

A Child Safe Organization

**AAWAAJ CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
and
CODE OF CONDUCT**

**To prevent the
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children
within the organization**



Revised on March 2018

Surkhet, Mid-western Region, Nepal

Prepared by: Irada Gautam, President, Aawaaj with wider consultation of other child rights organization, staff, children and communities where we work..

CONTENTS

➤ Personal Declaration to be signed and returned to the General Secretary	
➤ Why we need a Code of Conduct	5
➤ AAWAAJ Child Protection Policy for a child safe organization	6
➤ AAWAAJ Code of Conduct	10
➤ Annex I- Framework for reporting concerns	18 to 19
➤ Annex II- Key definitions	20
➤ Annex III - Code of Conduct	21 to 22
➤ Annex IV – Forms of Child Abuse	23 to 24
➤ Annex V – Recognizing the signs	25 to 27
➤ Annex VI - Twelve steps to build a child safe organization	28



DECLARATION OF GOOD CONDUCT
TO BE SIGNED BY
ALL PERSONS UNDER CONTRACT/MANDATE
(VOLUNTARY OR REMUNERATED)
WITH THE
AAWAAJ

I, the undersigned, hereby declare:

That I have not in the past been subject to any sentence for individual behavior incompatible with the responsibility of caring for or overseeing children or minors, and have never been subject to any administrative measure or investigation for criminal acts of pedophilia or breach of conduct jeopardizing the physical integrity or involving the ill-treatment of children placed under my responsibility;

That I have received and taken due note of the AAWAAJ “Child Protection Policy” and the “Code of Conduct” in respect of protection of children with whom the organization has contact, at all levels;

That I undertake to draw to the notice of my superiors any behaviour or suspicion of sexual exploitation or ill-treatment of children within the institution or in its programmes, as well as any information on such acts or behavior that may be brought to my notice;

That I have been informed of the particular vigilance of AAWAAJ with regard to the protection of children and prevention of risks of ill-treatment or of violations of the physical or psychological integrity of the children placed under my professional responsibility – and to have received information to this effect;

That I have been informed that in the event of suspicion of behavior incompatible with responsibility for children and contrary to the policy of prevention established by Aawaaj, the organization reserves the right to take protective measures involving provisional suspension;

That I have been informed that in the event of consistent evidence and known incidents, which are contradictory to the protection of the children placed under my responsibility, that the organization shall take appropriate administrative and legal measures, without limit of time or place, both in the country where the incident is alleged to have taken place and in my country of origin and/or main domicile.

That I have been informed that in the event of termination of contract on the grounds of violation of the physical and/or psychological integrity of children, the organization shall reserve the right to inform other institutions which may apply for my professional references of the termination of contract, within the legislative framework applicable to the protection of information.

Date:

Place:

Name in print:

Signature:

PLEASE RETURN THIS ORIGINAL SIGNED TO THE AAWAAJ

Why we need a ‘Code of Conduct’ and a ‘Policy’

- This document provides practical and background information to introduce the Aawaaj organizational Child Protection Policy, and introduces the Code of Conduct. It is intended for all those who directly work for, or are involved with Aawaaj at different levels, wherever our organization is active. It describes the commitment of Aawaaj to preventing abuse and to protecting the children to whom the organization is committed.
- A Child Protection Policy is at the basis of organizational risk management. The Code of Conduct provides practical directives.
- The aim is to inform Aawaaj volunteers, staff and leaders within the organization¹ about what is expected of them, to help raise awareness of what constitutes child abuse, to prevent child abuse, and to have a response mechanism in place, should child abuse occur.
- While acknowledging that local laws and customs may differ from one country to another, the Aawaaj Code of Conduct is based on international legal standards, which are grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For the purpose of this Policy, children and young people are defined as those under the age of 18.
- The Code of Conduct applies to all Aawaaj Workers. All are requested to sign it. All Aawaaj Workers share responsibility for encouraging, advocating and promoting the dissemination of the Code of Conduct and the Child Protection Policy. They also have a role in implementing, monitoring and enforcing its standards mentioned in the code of conducts.

¹ Within this document, the term 'Aawaaj Worker' shall refer to all staff/volunteers/consultants/those in leadership positions within the organization, as well as visitors to projects and partners.

A child safe organization, Aawaaj Child Protection Policy to prevent the Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children within the organization

Introduction

Child abuse is a global phenomenon. It occurs in all countries and in all societies. It involves the physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect of children. It is nearly always preventable.

