



## **Child Protection Policy**

'States Parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse' article 19 UN Convention on the rights of the Child (1989).

This convention has been ratified by almost all countries in the world and it is legally binding in them. (Signed by UK in 19 April 1990; Accession by Thailand in 27 March 1992)

### **Towards a child safe organisation**

Children have rights as human beings and also need special care and protection.

Ecologia Youth Trust rejects all forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children, and seeks to ensure that throughout its work it commits to policies, practices and procedures that are consistent with the best interests and the protection of the child at all times.

In this, it is guided by international agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, legal protection afforded children and young people by the state, and by the professional demands of best practice.

In this regard, Ecologia Youth Trust believes that its employees, or all those over whom it has any authority and influence, must demonstrate behaviour that is not simply consistent with protocols and legislation, but also with an appropriate set of personal and professional standards.

Child protection is both a organisational and an individual responsibility. Ecologia Youth Trust is committed to best practice in recruitment, to ensuring staff understanding of and commitment to child protection principles, and to advising partners of its policies in this regard.

The best protection for children is prevention, and Ecologia Youth Trust is committed to protecting children. Policies and procedures are developed to protect children and staff. Establishing and maintaining a child safe environment is a guiding principle in all of its activities and management practices

## **1. Those bound by Ecologia Youth Trust's Child Protection Policy**

- All staff of Ecologia Youth Trust.
- All volunteers of Ecologia Youth Trust.
- All those acting for Ecologia Youth Trust, such as consultants and trainers.
- Those who visit Ecologia Youth Trust's partner projects, in the name of Ecologia Youth Trust, such as patrons, donors, corporate sponsors, journalists, supporters, child sponsors/godparents and trustees.

### **1.1. Staff**

Ecologia Youth Trust screens all staff as part of its recruitment and selection process.

The following detailed procedure is followed:

- We inform candidates of our Child Protection Policy, our Behaviour Code of Conduct and of our screening process.
- All candidates for employment must fully declare on application all criminal convictions. A false declaration that results in employment will render the person liable to dismissal without notice. Candidates must explain gaps in their employment history.
- Before appointment, the elected candidate will be asked to go to their local police station and get a police check (*The police check will show all convictions held in the Police National Computer at a national level which are not spent; only custodial sentences of up to 2.5 years can be spent*).
- On appointment, Ecologia Youth Trust staff are given a copy of the Child Protection Policy and the Behaviour Code of Conduct, and will be asked to sign a declaration that they understand it and agree to be bound by it. This is a contractual obligation within the staff contract.

### **1.2. Volunteers**

All volunteers for Ecologia Youth Trust under go police screening in their country of normal residence.

The following procedure is followed:

- We inform volunteers of our Child Protection Policy, our Behaviour Code of Conduct and of our screening.
- All volunteers must fully declare on the application form all criminal convictions.
- UK volunteers will be asked to go to their local police station and get a police check. The candidate must organise this, with Ecologia Youth Trust's support. Volunteers will not be accepted until the police check has been obtained and presented to Ecologia Youth Trust.
- Equally, non-UK volunteers will be required to obtain a background check from the relevant police authorities in their countries of residence.
- Ecologia Youth Trust volunteers are given a copy of the Child Protection Policy and the Behaviour Code of Conduct, and will be asked to sign a declaration that they understand it and agree to be bound by it. This is a contractual obligation within the volunteer contract.

### **1.3. Consultants**

Consultants working for Ecologia Youth Trust will be asked to abide by its Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Code of Conduct.

Consultants working for Ecologia Youth Trust will under go police screening in their country of residence.

Ecologia Youth Trust's contracts with Consultants will include a signed commitment to abide by Ecologia Youth Trust's Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Code of Conduct.

### **1.4. Visitors to Ecologia Youth Trust projects**

Ecologia Youth Trust will require visitors, such as patrons, donors, supporters and trustees to sign up to the Child Protection Policy and abide by Ecologia Youth Trust's Behaviour Code of Conduct.

Those visiting Ecologia Youth Trust's projects will be required to under go police screening in their country of residence only if they might potentially find themselves alone with a child during their visit.

***The Aware Culture:*** Organisations give messages in all that they do, and need to give clear messages to potential offenders. The aware culture is sustained by protocols, policies and procedures: the emphasis is on helping people to implement them. Protocols should not lead to fear and negative impact on services to children. Interviewing, selecting, gate keeping, vetting, developing/maintaining institutional memory are important tools for developing an aware culture within an organisation.

## **2. Behaviour Protocols**

As a child safe organisation, Ecologia Youth Trust works to secure an open and aware culture where all those involved in the projects feel responsible for the protection of children in their projects. The approachability and supportiveness of the EYT staff is essential. An essential element of this is a comprehensive understanding of moral and legal responsibilities, best laid out in behaviour protocols.

