



STAFF, FIELD WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS CODE OF CONDUCT **Appendix 1 of Policy 6 – Personnel & Management Practice** **Edition – August 2021**

The Rationale for a Code

All SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. staff, field workers and volunteers are engaged through a calling to serve. The staff, field workers and volunteers are often public figures within the communities of their work whose lives are on display and are viewed with considerable public scrutiny.

The following are guidelines are designed to identify areas, articulate relevant principles, note areas of caution, and state what is clearly prohibited in terms of conduct for our staff and field workers.

The Code is underpinned by our **core values: seeking justice, acting with integrity, being transparent, accountable, and respectful**. It supplements our legal and ACFID compliance obligations and many of our policies provide guidance in specific areas such as Child Safeguarding, Occupational Health and Safety, Personnel and Management, Privacy and Complaints.

The Purpose of the Code

This code is intended to guide the behaviour of our staff, field workers and volunteers. It is articulated to assist them to serve in such a manner that it will cause our offices and projects to be safe places for all; places where integrity is honoured, accountability is practiced, misconduct is not concealed, and forgiveness is encouraged to bring about healing and restoration.

Improper conduct is generally regarded as behaviour that in all the circumstances of a case is an inappropriate or incorrect way of discharging a person's duties, obligations, or responsibilities.

This Code of Conduct sets out the standard that is expected of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. staff, field workers and volunteers, and therefore is an important document for determining whether a person has committed improper conduct.

A breach of a “**Prohibited**” provisions will always be improper conduct and will result in disciplinary action.

A breach of a “**Cautionary**” provision, depending on the circumstances may be improper conduct, and may result in disciplinary action.

The Code of Conduct

Personal Integrity

Our staff, field workers and volunteers (We) should be “**above reproach**” in all areas of our lives. We should be good citizens and obey the laws of the country we are living in and observe any cultural taboos of the local community. In a rare exception in Australia non-violent civil disobedience may be engaged in as a matter of protest. Our motivation comes from the fundamental principle of **seeking justice** for those made vulnerable by conflict and oppression and from the desire to empower individual and communities to create sustainable solutions to their poverty. We do not seek to build our own reputation or force our ideas or beliefs on other people. It is also important to have a healthy lifestyle and a balance of service, recreation, and family.

Caution

Addictive behaviours: Caution must be exercised in the use of alcohol and must not be done in the presence of children. Extreme caution must also be exercised with all potentially addictive and harmful behaviours that bring unwarranted harm to the body. Smoking is not permitted by staff, field workers or volunteers on or around SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. properties, projects or events.

Language: The use of offensive language should also be used with discretion and at certain times avoided (such as swear words, sexual connotations, and racial or religious slurs).

Dress: Being mindful to dress in an appropriate manner.

Lese-Majeste: When operating in Thailand we need to also be aware that speaking about the Thai Royal family is strictly prohibited and is punishable under Thai Law. All efforts must be made to withhold from speaking opinions of, telling jokes about, or making comments considered derogatory about the Royal Thai Family.

Prohibited

A staff member, field worker and volunteer must avoid drunkenness, gambling, and abstain from the use of all illegal drugs. Drinking of alcohol is not permitted around children.

Work Ethic

We should conduct ourselves honestly, reliably and without favouritism. We must always be **accountable and respectful** to those we work with and for, and will only make commitments we know we can fulfil. It is essential that we act responsibly in the best interests of those that we serve and ensure that our expectations are reasonable, clear and understood. We will work collaboratively with others with the aim of empowering each other to be the best we can be. We will be learners and endeavour to generate and

support innovative ideas to improve our work.

Caution

Qualifications: We must not misrepresent our competence, qualifications, training, or experience. Staff, field workers and volunteers should recognise their level of skill and experience and the limitations thereof. If they are unsure, they must seek additional advice from other colleagues and/or other professionals.

Working Relationships: We should also be aware of the danger of dependency developing in working relationships, and seek supervision or advice when such concerns arise. A balance should be found between the need for mutual support and the need for accountability.

Public statements: We live in a society that has become increasingly sensitive to matters of discrimination and vilification. All staff, field workers and volunteers must show respect and dignity to all people. Care must be taken in how we speak of fellow staff and field workers in public.

Care must be exercised when we express a personal opinion on controversial matters. They must distinguish expressing an opinion from speaking on behalf of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc.

Media: SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. has policies and procedures in place (including a Child Protection Policy)

relating to communication with the media, all communication with media will be done through the appropriate channels and methods

Staffing and volunteers: There is a need for transparency in any employment or volunteer offer extended to individuals interest in serving with SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. The offer must only be made with the prior knowledge and agreement of the Senior Management of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc.

After retirement or resignation from a SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. we must terminate existing project related relationships to allow their successor to assume responsibility. Friendships may continue as long as the end of the project relationship is mutually recognised.

Prohibited

We must not be abusive in any way toward others. This includes emotional abuse such as bullying, physical abuse and sexual harassment.

The misuse of authority can be a particular temptation in leadership and must be avoided. We must not attempt to use the project support, gifts, or our influence to manipulate or coerce a person or community. We are committed to being **accountable** in all areas of work.

Faith

As an Interdenominational Christian based organisation, all staff and field workers SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. are expected to be disciples of Christ with an active and ongoing attendance with a local church either in Australia or when posted abroad is encouraged.