All organizations and institutions working for the benefit of children have confronted, are confronting or may be confronted in future with the risk of pedophile behavior in the context of their programmes. While in certain countries preventive measures are showing success, the criminal promotion of pedophilia induces pedophiles as individuals or as networks to move to other countries for work purposes, or to create associations in order to have access to children. Despite improved recruitment and prevention procedures, the recruiting and contracting of persons with apparently excellent references does not exclude the risk of hiring paedophiles. As a result organizations can be forced to deal as a matter of urgency with the need to safeguard children and help those that have been abused to recover, to undertake internal investigations, to take administrative and legal decisions, and to handle a wider communication strategy.

To make ours a child safe organization

As an organization, we intend to do everything in the power of the structures that make up Aawaaj, at all levels, to prevent sexual abuse of children by Aawaaj Workers. Awareness of child sexual abuse has been growing steadily in our societies over recent decades. With this growing awareness the silence and secrecy that traditionally surrounds child sexual abuse is being challenged, and we are starting to understand the nature and extent of this age-old crime. Only with this information and understanding deeply imbedded in the organizational structures can effective prevention strategies be developed and implemented.

Evidence suggests that individuals who are predisposed - intentionally or unintentionally - to abusing children have been and continue to target organizations working with children.

It must be said here that by far the majority of carers, staff and volunteers working with children are safe for children. And most incidents of child sexual abuse occur outside of children's organizations, for example within the family and the extended environment of the child.

However, it is a fact that sex offenders do target children's organizations in order to access children. We also know that children and young people can be perpetrators of sexual abuse against other children. Children's organizations must take steps to protect children who are in their care, be it directly or indirectly.

Police statistics that are available from some countries indicate that more than forty percent of offenders - persons who have sexually abused children - that have been officially investigated gained access to child victims through children's organizations.

Extensive research undertaken appears to indicate that the occasional or systematic abuse of children is more likely to occur in organizations with the following features:

- there are gaps between official policy and actual practice;
- there are inadequate organizational guidelines;

- there is poor coordination among staff and no consistency in implementing those guidelines and regulations that do exist;
- there is a lack of specialized skills among the staff;
- children's participation in decision making is unheeded;
- and there is a lack of information on the issue of abuse.

There are of course other reasons that can also lead to abuse within organizations.

Protecting the child - safeguarding the organization

All forms of abuse present a risk to children. But experience has shown that child sexual abuse is a premeditated and planned act. It takes time, and relies on secrecy and opportunity. Child sex offenders are often skilled at gaining the trust of children, the child's family, and their co-workers.

It is well known that an incident of child abuse that occurs in a child focused organization not only harms the child, sometimes irreparably, but also the family and the community as a whole.

But even one incident also harms the effectiveness and the reputation of the organization thus highlighted.

In a present international climate of concern over the welfare of children who are entrusted to caring organizations, it has become a requirement to develop child protection mechanisms. Donors want to be reassured that steps have been taken by organizations to try and prevent sexual abuse and exploitation.

Aawaaj will meet its commitment to safeguard children through the following means:

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Awareness: | Ensuring that all Aawaaj Workers are aware of the problem of child abuse, the nature of abuse, and the risks to children; |
| Prevention: | Ensuring, through awareness, training and good practice, that staff and others understand how to minimize the risk to children; |
| Reporting: | Ensuring that Aawaaj Workers know what steps to take whenever concerns arise regarding the safety of children; |
| Responding: | Ensuring that appropriate action is taken to support and protect children, whenever concerns arise regarding possible abuse. |

Aawaaj recognizes that as a child rights organization it has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that children are safe when they are in the organization's care, directly or indirectly.

There is no tolerance for abuse taking place by Aawaaj Workers

(Aawaaj acknowledges with thanks the substantive information and material that have been made available by other child rights organizations, who in the recent past have developed their organizational child protection policies; in particular International Federation, BICE International, Terre des Hommes, Save the Children/UK, Ecpat, World Vision International, among others.)

CODE OF CONDUCT

- *A Code of Conduct is a code of standards of behavior, which creates clear boundaries for all concerned.*
- *It is a part of the Aawaaj Child Protection Policy.*

“We are committed to clearly defining the minimum standards of acceptable behavior, both inside and outside the work environment. This applies to employees and all others who come into contact with children through Aawaaj, and who are referred to in this document as Aawaaj Workers.