A Code of Conduct for Behaviour includes explicit clarification of unacceptable forms of behaviour that will result in a formal enquiry and which could lead to disciplinary measures being taken, or criminal proceedings instituted as well as guidance on appropriate/ expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children, and also of children towards other children.

*Ecologia Youth Trust's Behaviour Code of Conduct is attached in Appendix 1.*

### **3. Child protection in project partnership**

The promotion of child protection is one of the pillars of Ecologia Youth Trust's development approach. It has a responsibility to children through the work of its partners.

Children on occasion may disclose to our partners overseas, or to visiting Ecologia Youth Trust personnel, that they are being abused. Also, staff may bring to the attention of Ecologia Youth Trust, allegations, or suspicions of abuse by fellow staff members or any other third party involved in EYT's work.

Procedures for working with children to construct safe organisations are essential. Boys and girls should be involved in defining the risk and minimising it. Children need to be aware of child abuse and misconduct and how they may be targeted and manipulated. Reporting procedures need to be accessible and appropriate, the entire procedure from complaint or information to follow-up and possible legal action should be made apparent. Ecologia Youth Trust expects from its partners that children be involved in maintaining and influencing the environment of maximum safety.

Therefore, in relation to the work of its partners, Ecologia Youth Trust will:

- Advise partners on Ecologia Youth Trust's *Child Protection Policy* (attach the CPP to Ecologia Youth Trust's partnership criteria and require signatures from partners' personnel).
- Require its partners overseas to implement a *Child Protection Policy*: where assistance is required, Ecologia Youth Trust will prioritise child protection training, policy development and implementation, as a capacity building priority.
- Monitor safe mechanisms in place for child participation, including structured group feedback on project management.
- Encourage a reporting system that confers respect on complainants and respects confidentiality.

### **4. Reporting processes**

- Should a person travelling as a representative of Ecologia Youth Trust refuse to accept, or to agree to be bound by Ecologia Youth Trust's child protection policies, the visit will be cancelled, and the partner informed.
- Should a partner identify a case of abuse, or suspect the behaviour or intent of an Ecologia Youth Trust employee, volunteer, or someone acting on behalf of the organisation, this should be reported as a matter of urgency to Ecologia Youth Trust's Volunteers Coordinator at head office. The Chief Executive Officer or the Chairperson of the organisation will manage the report.
- In the event of an allegation of child abuse when still in country, Ecologia Youth Trust will request that the matter is reported immediately to the Director of the project who will inform Ecologia Youth Trust and launch an internal inquiry. The Project partners may as appropriate ask the person to leave the project, or contact the local authorities, initiate a formal inquiry, take disciplinary measures, and/or initiate criminal proceedings in-country. They will at all times ensure that there is a fair process for all parties concerned.

- When the allegation is made after the Ecologia Youth Trust volunteer, visitor or staff member's departure from the country in which the alleged offence takes place, a formal enquiry may be initiated by Ecologia Youth Trust after consultation with the partner that could lead to disciplinary measures being taken, or criminal proceedings instituted.

*See Appendix 2 for Guidelines on recognising signs of abuse.*

*Ecologia Youth Trust's Reporting format is attached in Appendix 3.*

## **5. Ecologia Youth Trust's Communications Guidelines**

Ecologia Youth Trust will sometimes use text and imagery from its partners' projects. We recognises a child's right to be accurately represented and accept our responsibility not to portray a manipulated or sensationalised depiction of the child's life and circumstances.

*Ecologia Youth Trust's Guidelines on Communications about Children are attached in Appendix 3.*

## **Appendix 1: Ecologia Youth Trust Behaviour Code of Conduct**

The aim of Ecologia Youth Trust's Behaviour Code of Conduct is to protect children from exploitation and abuse. By setting standards for appropriate behaviour it also protects people who come into contact with children from unfounded accusations of improper conduct.

It clarifies unacceptable forms of behaviour that will result in a formal enquiry and which could lead to disciplinary measures being taken, or criminal proceedings instituted. Additionally, the Code of Conduct gives guidance on expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children, and also of children towards other children.

This Code of Conduct applies to Ecologia Youth Trust staff and anyone acting as a representative of, or on behalf of, Ecologia Youth Trust who may come into direct contact with, or be responsible for, bringing children into contact with adults.

The Code of Conduct shall be sent to all visitors to Ecologia Youth Trust's projects before their visit.

The project partners will be encouraged to develop their own code of conduct that shall be prominently displayed / easily accessible for all organisation representatives.

The Code of Conduct should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense, with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration.

