



CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Date Effective: November 2019

Date for Review: September 2021

Introduction

ECPAT International believes that every child has the right to live free from abuse and exploitation and that we all have a responsibility to create the circumstances that allow them to be safe and thrive. In everything we do, we are guided by the rights of children described in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*. Specifically, article 34, “to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse” substantiates our mandate to end the sexual exploitation of children.

ECPAT International recognises that all children are vulnerable to risks, including the risk of sexual exploitation. However, some children are more vulnerable due to their age, gender, race, ethnic origin or socio-economic status. Children with disabilities, who do not have living parents, are from ethnic minority groups, or are of diverse sexual orientation or gender identity, can face even higher levels of vulnerability.

Additionally, the sensitive nature of ECPAT International’s mandate to end the sexual exploitation of children means we must take extra care to ensure we do no harm to children through our work and people.

This *Child Safeguarding Policy* outlines the standards that are applied by the ECPAT International secretariat, and that must be reflected by network members in their own child safeguarding approaches.

The *Child Safeguarding Procedures* describe the practical actions that the ECPAT International secretariat performs to apply this policy. The procedures detail the expectations for ECPAT member organisations to address in their own child safeguarding approaches.

Related is the *Code of Conduct*, which articulates expectations of the ECPAT International secretariat at all times and includes a sub-section detailing specific child safeguarding conduct requirements.

Our Commitment

ECPAT International takes extensive steps to safeguard children that we are in contact with through our work. As outlined in this policy and procedures, there are clear consequences for breaches.

ECPAT International operates in compliance with relevant national legislation. However, our child safeguarding policy and procedures also go above and beyond the law with more rigorous expectations of our people in certain circumstances.

ECPAT International respects, and will generally work to strengthen, the culture, traditions and practices of the communities in which it works. However, in instances where cultural practices are harmful to children’s rights, we advocate for their elimination. The best interests of the child are always central to our decisions.



Scope

This policy covers ECPAT International's activities that involve:

- Board members
- Staff
- Consultants
- Interns and volunteers
- Any person representing the organisation at ECPAT International's request.

However, when concerns are raised with us that do not involve our activities or the above people, ECPAT International is still committed to responding to all credible child safeguarding concerns by identifying and connecting to appropriate support, facilitating referrals, assisting with reporting to relevant authorities and advocating for cases to be addressed where appropriate.

ECPAT International Member Organisations

As a condition of membership to the ECPAT International network, organisations must have a child safeguarding approach (i.e. policy, procedures) that meets the standards outlined in the Child Safeguarding Procedures. Member organisations must also be prepared to demonstrate evidence that their policy is genuinely implemented in practice. Recognising the diverse nature of member organisations, contexts and types of work, there is flexibility in the way this can be represented.

Candidate member organisations who do not have a child safeguarding approach may request the ECPAT International Secretariat for support in the establishment of such policies and procedures.

Definitions

While it is common to include a section detailing relevant child safeguarding definitions directly in policy, ECPAT International subscribes to, and promotes the terminology agreed in the *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (Luxembourg Guidelines), including important projects that contextualise and translate terminology into languages other than English. These are available at <http://luxembourgguidelines.org/>.



Implementation

Awareness

For effective implementation of the *Child Safeguarding Policy*, it needs to be understood accurately by all. ECPAT International ensures awareness and understanding through a minimum thirty-minute induction for all new people, and a signed commitment to comply with the *Code of Conduct* which includes child safeguarding components. ECPAT International also provides regular refresher activities, and access to consultation with the designated child safeguarding focal point at any time.

Child Safeguarding Focal Point

The child safeguarding focal point will coordinate awareness, as well as receive concerns and assist the Senior Management Team to investigate and respond as required.

Recruitment

ECPAT International will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that our people do not pose an unacceptable risk to children. Criminal record checks are included in recruitment procedures. For consultants and others representing ECPAT International, an assessment for risks related to contact with children (real-life or virtual) will be made before deciding on whether a criminal record check will be performed.