“We are committed to treating children with dignity and respect, and to protect them from sexual exploitation and abuse.

“We are committed to enforcing that minimum standards of behavior are observed in order to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including the following core principles:

“Sexual exploitation and abuse by Aawaaj Workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment or relationship;

- Sexual activity with children and young people (all persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense;
- Exchange of money, goods, other benefits and assistance that is due to the beneficiaries for sexual services is prohibited. They represent forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour.
- Where a Aawaaj Worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, he or she must report this through the organizational reporting mechanisms. [see Annex I]
- Aawaaj Workers are under obligation to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse, and which promotes our Code of Conduct and work ethics. “

**Certain rules of behavior apply in any child-adult context.
They are summarized here to indicate what to do, and what not to do:**

DOs

- empower children by promoting children's rights, i.e. discuss their rights with them, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem;
- recognize situations that present risks to children and staff and manage them effectively;
- challenge poor practice and recognize potential pitfalls which might lead to child abuse;
- promote a culture of openness where issues and concerns can be raised and discussed;

- ensure visibility, whenever possible while Aawaaj Workers are with children, and apply the “two adult rule”;
- define with children what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour;
- listen to children and talk to them about their contacts with Aawaaj Workers;
- discuss their concerns with children, explain how to voice concerns;
- avoid compromising and/or vulnerable situations which might lead to accusations;
- Ensure when making images of children, such as photos, videos, etc. that they are respectful of the children, who are adequately clothed and not represented in sexually suggestive poses.

DON'T

- use any form of physical punishment, including hitting, physical assault or physical abuse;
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative;
- enter any form of physical and/or sexual relations with children;
- hold, kiss, hug or touch a child in a culturally unacceptable manner;
- act in a manner or organize activities which are abusive or place children at risk from abuse;
- use language or act in a physically or sexually provocative and inappropriate manner;
- stay overnight with any child unsupervised;
- invite a child/children to your place of residence unsupervised;
- sleep in the same place as a child unsupervised;
- do things for children of a personal nature which they are capable of doing for themselves;
- condone or participate in activities where the child's behavior is likely to lead to abusive or illegal acts;
- act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or engage in any form of emotional abuse;
- discriminate through preferential treatment to a child, for example with gifts, sponsorships, money;
- spend excessive time alone with a child, excluding them from others;
- Take images of children, such as photos or videos, which are detrimental or explicit and undermine the child's dignity.

Management Responsibility

The Aawaaj corporate policy on protecting children from abuse is detailed in this document. It is therefore mandatory that it is implemented fully in all parts of the organization.

It is the responsibility of management to ensure that all Aawaaj Workers are made aware of the Policy.

All Aawaaj Workers must become acquainted with the requirements of the Policy, and act in accordance with these. If it comes to light that anyone associated with the organization commits acts in relation to children - whether within or outside the context of our work - which are criminal, grossly infringe on children's rights, or contravene the principles and standards contained in this document, the organization will take immediate disciplinary action, and any other action which may be appropriate to the circumstances. This may mean, for:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| ➤ Staff | disciplinary action/dismissal |
| ➤ Volunteers | disciplinary action/ending the volunteer relationship |
| ➤ Board members | termination of relationship |
| ➤ Partners | withdrawal of funding/support |
| ➤ Contractors | termination of contract |

Depending on the nature, circumstances and location of the case, Aawaaj will also consider involving authorities such as the police to ensure the protection of children, and criminal prosecution where this is appropriate.

In particular, the following roles and responsibilities are assigned within Aawaaj:

The Founder president has overall responsibility for the organization's Child Protection Policy;

Program Director is responsible for determining policy and good practice in the specific projects;

Management team, District team leaders, and those in other leadership positions are responsible for the day to day implementation of the Child Protection Procedures;

Aawaaj provides clear responsibilities for this group of staff/partners to ensure that the implementation of the child protection policy is carried out across the organization. Staff at this level has direct responsibility for ensuring that all individuals, whatever their status and role, who come into contact with children receive full awareness training in this Policy and its accompanying procedures.

Where concerns of child abuse arise, staff are responsible to ensure that mandatory internal reporting takes place to protect the child. At the same time the correct course of action must be decided on. The course of action is based on the Aawaaj Policy. In all cases the "best interest of the child" shall be considered above anything else.