Respect must always be shown to people of other faiths with whom we work and serve. We care for the whole person, working to improve their total well-being regardless of ethnicity, gender or religion. Everyone is to be treated fairly and without discrimination, and his or her opinions and contributions, valued.

Prohibited

Any form of discrimination or favouritism based on someone's religious beliefs, family status, gender, sexual orientation or political opinion.

Sexual Behaviour

We uphold the human dignity of every person at all times. Sexuality is a gift from God, integral to human nature and always must be respected.

Caution

Children: Being especially vulnerable, children are entitled to be safe and protected. Our work children needs to be characterised by absolute trustworthiness. All staff field workers and volunteers are responsible to implement the SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. **Child Protection Policy.**

Sexual harassment: is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. Caution must always be exercised when initiating or receiving physical contact including gestures of comfort that may be unwanted or misinterpreted. We must be aware of the varied cultural sensitivities in which we work.

Conversations: We must be careful in conversations when a person talks about sexual problems.

Consideration must always be given to whether it is appropriate to refer a person to a suitable counsellor.

Work with people in the sex industry requires clear boundaries, a high level of accountability and mixed gender peer support.

Professional relationships: It is only in the rarest of circumstances that a professional relationship can legitimately develop into a romantic relationship. If two single people meet in a professional setting (not a counselling relationship), and there is mutual attraction, then it is important for both parties to acknowledge that the nature of the relationship is changing. Once mutually recognised and acknowledged, it is the responsibility of the staff member, field worker or volunteers to disclose this to the Senior Leadership or their supervisor.

Prohibited

All inappropriate sexual behaviour towards adults and minors is forbidden. Staff members, field workers and volunteers must not have a sexual relationship with a member of the community or anyone who is receiving, or has recently received, project support. It is never acceptable for the staff member or field worker to blame the person who has received support.

Sexual innuendo or compliments of a sexual nature are always inappropriate.

Staff, field workers and volunteers must not view pornographic material or go to places of commercialised sex such as strip clubs or visit a brothel. Additionally, they must avoid chat rooms or internet sites of a sexual nature.

Financial Matters

We must set an example and have integrity in all their financial dealings. This would include the timely payment of debts, the effective management of project finances, as well as providing for their family. Failure to do so will have a significant impact on SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. and the perceptions in the wider community.

The Senior Management of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. have responsibility for the sound management of all donor and project finances. They may or may not be involved in actual transactions, but must ensure the implementation of a proper system for financial integrity and accountability.

Caution

Conflicts of interest: It is important to avoid any potential conflict between personal finances and work responsibilities. If there is anything that could lead to a conflict of interest, then it must be immediately disclosed to the Senior Management. It is important to disclose to the National Director or Board or CEO of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. any personal gift or bequest.

We must avoid borrowing money from, or lending money to, a person with whom there is a professional or project relationship.

Taxation: We must exercise caution with tax minimisation strategies and must not improperly use fringe benefit or other allowances.

Prohibited

We must not seek additional personal advantage or financial gain because of our roles. Naturally, this includes any benefit to a spouse and/or immediate member of their family. Various professions forbid dual relationship. For example, a doctor cannot enter into a business relationship with a patient. A staff member, field worker or volunteer must disclose to their National Director, Board or CEO of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. any situation that could be viewed as a dual relationship, including business agreements. We must never give project or personal funds to an armed ethnic organisation as we are committed to remaining neutral and impartial.

We must never borrow or take organisational or project funds without proper authorisation. On termination of a contract with SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc, a staff member, field worker or volunteer must not expect a payment that is excessive, illegal or by private arrangement. In cases of dispute, the matter must be referred to the SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. Board.

Confidentiality

We are committed to relationships and trust is essential in the work of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. Those involved in any form of pastoral care/counseling must note that both formal interviews and casual conversations should be treated with the utmost care and confidence. Exceptions include when disclosure is required by law (subpoena or abuse notifications), there are concerns for the safety of the person or others, or when the information is in the public domain.

Caution

Pastoral/counseling records: Pastoral /counseling notes and records are important, but caution must be taken with securing them. Any record of a counselling session is considered a health record, which is governed by national legislation. *Computer records:* must be password protected and access limited to authorised persons. Paper records must be locked up and access limited to authorised personnel.

Particular care must be exercised in the publication of personal information in donor directories, newsletters, rosters, and websites, etc. This also extends to publishing voices and images of individuals.

Confidentiality should be preserved in peer supervision or in mentoring relationships. All care should be taken to avoid disclosing those being discussed.

Prohibited

We must not disclose confidential conversations except if required by law or if there is a concern for the safety of the person or another person.

Personal Development

We are committed to being **effective** and therefore It is important to continue to develop skills through a variety of means including education, professional supervision, peer support, mentoring, and a regular reviews. We are committed to being learners, and seeking continual growth and transformation.

The Implementation of the Code

If questions arise with areas of “**Caution**,” the individual staff member, field worker, or volunteer must talk to a supervisor, mentor, consult with peers, and if necessary pursue voluntary counselling.

With any breach of the Code of Conduct in a “**Prohibited**” area the person in breach must notify the Chair of the SUSTAIN Projects - Myanmar Board or the National Director of SUSTAIN Projects – Myanmar Inc. (or the person fulfilling those duties at that time) within 7 days (24 hours if civil or criminal action is involved).

Failure to notify in accordance with the paragraph above will itself be a “**Prohibited**” breach of the code.