



Comhlámh
Code of Good Practice

Comhlámh Code of Good Practice

FOR VOLUNTEER SENDING AGENCIES

2024 Edition



Comhlámh
GLOBAL SOLIDARITY IN ACTION






About Comhlámh

Established in 1975, Comhlámh is the Irish association of international development workers and volunteers. As a membership organization, we build and mobilise community around global justice issues. Comhlámh nurtures and supports work for change, locally and globally, and advocates for a world beyond injustice.



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Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies

Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies (VSAs) is a set of values-led principles that provides organisations with a framework to reflect on, adapt, and deepen their international volunteering practice. Since its launch almost 20 years ago, it has been rooted in a strong community of practice, with members continually engaged in a process of revision that connects the Code to evolving local and global contexts.

The 2024 edition of the Code is informed by collaborations between Comhlámh, VSAs and partners from across civil society, in Ireland and in the Global South. It has been developed during a time of vast change and upheaval across the world. The international volunteering sector was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in cancelled programmes, the closure of some organisations, and a recognition of the need to reexamine ways of working. Alongside many challenges, this enforced pause in our work provided space for shared reflection on the drivers of unsustainability, the need for radical change, and an increased recognition of the need for mutually supportive relationships that recognise the interconnectedness and interdependence of people and planet.

The Code's core values are Solidarity, Social Justice, Ecological Sustainability, Respect, and Integrity, and Code members are encouraged to consider where these may be present in their work, and to explore how they could further strengthen their practice.



Questions raised by the Code include:

- How does our work acknowledge power differentials and the importance of taking longer-term action on priorities identified by those we are in solidarity with?
- In what ways is our work informed by an awareness of the interdependence between wealth and poverty, and of the drivers of injustice and inequality everywhere?
- How do we work to integrate processes of learning and unlearning that challenge unsustainability and seek out emerging ways of being in response to this?
- Is our organisation committed to building the conditions for respectful relationships with everyone we work with – volunteers, staff, partners, and communities – and to critically reflecting upon our practice in an ongoing manner?
- In what ways do we commit to looking honestly at ourselves, our policies, and practices, identifying where and how we need to change, and then to making those changes?

The Code aims to support and to challenge, accompanying a journey of reflection and change. It seeks to strengthen practice within living, learning organisations who are open to new approaches and willing to seek out emerging ways of being, even if these are not always clear and easily defined. It is not about ticking boxes to achieve a narrowly defined status which fits neatly into a photo frame. Perfection is not the goal – mistakes are part of the process and vital for learning within a continuously evolving process that we are all part of.

We invite you to explore the Code – to consider the values, principles, and indicators, and to reflect on where your organisation is living these, where there may be gaps in your organisation's practice, and what opportunities may emerge through your reflections and explorations.



Learn more about the Code and see the current list of Signatories here:

<https://comhlamh.org/code-of-good-practice/>

Solidarity

involves mutually supportive relationships that recognise the interconnectedness and interdependence of people and planet. It acknowledges power differentials and the importance of taking longer-term action on priorities identified by those we are in solidarity with. Our organisation works to support change in relation to those issues through sustainable and equitable partnerships. All areas of our work – nationally and internationally – are based on a commitment to ongoing critical reflection that supports action for positive change.

PG 7

Social Justice

is about recognising our common humanity and our diversity. It involves a commitment to systemic change to advance freedom, protection of human rights, and equality of outcomes, particularly in economic terms and in power relations. Our work is informed by an awareness of the interdependence between wealth and poverty, and of the drivers of injustice and inequality everywhere. Our organisation commits to identifying and responding to these drivers wherever we work.

PG 10

Ecological sustainability

is about recognising the entanglement of the work we do within wider systems. Our organisation works to address unsustainability in all its forms: for individuals, organisations, the systems driving unsustainability, as well as earth's ecosystems. We work to integrate processes of learning and unlearning that challenge unsustainability and seek out emerging ways of being in response to this.

PG 12

CODE VALUES

Integrity

is about honesty, transparency, quality, and accountability. We uphold good governance, accountability, and safeguarding across our work. We commit to looking honestly at ourselves, our policies, and practices, identifying where and how we need to change and then to making those changes.

PG 20

Respect

is about openness and flexibility in how we think and act. It involves consideration and empathy for people's diverse identities, beliefs, understandings, and situations. Our organisation commits to building the conditions for respectful relationships with everyone we work with – volunteers, staff, partners, and communities – and to critically reflecting upon our practice in an ongoing manner.

PG 16



Solidarity

Solidarity involves mutually supportive relationships that recognise the interconnectedness and interdependence of people and planet. It acknowledges power differentials and the importance of taking longer-term action on priorities identified by those we are in solidarity with. Our organisation works to support change in relation to those issues through sustainable and equitable partnerships. All areas of our work - nationally and internationally - are based on a commitment to ongoing critical reflection that supports action for positive change.

PRINCIPLE 1: Our organisation is committed to long-term action on priorities identified by those we are in solidarity with. Our organisational culture seeks to challenge power imbalances and strives to promote sustainable and equitable partnerships.

1.1.

