



# **Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI)**

## **Child safeguarding Policy (2009)**

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This document outlines the policies and procedures established to ensure that Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI) is recognized as a child safe organization. The application of this policy is the means by which Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI) ensures that it is in compliance with the Child Safeguarding Protocol of Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI) as well as the UN Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse 2003.

### **1. AWARENESS AND PREVENTION**

**1.1** The Child Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct, and Local Procedures must be made widely available to all staff, other representatives, and staff of partner agencies.

**1.2** Distribution must be supported by so as to ensure that the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct are understood; this will include the use of translation into local languages, induction, training, posters, popular /card versions, pictorial images and child friendly material.

### **RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**

**1.3** Recruitment and selection of staff and others must reflect SDI's commitment to safeguard children by ensuring warnings, checks and procedures are in place to screen out anyone who may be unsuitable to work with children.

**1.4** Successful candidates should be made aware of the fundamental and binding nature of this policy, procedures and codes of conduct and that the fact that they are apply equally to personal and professional life.

### **BUILDING CHILD SAFEGUARDING INTO MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES**

**1.5** The Child Safeguarding Policy must be incorporated into all systems, standard operating procedures and processes that have any bearing on the safeguarding of children so that an environment is established where the rights of children are respected and where child abuse and sexual exploitation of children is not tolerated.

**1.6** The Child Safeguarding Policy should be reflected in all human resource and management arrangements that define or determine how staff and other representatives carry out their work, including job descriptions, Standard Operating Procedures, terms of reference, contract of employment, and codes of conduct, performance management systems and disciplinary procedures. Failure to adhere to child safeguarding aspects of any such arrangements should be recognized as a serious disciplinary breach.

**1.7** Children and their carers must be made aware of the systems that exist to raise a concern or a complaint. As key stakeholders they must be aware of the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct and of what they can expect in terms of the behaviour of staff, other representatives and partners towards them. Child friendly materials should be used to communicate these messages.

**1.8** Where the Sustainable Development Initiative(SDI)is responsible for providing activities or services for children they will at all times supervise and safeguard them to the best of our abilities. The quality of those services and activities must reflect the principles and procedures of the Child Safeguarding Policy.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

**1.10** All activities within Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI) must be assessed to make sure that any child safeguarding risks are identified and adequate controls developed. These aspects should be included in the Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks for such activities.

**1.11** All activities, involving contact with children through use of information technologies, must be assessed to make sure that any child safeguarding risks are identified and adequate controls developed. These aspects should be included in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks for such activities.

**1.12** Engagement with children and their carers for the purposes of marketing, media/communications, consultation, participation and advocacy should be with informed consent, and should not exploit the child or carer, nor increase their vulnerability, or place them at risk. Adequate controls should be developed for such activities and practice guidelines identified and followed.

## **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**1.13** Staff, representatives and volunteers should be supported to develop child safeguarding skills, knowledge and experience appropriate to their role in the organisation. Staff who have a responsibility to respond to children disclosing sexual exploitation and abuse, must receive specific training in receiving and responding to disclosure.

**1.14** Understanding of the Child Safeguarding Policy (including Code of Conduct and Local Procedures) must be included in induction and mandatory/core training for staff and other representatives. Sensitivity to and understanding of local circumstances and culture should be incorporated in learning and training without condoning acts that are harmful to children.

## **PARTNERS**

**1.15** All agreements between Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI) and partner organizations must include agreement on a Child Safeguarding Policy.

**1.16** Partner organizations must adopt this Child Safeguarding Policy or have developed their own policy of a similar standard and approach. Agreements with partners must clearly outline agreed procedures for reporting and investigating concerns involving breaches of the policy. Breaches within partner agencies must be reported to SDI.

**1.17** SDI should have clear plans for developing the capacity of partner organizations in this field to develop standards based policies and procedures

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

**1.18** Guidance is in place which governs the appropriate use of information and communication technologies such as the internet, websites, social networking sites, digital photography to ensure that children are not put at risk. This guidance should cover both the use of these technologies by our staff and representatives as well as children who utilize the technologies on our behalf or in response to a request by our organization.

## **BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS CHILDREN**

**1.19** Staff, partners and other representatives must never:

1. Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
2. Engage in sexual activity or have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 years regardless of the age of majority/consent or custom locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
3. Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
4. Act in ways that may be abusive in any way or may place a child at risk of abuse.

5. Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
6. Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
7. Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from a their line manager
8. Sleep in the same bed as a child with whom they are working
9. Sleep in the same room as a child with whom they are working unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from a their line manager
10. Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves
11. Condone, or participate in, behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
12. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
13. Discriminate against, show unfair differential treatment or favor to particular children to the exclusion of others.
14. Spend excessive time alone with children away from others
15. Place themselves in a position where they are made vulnerable to allegations of misconduct

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. Staff, partners and other representatives should at all times avoid actions or behaviour which may allow behaviour to be misrepresented, constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

**1.20** It is important for all staff, partners and other representatives in contact with children to:

- a. Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- b. Plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- c. As far as possible, be visible in working with children
- d. Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- e. Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- f. Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- g. Empower children - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.
- h. Maintain high personal and professional standards
- i. Respect the rights of children and treat them fairly, honestly and with dignity and respect
- j. Encourage participatory practice with children which develops their own safeguarding capacity

## **2. Reporting and Responding**

### **CENTRALISED SYSTEM**

**2.1** SDI will establish a centralized system in order that concerns identified and responded to locally will be reported, recorded and analyzed centrally. In addition where necessary these cases will be investigated and managed centrally. These records should be reported to senior managers and trustees on a regular basis.