### **Minimising Risk Situations**

#### **NEVER:**

- Condone or participate in behaviour that is illegal or unsafe

#### **TRY NOT TO:**

- Be alone with a single child, including in the following situations: in a car, overnight, in your home, or the home of a child
- Show favouritism or spend inappropriate excessive amounts of time with one child

#### **TRY TO:**

- Avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position
- Be accompanied by a second adult whenever possible
- Meet with a child in a central, public location whenever possible
- Immediately note the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation by a third party.
- Avoid doing something that could be misinterpreted by a third party

### **Sexual Behaviour**

#### **NEVER:**

- Develop physical/sexual relationships with a child

- Discuss sexuality with children. If they initiate this, refer to the parents/guardians.
- Behave physically in a manner that is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Engage in or allow sexually provocative games with children to take place
- Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing and grooming.

### **Physical Behaviour**

#### **NEVER:**

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse a child.

#### **DO:**

- Wait for appropriate physical contact such as holding hands, to be initiated by the child
- Ask permission from children before taking photographs of a child/children whenever possible

### **Psychosocial Behaviour**

#### **DO:**

- Be aware of the power balance between an adult and child, and avoid taking any advantage this may provide.

#### **DO NOT:**

- Use language that will mentally or emotionally harm a child
- Suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind
- Act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate or degrade a child
- Encourage any inappropriate attention seeking behaviour, such as tantrums by a child
- Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion.

### **Peer Abuse**

#### **DO:**

- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse
- Encourage Ecologia Youth Trust partners to develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children

#### **DO NOT:**

- Allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.

### **Physical Environment**

#### **DO:**

- Encourage partners to develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (e.g. for projects based near water, heavy road traffic, railway lines).

### **What to do if you suspect or witness an abuse/ potentially abusive behaviour**

Immediately bring to the attention of the partner (this may not always be possible, e.g. if the person is a member of staff and you are a young, inexperienced volunteer) and to Ecologia Youth Trust's Volunteers Coordinator any instance of witnessed or suspected abuse, and any action or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. A Sample Report Form for Suspected Abuse can be found in Appendix 3.

We encourage you to discuss both the Behaviour Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Policy with an Ecologia Youth Trust representative at any time.

### **Ecologia Youth Trust Behaviour Code of Conduct Declaration**

EYT representatives are required to sign and return the Ecologia Youth Trust Statement of Commitment and Behaviour Code of Conduct Declaration that confirms individuals understand the Behaviour Code of Conduct, and agree to comply with it. It is an essential component of Ecologia Youth Trust's Child Protection Policy.

Ecologia Youth Trust, The Park, Forres,  
Scotland IV36 3TD

Tel and Fax: (+44) 01309 690995

Email: [info@ecologia.org.uk](mailto:info@ecologia.org.uk)

Web: [www.ecologia.org.uk](http://www.ecologia.org.uk)

**Registered Charity SC023976**



## Appendix 2: Recognizing Signs of Abuse<sup>1</sup>

“Recognising indications of potential abuse is complex and there is no simple checklist to allow easy recognition.”<sup>2</sup> “There are potential warning signs that [you] can be alert to but they should be observed and assessed with care.”<sup>3</sup> “It should not be automatically assumed that abuse is occurring, and talking to the child may reveal something quite innocent. It is important, however, not to dismiss significant changes in behaviour, fears, worries, and physical indicators a child is exhibiting. Do not ignore these signs, but remember it is not your role to become an investigator.”<sup>4</sup> Report any concerns to the designated child protection contact in your organisation.

<p><b>Possible signs of physical abuse<sup>4</sup>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts</li> <li>• Improbable excuses given to explain injuries</li> <li>• Refusal to discuss injuries</li> <li>• Withdrawal from physical contact</li> <li>• Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather</li> <li>• Fear of returning home or of parents being contacted</li> <li>• Showing wariness or distrust of adults</li> <li>• Self-destructive tendencies</li> <li>• Being aggressive towards others</li> <li>• Being very passive and compliant</li> <li>• Chronic running away</li> </ul>	<p><b>Possible signs of neglect<sup>5</sup>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent hunger</li> <li>• Poor personal hygiene</li> <li>• Constant tiredness</li> <li>• Inappropriate clothing, e.g. summer clothes in winter</li> <li>• Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school</li> <li>• Untreated medical problems</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Poor social relationships</li> <li>• Compulsive stealing</li> <li>• Drug or alcohol abuse</li> </ul>
<p><b>Possible signs of emotional abuse<sup>5</sup>:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed</li> <li>• Highly anxious</li> <li>• Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder</li> <li>• Fear of new situations</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations</li> <li>• Extremes of passivity or aggression</li> <li>• Drug or alcohol abuse</li> <li>• Chronic running away</li> <li>• Compulsive stealing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Possible signs of sexual abuse:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age inappropriate sexualised behaviour (Sense International, 5.2.3)</li> <li>• Physical indicators (general and in genital and anal areas)<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Behavioural indicators (general and sexual) which must be interpreted with regard to the individual child’s level of functioning and development stage<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> This material has been based on information compiled from Sense International Child Protection Policy, section 5.2.and ECPAT Australia, *Choose with Care*, pp.34-35.