Our organisational culture seeks to challenge power imbalances and we continuously collaborate with partners and communities to identify where and how we need to change, and work to implement these changes.

Areas to Consider

KEY QUESTION: How do we identify, analyse, and challenge power imbalances in our work?

- Organisational culture;
- Power and privilege;
- Listening to our partners;
- Unconscious bias;
- Complicity;
- Cultural sensitivity;
- Anti-racism;
- Reciprocity;
- Creating space for critical feedback;
- Long-term thinking.

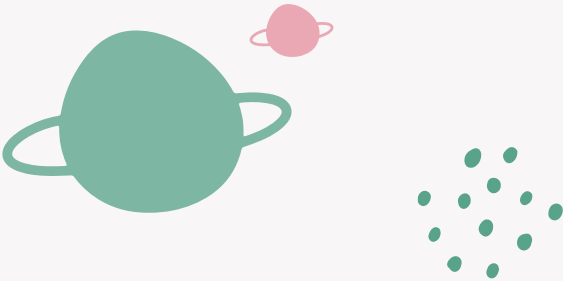
Suggested Evidence

- **Strategies/ Policies/ Code(s) of Conduct/ Partnership Agreements** which demonstrate how we challenge power imbalances.
- **Training Materials/ Workshops** which show how we explore issues of power.
- **Creative evaluation and learning methods** which support conditions for partners and the communities we work with to offer open and honest feedback, and to engage in regular review processes, which may be challenging to our organisation.

1.2.

We work with partners and communities to identify priorities for long-term action: through sustainable and equitable partnerships, we co-create and co-deliver programmes, projects, and volunteer roles that address these.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we demonstrate a commitment to long-term action informed by priorities identified by those we are in solidarity with, and what future do we see for international volunteering in this process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Who is involved at every stage and who is heard and listened to?Advocacy for long-term change;Connecting local and global issues;Have alternative ways of working been considered?Partner role in planning and implementing volunteer placements;Addressing partner capacity gaps;Mutual respect and learning;Mitigation of shared risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Strategies/ Policies/ Partnership Agreements/ Budgets which demonstrate a commitment to long-term action through sustainable and equitable partnerships.Needs assessments/ Situational Analyses/ Programme Plans/ Budgets which show how the priorities of partners and the communities we work with are identified to inform the development of volunteer roles.Creative and emergent approaches to programme design which support conditions for the priorities of partners to shape the volunteer experience.Supporting measures taken by our organisation to assist our partners in responding to the priorities that they have identified.



1.3.

We nurture the creation of a thriving ecosystem within our work, grounded in solidarity and recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of people and planet, where staff, volunteer, partners, and the communities we work with can thrive.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we create an environment where people can flourish within a thriving ecosystem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">What does care look like within our org (staff, vols, partners – the people) as well as systems, policies, working environment?How would we know when our organisation is in balance internally, externally and in partnership with wider nature? What are indications the organisation is out of balance?What is thriving already in our organisation (the ‘wild spaces’ in the ecosystem) and how to grow this?How is our work potentially damaging/ extractive to the individuals (people) involved?Are our partners compensated for the time it takes to host volunteers?Are our programmes reciprocal?Where does burnout manifest at all levels of the work we do, and how are we mitigating this?How sustainable are our working practices?How does our relationship with ‘pace’ affect reflection/ slowing down for greater insight?Psycho-social support, health and safety measures <p><i>*Collective Care refers to a way of caring that is beyond Self-Care. Self-care relies on individuals to take responsibility for their own care separate from entanglement and relationship with others. Collective Care assumes that wellbeing can be promoted through structures of the organisation promoting a culture of care beyond individualism and recognises systems that aggravate unsustainability for people/ workers.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Supporting measures (research, training, and any other supports) taken by our organisation to promote collective care and mitigate the risk of burnout among staff, volunteers, partners, and the communities we work with, including the provision of psycho-social supports.Partnership agreements that show how partners are compensated for the time it takes to host volunteers/ how volunteer placements are linked to wider funding provided by the VSA.Strategies/ Policies/ Code(s) of Conduct/ Partnership Agreements which challenge unsustainable ways of working and promote collective care.Consideration of how our organisation welcomes people in each of the spaces we create (new staff members, volunteers, partners). <p><i>*Collective Care refers to a way of caring that is beyond Self-Care. Self-care relies on individuals to take responsibility for their own care separate from entanglement and relationship with others. Collective Care assumes that wellbeing can be promoted through structures of the organisation promoting a culture of care beyond individualism and recognises systems that aggravate unsustainability for people/ workers.</i></p>





Social Justice

Social Justice is about recognising our common humanity and our diversity. It involves a commitment to systemic change to advance freedom, protection of human rights, and equality of outcomes, particularly in economic terms and in power relations. Our work is informed by an awareness of the interdependence between wealth and poverty, and of the drivers of injustice and inequality everywhere. Our organisation commits to identifying and responding to these drivers wherever we work.



PRINCIPLE 2: We identify and respond to the structural causes of global injustice and unsustainability.

2.1.