Staff

All Aawaaj employees must be aware of their responsibilities in ensuring that child abuse is prevented. In addition, employees must also be aware of their role in protecting children, and their responsibility for mandatory reporting of their concerns, regarding witnessing, allegations, disclosures or suspicion of child abuse.

The Aawaaj Code of Conduct outlines the specific behavior of what is, and is not, considered acceptable behavior. Where employees are considered to engage in high risk behavior in their professional and/or private lives, thus breaching the Code of Conduct, the code will be strictly enforced through disciplinary procedures.

Employees shall be aware that Aawaaj may have a legal and/or mandatory obligation, where concerns of child abuse arise, to terminate employment and/or report those concerns to relevant, competent authorities in addition to action deemed appropriate by the Aawaaj President.

Partner Organizations

Aawaaj works with numerous allies. While the autonomy of the partner is preserved, at the same time Aawaaj has a legal and moral responsibility for the children in a project who are ultimately under the organization's care, although outside of immediate control.

Therefore, it is essential that the child protection philosophy is fully embraced when planning, developing or implementing a project with allies. The philosophy must be reflected when designing and negotiating concept papers, proposals, agreements and funding. While the policy cannot be forced on unwilling partners, it should be made clear that it is one of the fundamental areas of the Aawaaj philosophy of working with children.

Allies shall be aware that Aawaaj will have a legal and/or mandatory obligation, where concerns of child abuse arise, to withdraw funding, and/or report those concerns to the relevant competent authorities in addition to action deemed appropriate by senior management.

Volunteers

Volunteers provide a wide range of services within Aawaaj. Program coordinators must identify those areas whereby procedures for employees and others can be applied, and/or new procedures are adapted to meet the specific, often 'one off' role of volunteers. The volunteer should be subject to the recruitment and selection process as any employee, and as set out in the 'recruitment and selection' section.

Volunteers shall be aware that Aawaaj will have a legal and/or mandatory obligation, where concerns of child abuse arise, to expel the individual or group, and report those concerns to the relevant competent authorities in addition to action deemed appropriate by senior management.

Visitors, 'official' and 'non-official'

Aawaaj projects on different continents receive visitors - both local and from overseas. It is essential that all visitors who have access to children are aware of the organization's Child Protection Policy, and they must be briefed accordingly. All visitors to projects or where they are in contact with children must understand this policy. Under this policy all visitors have a responsibility to report, as would employees and others, any concerns of child abuse, and likewise they are obliged to adhere to the terms and conditions of the Code of Conduct. All visits should be monitored and recorded and in no circumstances are visitors to be left unattended in the presence of children.

Visitors shall be aware that Aawaaj or its partners may have a legal and/or moral obligation, where concerns of child abuse arise, to expel the individual from the project/event. The concerns will be reported to the relevant competent authorities, in addition to action deemed appropriate by the President.

Recruitment Policy

Recruitment, selection and screening require vigilance. Child sex offenders will target organizations where they may have access to vulnerable children. They know which organizations operate without stringent screening procedures. The majority of child sex offenders look and act like everybody else. They are often extremely clever at presenting themselves as caring and trustworthy individuals.

In order to reduce the risk of Aawaaj being used by paedophiles at any level, all or part of the recruitment process, which is imbedded in the recruitment policy, applies to all Aawaaj Workers.

Our organizational motto in recruitment at all levels must be:

- **Do not assume anything, check all details!**
- **Don't apologize for stringent checking procedures!**

Procedures

General:

All job specifications/volunteer assignments/terms of reference must contain a generic statement about the Aawaaj commitment to child protection, and the expectations it places on everyone to adhere to its principles and practices. Regional coordinators have a direct responsibility to adapt local recruitment and selection procedures to reflect the principles of the Aawaaj Policy, and to apply best practice in all aspects of child protection.

When advertising for a post/position:

- the Aawaaj Child Protection Policy will be referred to when advertising for a post;
- the Child Protection Policy and specific responsibilities of the post holder will be included in the job description.

Information to all applicants for a post to include:

- summary of Child Protection Policy
- disclosure of convictions form
- consent to Criminal Records Check form
- Covering letter to applicants to highlight need for specific child protection procedures.

During the interview:

- Citizenship or other form of identification;
- identification and resolution of employment gaps;
- questions on convictions and disciplinary record;
- granting of candidate's permission to carry out background check;
- questions on child protection issues relevant to the role;
- criminal record check if indicated;
- two reference checks on past employment;
- original evidence of qualifications claimed on application form;
- job history check.