### **LOCAL REPORTING PROCEDURE**

**2.2** Each SDI office must develop Reporting Procedures to identify what, how and when concerns are reported. The reporting procedure must outline in some detail the chain of actions to be followed when a concern is raised. The reporting procedure must differentiate between incidents which have their origins outside the organization and those which involve staff, other representatives and partners as well as those where the alleged perpetrators are children themselves.

**2.3** The Local Procedures must include agreed management guidance on when and how to report concerns to national authorities such as the Police or National/Local Ministries /Authorities (for instance where an alleged offence has been committed). In addition they would include details of the local child safeguarding infrastructure, local issues of abuse of particular concern and locally available child safeguarding resources.

**2.3** These procedures should be drawn up following the completion of a mapping exercise, guidance for which is provided.

### **DUTY OF ALL STAFF AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVES TO REPORT CONCERNS**

**2.4** All SDI staff, other representatives and staff of partner agencies must report all concerns including both specific reports and unconfirmed concerns regarding child abuse or sexual exploitation where the alleged perpetrator is a member of staff, other representative or staff of a partner agency.

**2.5** The first priority of any staff member to whom child protection concerns are reported must be the immediate safety and welfare of the child.

**2.6** The Local Procedures should also include procedures to enable staff to report and respond to serious<sup>1</sup> allegations of abuse and sexual exploitation where the alleged perpetrators lie outside the organization, its representatives or partners.

**2.6** Child Safeguarding concerns should be reported within 24 hours, unless it is impossible or impracticable to do so or other exceptional circumstances exist.

**2.7** The procedures must be easily accessible, known to and understood by all staff, representatives and staff of partner agencies.

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

**2.8** "Child Safeguarding Focal Points" i.e designated staff members to receive Child Safeguarding concerns/complaints should be appointed at appropriate geographical/operational unit levels by the Executive Director.

**2.6** Staff nominated to key positions must have their roles & responsibilities for child safeguarding clearly identified. This must include roles and responsibilities of staff in raising child safeguarding concerns/complaints, child safeguarding focal points<sup>2</sup> for receiving child safeguarding concerns/complaints and managers for responding to and managing these issues. Such positions should receive appropriate guidance training and support.

**2.7** All staff, representatives and staff of partner agencies must be aware of the contact details of the focal point for receiving child safeguarding concerns/complaints.

**2.8** The standard reporting form should be used for reporting concerns. Action must be instigated by the persons identified in line with the Local Procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "serious" is used in relation to cruel deliberate or unusual maltreatment of children and is meant to distinguish these incidents from prevalent low level violence against children which is a regrettable feature of some societies. These refer to incidents of a deliberate preventable nature which constitute a crime against children in local law. For example in settings where physical punishment remains a common form of discipline, extreme punishment including the use of implements and punishment which causes bleeding, bruising and broken bones should be reported within these procedures.

<sup>2</sup>Child Safeguarding Focal points is the term used for the staff member responsible for receiving concerns or complaints. These are key staff members who have to be appointed to this role and trained and supported in the undertaking of their duties.

## **WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

**2.9** The Sustainable Development Initiative's Whistle-blowing policy is to be utilised where staff hold a genuinely held belief that the Child Safeguarding Policy has been compromised. (E.g. where the person to whom they would report a concern to is himself the subject of concern).

## **PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE IN RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE OR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

**2.10** In responding to allegations of child abuse or sexual exploitation of children, staff and managers should be guided by the Global Procedures for Dealing with Suspected Abuse or Exploitation. These outline a clear set of principles that focus on the best interests of the child as well as issues of protection and safety, physical and psychological health and welfare and respect for the right to confidentiality, equality and access to justice.

**2.11** All SDI staff, other representatives and partner agencies will act appropriately and effectively in the process of instigating any investigation or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation, and will be guided by the principle of acting in the 'best interests of the child' in any such process as well as the SDI Procedures for Dealing with Suspected Abuse or Exploitation..

**2.12** Staff will be required to cooperate in any investigation and to maintain the appropriate levels of confidentiality. Failure to do so will be considered a serious disciplinary matter.

## **STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

**2.13** Staff and managers must be aware of their roles and responsibilities in responding to, investigating and referring allegations of abuse and sexual exploitation to national authorities as outlined in local procedures.

## **MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS TO RESPOND TO, MANAGE, AND LEARN FROM INCIDENTS**

**2.14** Sustainable Development Initiative must establish a management system capable of managing an incident supporting and assisting any victims and capturing lessons as a result of the occurrence, reporting, investigation or other management of any incident under the Child Safeguarding Policy so that lessons are learnt and practice improved.

**2.15** Lessons learnt in the general implementation of this Policy as well as from individual incidents should be used to influence policy and develop best practice across SDI family and elsewhere when appropriate.

**2.16** All staff and representatives must be aware that any concern or allegation of abuse or exploitation of children made against them will be investigated, under the Child Safeguarding policies:

- a. by consideration of referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation and prosecution under the law of Malawi/or
- b. by SDI in accordance with the Global Procedures for dealing with Suspected Abuse and Exploitation and under disciplinary procedures, which may result in dismissal.