<sup>2</sup> Sense International Child Protection Policy, section 5.2.1.

<sup>3</sup> Sense International Child Protection Policy, section 5.2.2.

<sup>4</sup> ECPAT Australia, *Choose with Care*, p.34.

<sup>5</sup> ECPAT Australia, *Choose with Care*, p.35.

<sup>6</sup> Detailed indicators are outlined in ECPAT Australia, *Choose with Care*, p.36.

<sup>7</sup> Detailed indicators are outlined in ECPAT Australia, *Choose with Care*, p.37.

### **Possible signs of concern regarding adult behaviour:**

- A person in whose presence a child or children becomes unusually distressed or agitated can be a cause for concern (Sense International, 5.2.5)
- A member of staff, volunteer, or parent asks a child to lie about anything (especially if it is about meeting that child) is a cause for concern (Sense International, 5.2.7)
- Any member of staff, volunteer, or parent who asks you to lie about a situation involving a child – particularly if that child looks distressed – is a cause for concern (Sense International, 5.2.6)
- Any person who persistently fails to follow the organisation’s Code of Conduct / behavioural protocols (detailed in the Child Protection Policy) is a cause for concern, particularly if reasons are evasive (Sense International, 5.2.4)
- Private (i.e. outside of work) meetings between a child and a member of staff or volunteer are a cause for concern (Sense International, 5.2.8)

### **Appendix 3: Guidelines on Communications about Children**

Within its fundraising and publicity materials, Ecologia Youth Trust will sometimes be required to use text and imagery from its projects around the world. In so doing, it recognises that it has a responsibility to the children that are portrayed. To this end, Ecologia Youth Trust looks on all children as human beings, who are the subject and receivers of human rights and will respect these rights at all times.

In communications about children, the following therefore, applies:

- Every child has a right to be accurately represented through both words and imagery. Ecologia Youth Trust’s portrayal of each child must not be manipulated or sensationalised in any way, but provide a balanced depiction of their life and circumstances. Children must be presented as human beings with their own identity and dignity preserved.
- Names of children are changed on public documents to protect the identity of the child.
- Ecologia Youth Trust will avoid the following:
  - Language and images that could possibly degrade or victimise or shame children.
  - Making generalisations which do not accurately reflect the nature of the situation
  - Discrimination of any kind
  - Taking pictures out of context (e.g. pictures should be accompanied by an explanatory caption where possible and should be relevant to any accompanying text).
- Where children are indeed victims, the preservation of the child’s dignity must, nevertheless, be preserved at all times. The Ecologia Youth Trust should attempt to depict a balance between victimisation and empowerment by using necessary tools, such as ‘before’ and ‘after’ shots.
- In images, children will not be depicted in any poses that could be interpreted as sexually provocative.

- Personal and physical information that could be used to identify the specific location of a specific child within a country and cause them to be put at risk will not be used on the organisation's website or in any other form of communication for general or public purposes. Where it is necessary to use case studies to highlight the work of Ecologia Youth Trust, names of children will be changed.
- Permission will whenever possible be sought from the child/children themselves before taking photographs. This may be verbal permission.
- To the greatest extent possible, the Ecologia Youth Trust will acquire informed consent/the permission of the child, child's guardian and/or organisation responsible for the child, before using any image for publicity, fundraising, awareness raising or other purpose. The purpose should be made clear to the consent giver.
- As far as possible, people (including children) should be able to give their own accounts, rather than have people speak on their behalf. People's (including children's) ability to take responsibility and action for themselves should be highlighted.
- Information about a child/children's life and photographs of children (including information stored on the PC) will be kept in secure files. Access to these should be limited to those that need to use them during the course of their work.
- Individuals or organisations that request the use of Ecologia Youth Trust's resources, such as photographs, will be required to sign an agreement with the organisation as to the proper use of such materials.

Ecologia Youth Trust, The Park, Forres,  
Scotland IV36 3TD

Tel and Fax: (+44) 01309 690995

Email: [info@ecologia.org.uk](mailto:info@ecologia.org.uk)

Web: [www.ecologia.org.uk](http://www.ecologia.org.uk)

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