Finally, the Declaration of Good Conduct will be signed by all candidates for a post, including volunteers and staff at all levels, as well as board members and the president of the board, stating that they have not been subject to any investigation regarding paedophilia, or other child abuse. ²

ANNEX I

Framework for reporting concerns

If you are concerned about the safety and welfare of a child, you are requested to follow this procedure:

What are the circumstances of your concern?

Did you witness child abuse?	yes/no
Do you suspect someone of child abuse?	yes/no
Has someone alleged abuse of a child?	yes/no
Does a child's behavior possibly point to abuse?	yes/no
Has someone disclosed abuse of a child to you?	yes/no

Does your concern fit any of the following categories of abuse?

Do you think a child may have been neglected?	yes/no
Do you think a child may have been physically abused?	yes/no
Do you think a child may have been emotionally abused?	yes/no
Do you think a child may have been sexually abused?	yes/no

Your concern is justified if you answered yes to any of the questions above. Your duty is to report you concerns to one of the following persons. Don't wait before you act, a child may be at risk of serious harm if you do.

Contact person: ()

Name:

Title:

Location:

Telephone:

e-mail:

The above named person will immediately inform the person indicated below, and follow up in writing not later than twenty four hours after receiving the information.

Contact person: (Program Director)

Name:

Title:

Location:

Telephone:

e-mail:

A senior staff team will agree an action plan with timings and responsibilities for the field and Program coordinator to decide what the next steps are. The plan will be followed up in writing, to all concerned, not later than 24 hours after receiving the information.

Confidentiality

It is essential to preserve and to respect confidentiality. Lack of confidentiality may have devastating effects for the lives of children, and may also result in serious consequences for adults involved in the process.

Sometimes, it may be that information offered by an individual has to be passed on, against the express wishes of the person concerned, in the interests of protecting a child or other children.

Especially when working with a child who is disclosing or alleging abuse, this could be extremely difficult. It is important to make clear the fact that it may not be possible to keep such information wholly confidential.

Do not promise to keep secrets!...

...Yet the decision to pass on information must be discussed with the child concerned, and their views sought on the release of information, the way in this is done, safeguards etc. It must be made clear, that it may not be possible to influence any subsequent process resulting from the disclosure. The child involved must be kept informed about the process.

Confidential record keeping

Disclosures, concerns or allegations must be written down at the time they are made, and not later than 24 hours afterwards. They must be signed and dated.

Records should be as detailed and precise as possible, especially when a child is making a disclosure or an allegation. The records must be kept locked away in a secure place, and the transfer of this information should be done in such a way that confidentiality is maintained.

ANNEX II Key definitions:

There is now general recognition of the existing problem of sexual exploitation and abuse of children in a variety of settings. For the purpose of this manual, the following definitions apply:

- "Aawaaj Worker" includes all those who are involved - directly or indirectly - in conducting activities for and on behalf of Aawaaj.
- "Child" means every human being below the age of eighteen years of age.

- "sexual abuse" is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force, or under unequal or coercive conditions. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest, and all forms of sexual activity involving children, including pornography.
- "sexual exploitation" is any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- "Abuser, offender, perpetrator" are words used to describe the person who abuses the child or young person.
- "Disclosure" is the statement the child or young person makes to another person, which describes or reveals abuse.
- "Paedophile" is the term used to describe a person who is driven by his interest in sexual activity with a child or with children.

Annex III - Code of Conduct

While implementing development assistance activities, staff will:

- treat children with respect regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
- not use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts where, under the law(s) applicable to the child, the child is below the age of consent or the act(s) are an offence under relevant laws;
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
- not invite unaccompanied children into my home without the permission of their parent/guardian, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible;
- use any computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately, and never exploit or harass children or access child pornography through any medium (see also 'Use of children's images for work-related purposes');
- refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children
- refrain from hiring children for domestic or other labor 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 German and local legislation, including labor laws in relation to child labor; and
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures.

Use of children's images for work-related purposes

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

- before photographing or filming a child, assess and endeavor to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images;
- before photographing or filming a child, obtain consent from the child or a parent or guardian of the child. As part of this Aawaaj 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 images are honest representations of the context and the facts; and
- ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.

Staff will use common sense to avoid actions or behaviors that could be construed as child abuse, and will report any suspected cases of child abuse when implementing development aid activities.

