with the effects of dioxins from the herbicide “Agent Orange”. These children and young people come from different provinces in Vietnam and suffer from a range of disabilities including autism, cerebral-palsy, Down-syndrome, physical deformity, and severe mental disability. These factors make them particularly vulnerable to abuse and in need of protection from harm.
- Phuc Tue Centre – a social welfare, non-government organisation located in Tay Ho district that provides care and social integration for mentally and physically impaired children and young people from 2 to 22 years.
- New Horizons – a teaching program located in Quoc Oai , a semi-rural, outlying area of Hanoi that runs an English community class outside school hours for children and young people at primary and secondary school level.
- Nguyen Tat Thanh School – a secondary school located in Cau Giay district with pupils from Years 6 to 12.

Purpose

This policy sets out the behaviour and responses we expect from our people in order to ensure that children are protected.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- CSDS Staff and management
- CSDS Volunteers (short-term and long-term)

- Personnel contracted by CSDS (eg. consultants, researchers)

The policy applies at any time that staff, volunteers and others are engaged in CSDS activities involving children.

Guiding Principles

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* is an international treaty that recognises the human rights of children. The Convention establishes in international law that states Parties must ensure that all children—without discrimination in any form—benefit from special protection measures and assistance; have access to services such as education and health care; can develop their personalities, abilities and talents to the fullest potential; grow up in an environment of happiness, love and understanding; and are informed about and participate in, achieving their rights in an accessible and active manner.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. This policy reflects both the spirit and intent of the Convention and is guided by its principles.

Definitions

Child: Article 1 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* defines ‘a child’ as “a person below the age of 18 years, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger”.

Young Person: The United Nations defines ‘youth’ as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. However, it recognises that the experience of being young can vary enormously across the world, and that ‘youth’ is often a fluid and changing category. Hence definitions of the specific age range that constitutes youth are flexible and can vary between countries and regions. Furthermore an individual’s actual maturity may not correspond to their chronological age, as immature individuals can exist at all ages. This is particularly the case in terms of young people with an intellectual disability whose impairment makes them more susceptible to abuse or exploitation.

Volunteer: defined as any person working for CSDS in a voluntary capacity.

Child abuse: Both boys and girls can be the victim of child abuse, and abuse can be inflicted on a child by men, women and older children. It includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation. It results in actual or potential harm to a child’s health, development or dignity.

- **Physical abuse:** the intentional causing of physical harm to a child. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, biting, strangling, poisoning or otherwise physical hurting a child.
- **Emotional abuse:** involves a pattern of behaviour by adults towards children, which includes threats, rejection, isolation, belittling, name calling, sexually suggestive comments or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment which erodes social competence or self-esteem over time.

- **Neglect or negligent treatment:** is the failure to provide a child - within the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caregivers - with the conditions essential for their physical and emotional development and well-being.
- **Sexual abuse:** occurs when someone uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual or romantic activity. Sexually or romantically abusive behaviours can involve fondling, kissing, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism or exposing the child to, or involving the child in, pornography. Both boys and girls can be victims of child sexual abuse.
- **Romantic abuse:** happens when an adult develops a relationship with a child beyond platonic friendship.

Procedures

Induction

The induction session which CSDS conducts with all new staff and volunteers will include introducing the Child Protection Policy and in particular, the Code of Conduct for Working with Children.

We will:

- Make the CSDS Child Protection Policy available to all applicants during the recruitment process;
- Require all staff and volunteers to sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understood the Child Protection Policy, and will abide by the Code of Conduct for Working with Children.

Training

CSDS will arrange training with staff on issues relevant to promoting the safety, protection and well-being of children from time to time.

Reporting Concerns

What should be reported?

Staff and volunteers must report to senior personnel (CSDS Director or International Volunteer House Vice-Director) when they have a reasonable belief that a child has been harmed or is at potential risk of harm when it is due to the actions of a staff member or volunteer. Harm includes, but is not limited to, the forms of child abuse defined in this policy.

Cases where children have been harmed or are at risk of harm due to the actions of someone not associated with CSDS (in the community) should also be reported.

Concerns that must be reported include:

- An observation or disclosure of actual harm or abuse to a child;

- An observation or disclosure of potential risk of harm to a child;
- A breach of the Child Protection Policy or Code of Conduct for Working with Children;
- An observation of possession of child exploitation material.

CSDS also expects staff and volunteers to be observant for indicators of child abuse and to raise concerns, even in the absence of a disclosure.

If you are not sure if what you have seen or heard is harm or risk of harm to a child, talk to a senior member of staff.

How do you make a report?

Reports should be made as soon as possible after witnessing the incident, either in person, by phone or email, taking into account the confidential nature of the subject matter. Verbal reports should then be followed up with written notification within 24 hours.

What do you need to include in the report?

You should provide as much objective information as possible, including:

- Dates, times, form of communication of disclosure;
- Names of people/organisations involved;
- Details of alleged incidents;
- Which authorities have/ will be informed;
- Activities/ interventions already undertaken;
- Support services engaged;
- Details of what CSDS proposes to do;
- Any other relevant information.

What happens after making a report?

Once a report has been received, a full investigation will be conducted by senior personnel at CSDS and then action taken. All information provided in a report will be treated confidentially and professionally.

A decision to notify police or other relevant authorities will be based on the type of concern reported, legal responsibilities and the best interests of the child/children involved.

A decision to suspend a staff member or volunteer may be taken while an investigation is underway, however CSDS will ensure that this process is just and fair.

Responding to a disclosure

The following advice should be followed in the event that a child discloses a concern to staff or volunteers.

- Remain calm and in control of your feelings;
- Tell them that you believe them;
- Listen carefully to what they are saying;
- Don't ask lots of questions - listen to what they want to tell you;
- Tell them it is not their fault and you are pleased that they told you as you can now do something about it;
- Take steps to distance the alleged perpetrator from the child.

Consequences

CSDS is committed to preventing a person from working with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.

When reported, a formal investigation will be undertaken by senior personnel. If a person is found to have not followed the Code of Conduct for Working with Children it will lead to disciplinary actions.

For minor violations, the staff member or volunteer will be warned.

For major violations, staff may be dismissed or transferred to other duties. Volunteer relationships may be terminated.

Code of Conduct for Working with Children

I understand that while involved with CSDS, I will:

- treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
- not use language towards children that is offensive, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- not touch or behave towards children in a manner that is harassing, abusive, sexually provocative or sexually suggestive, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- not develop a romantic relationship or attachment with any child;
- not engage children in any form of sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts;
- immediately inform a senior member of staff of any concerns that I might have in regards to the overall safety and wellbeing of any child;
- not give gifts or money to any children as this shows favouritism and encourages dependency. Instead, I will give donations to CSDS as an organisation to distribute;
- always use computers, mobile phones, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material;
- not use physical punishment on children;
- not hire children for domestic or other labour 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;
- comply with all relevant local legislation, including labour laws;
- immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes which occurred before or during my time with CSDS that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

When photographing or filming a child for **work-related purposes**, I must:

- assess and try to comply with local traditions or restrictions;
- obtain informed consent from the parent or guardian before photographing or filming a child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used;
- ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children 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;
- ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.