Additionally, a range of additional safeguarding recruitment procedures will be applied depending on risks related to contact with children. These include:

- Specific child safeguarding interview questions
- Signed commitment to the *Code of Conduct*.

Details can be found in the *Child Safeguarding Procedures*.

Risk Assessment and Management

The sensitive nature of ECPAT International's work is associated with child safeguarding risks. We are committed to doing everything in our power to identify and minimise preventable risk, and manage the impacts of concerns when they occur. In the interest of preventing risk, we conduct and document child safeguarding risk assessment as part of the development of all new projects.

Furthermore, in line with our *Partnerships Policy*, all new partnerships include child safeguarding screening. Partner assessment before concluding a partnership agreement, includes assessment of their child safeguarding policies and procedures. Safeguarding screening does not extend to service providers unless exceptional circumstances indicate contact with children (e.g. catering services for child participation events).



Research

ECPAT International takes a range of precautions when conducting research that involves children, particularly given the sensitive nature of working with those who have experienced sexual exploitation. Detail can be found in the *Child Safeguarding Procedures*. General principles include:

- Strict requirements for obtaining informed consent and assent for children's data
- Closely protecting any data that could identify a child.

Communications

ECPAT International takes a range of precautions when sharing stories of or about children through external communications. Detail can be found in the *Child Safeguarding Procedures*. General principles include:

- Requirements for obtaining informed consent and assent for children's stories and images
- Clear guidelines on how children are portrayed in images and reporting.

Raising Concerns

Board members, staff, consultants, interns and volunteers or others must inform ECPAT International when they have a reasonable belief that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm:

- When it is due to the actions of ECPAT International board members, staff, consultants, interns and volunteers, or others representing the organisation
- When it is due to the actions of staff or representatives of ECPAT International network member organisations.

Concerns that must be raised include:

- An observation or disclosure (by an adult or child) of actual harm or abuse to a child
- A suggestion or indication of potential harm or abuse to a child
- A breach of the *Code of Conduct's child safeguarding section*
- A breach of the *Child Safeguarding Policy or Child Safeguarding Procedures*
- Child sexual abuse material that is received through ECPAT International electronic equipment
- A child or adult unconnected to ECPAT International presents credible evidence that a child is being abused or exploited.

Within 24 hours of becoming aware of the concern you must inform one of the following:

- The Executive Director
- The Child Safeguarding Focal Point
- Any member of the Senior Management Team
- The Chair of the Board of Trustees

Informing can be done in person, by phone or email. Verbal methods should be followed up in writing as soon as possible.



Responding

ECPAT International regards any concerns seriously and will support any child or adult who raises a concern. All concerns will be assessed and responded to using the matrix included in the *Child Safeguarding Procedures*. All responses will be guided by the principle ‘in the best interest of the child’.

Concerns will be formally investigated and responded to by the Child Safeguarding Focal Point and/or a member of the Senior Management Team according to assessment. This will include externally reporting to the relevant authorities when a suspicion of a criminal offence has occurred. Concerns rated as ‘Severe’ will be confidentially documented by the Executive Director and reported promptly to the Chair of the board. The board will be regularly updated on lower rated concerns. Further detail on raising concerns and responding can be found in the *Child Safeguarding Procedures*.

Disciplinary Actions

ECPAT International is committed to preventing a person from contact with children through our work if they pose an unacceptable risk. Following a formal investigation, a confirmed breach of the *Child Safeguarding Policy*, *Child Safeguarding Procedures* or the *Code of Conduct* will lead to disciplinary procedures which may involve termination of contracts or other consequences.

ECPAT International assures that no punitive action will be taken against those who inform of incidents or risks in good faith as per our *Whistleblowing Policy*. However, anyone who wilfully informs using false information may be subject to possible consequences as per disciplinary procedures.

END