Annex IV – Forms of Child Abuse

Information Sheet – Forms of Child Abuse

Child abuse can occur in a variety of forms, be it physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or bullying.

Physical abuse

“Physical abuse 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

“Emotional abuse is a persistent attack on a child or young person’s self esteem. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child or young person”. A child may also be subject to emotional trauma or abuse if they are forced to, or inadvertently become a witness to domestic violence. Where this occurs deliberately it is a form of abuse.

Neglect

“Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision to the extent that the child’s health and development are at risk”

Sexual abuse

“Sexual abuse is the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing children to, or taking, pornographic photographs” or other media/materials. Child sexual abuse damages children physically, emotionally and behaviorally. Both its initial effects and long-term consequences impact on the individual, on their family and on the community.

Initial effects of child sexual abuse may include:

- Medical problems such as sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy and physical injury;
- Emotional problems such as guilt, anger, hostility, anxiety, fear, shame, lowered self esteem;
- Behavioral problems such as aggression, delinquency, nightmares, phobias, eating and sleeping disorders; and

Long-term consequences may include:

- sexual dysfunction (such as flashbacks, difficulty in arousal, avoidance of, or phobic reactions to sexual intimacy);
- Promiscuity;

- Prostitution;
- Discomfort in intimate relationships;
- Isolation;
- Marital problems;
- Low self esteem;
- Depression; and
- Mental health problems;

Annex V – Recognizing the signs

Information Sheet – Recognizing the signs

Who is most likely to abuse a child?

- Someone who is known to the child.
- Someone who the child trusts.
- Someone who the family trusts, i.e. not a stranger.
- Someone who has access to the child.
- Someone who has themselves experienced abuse as a child.

How to recognize abuse

Listed below are a number of indicators of abuse; however, they may vary by cultural and economic context. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive but is a guideline to help establish whether some form of child abuse or exploitation has taken place.

Emotional signs of abuse:

- Sudden under achievement or lack of concentration;
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults;
- Changes or regression in mood or behavior, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging;
- Depression or extreme anxiety;
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness;
- Obsessions or phobias;
- Persistent tiredness;
- Running away/stealing/lying.

Indicators of possible physical abuse:

- Any injury inconsistent with explanation given to them;
- Injuries to the body in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc;
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games;
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains;
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures, etc., which do not have a reasonable explanation;
- Infections and/or symptoms of sexually transmitted diseases;
- General bruises, scratches or other injuries not consistent with accidental injury.

Indicators of possible sexual abuse:

- Any allegations made by a child concerning abuse;
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behavior, or engaging in age in-appropriate sexual play;

- Sexually provocative or seductive with adults;
- Sudden changes in mood or behavior;
- Open displays of sexuality;
- Lack of trust in familiar adults; fear of strangers;
- General bruises, scratches or other injuries not consistent with accidental injury;
- acting-out behavior – aggression, lying, stealing, unexplained running away, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide attempts.

Indicators of possible neglect:

- Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school;
- Inadequate care.

How child sex offenders choose and “groom” children.

Child sexual abuse is different from other forms of abuse that children may experience in that it is usually premeditated. Sexual offending is not a random act; it is frequently carefully thought out and well planned. Offenders will take time to groom their victim. This appears to have two elements: choosing a victim that appeals to the offender, and picking someone the offender believes he/she can safely victimize. What follows is a process called “grooming”. This process means that the offender will manipulate people and situations in order to gain and maintain access to their victim/s. Some sex offenders' work alone; others operate in a network. Grooming is an insidious process; it is a dual process of:

- a) Building a trusting relationship with the child and his/her carers; and
- b) Isolating the child in order to abuse them.

Grooming occurs before the sex offence in order to access the child and after the offence in order to:

- a) Maintain access to the child; and
- b) Ensure the child’s silence, and the carer /adults continued trust.

Why don’t children tell?

Sex offenders frequently justify their behavior long after the fact by saying that the victim didn’t say no. The assumption that children will resist the abuse, preferably violently, is based both on ignorance about the power relationship between adults and children and an underestimation of the skillfulness offenders.

A number of barriers to children speaking out and revealing abuse have been identified.

Children do not speak out because they:

- are scared;
- think they are to blame;
- think they are strange in some way;
- do not want the abuser to get into trouble;
- feel embarrassed;
- feel guilty;
- feel alone.

12 Steps to a child safe organisation



* Copyright ECPAT Australia 2001