We have a commitment to social justice at home and abroad and an understanding of social justice as a global and interdependent issue.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: What does social justice mean to our organisation, and how do we action this value in our work at home and abroad?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How do we foster and support creativity, exploration, and discovery throughout our work on social justice?Linkages between volunteering and justice movements.Advocacy for long-term change.Communicating our commitment to the social justice agenda.How do we support volunteers to engage with social justice issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mission statement, values and goals and strategic plan that reflect a commitment to the broad social justice agenda.Research, evaluation and learning methods which encourage exploration, discovery, and the consideration of alternative ways of working.Programme plans/research which reflect an evidence-based approach to addressing the root causes of poverty, injustice, and inequality.Memberships/connections/partnerships with networks, organisations, campaigns, and actions on social justice issues in Ireland and internationally.Mobilising of volunteers to act on social justice issues and to get involved in movements for change.

2.2.

Our organisation critically reflects on the ‘fair share’ use of resources with a social justice approach.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: Does our strategy assume growth as an intuitive direction?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">What might degrowth look like for our organisation?What might this mean for workload/ reduced working hours/ creating capacity for reflection?How do we strive for outcomes that go beyond monetary/ funding considerations?Where do we reduce/ share resources with others (locally and internationally)?How does our organisation deal with the unknown?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Theory of Change that suggests challenges to dominant economic models.Monitoring and Evaluation systems and outcomes that use compassionate and emergent approaches.Shared use of resources (e.g. office space, collaborating on programmes).Initiatives to reduce workload and create capacity for reflection.Evidence of new projects which emerging for the learnings from previous projects and demonstrate changed approaches.





Ecological Sustainability

Ecological sustainability is about recognising the entanglement of the work we do within wider systems. Our organisation works to address unsustainability in all its forms: for individuals, organisations, the systems driving unsustainability as well as earth's ecosystems. We work to integrate processes of learning and unlearning that challenge unsustainability and seek out emerging ways of being in response to this.

'We need to value and learn from the entire spectrum of global wisdom, and redefine development to support genuine regeneration based on ethical behaviour and long-term thinking'.

- Looby McNamara, People and Permaculture



PRINCIPLE 3: Our organisation commits to critical reflection on what drives unsustainability and creates conditions to explore and integrate regenerative ways of being and doing, using critical Global Citizenship Education (GCE) approaches.



3.1. Our organisational values and ways of working demonstrate a commitment to interrogating and unpacking the systems of harm which drive global injustice, inequality, and unsustainability.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How does our organisation engage with the issue of unsustainability and the complicity of our work in systems of harm?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the 'systems of harm'? What does change mean? What might 'complicity' look like? Where might issues including unsustainability, (neo) colonialism, extractivism, saviourism, and slavery show up for our organisation? How do we engage with GCE approaches that help us to consider these questions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies/ Policies/ Partnership Agreements which challenge unsustainability in our practice and critically reflect on our complicity in systems of harm. Research/ Workshops which use GCE approaches to explore unsustainability, unpack systems of harm, and consider regenerative ways of being and doing. Procurement policies and practices which are ethical and environmentally sustainable. Divestment from support for violent systems such as fossil fuels and war industries (e.g. staff pensions, procurement policies, support for divestment campaigns). Membership of IDEA and participation in the IDEA Code of Good Practice for Development Education.



3.2. We use GCE approaches to create the conditions for people who are interested in volunteering to engage in critical reflections on their motivations, consider their complicity in unsustainable and harmful systems, and explore regenerative ways of being and doing.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we support individuals seeking to volunteer to engage in critical reflection, and do we allow for the possibility that this process may lead to them deciding not to volunteer internationally?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motivations, saviourism• Complicity in systems of harm• Alternatives to volunteering• Regenerative ways of being and doing• Curiosity, Exploration, Emergence• Role of volunteers in achieving change at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotional/ Recruitment/ Training materials which show the use of critical GCE approaches to explore unsustainability, unpack systems of harm, and consider regenerative ways of being and doing.• Post-return supports which create the conditions for individuals to collectively continue their global learning journey.• Capacity development of staff and volunteers through participation in GCE trainings, working groups, and educational opportunities.• Signposting of alternatives to international volunteering.

3.3. Our organisation considers how our work is located within wider ecosystems and we take action to support more-than-human communities.

**More-than-human communities and wider ecosystems frame nature with the assumption that humans are nature, not separate from and this framing can affect how humans engage with nature.*

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we connect our work to broader ecosystems, and what impact is our organisation having on more-than-human communities and wider ecosystems?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is it possible to cultivate Global Citizenship which is separate from the rest of nature?• If our work is not actively restoring or caring for ecosystems/wider nature, is it possible we are actively damaging such (eco)systems?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnerships/ Volunteer roles in ecosystem restoration locally and internationally.• Advocacy on issues connected to biodiversity ecosystem restoration/ nature.• Sourcing local, native, open-pollinated seeds/ plants/ trees.• Choices around food (local, seasonal, values of the supplier) at events in Ireland/while overseas.• Engagement with nature as inspiration -Nature as the ‘classroom’ to deliver content (outdoor learning).• Evidence of nature in the working environment (without tokenism).

3.4. Our organisation commits to actively protecting and restoring nature in all her forms.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How does our organisation engage with the issue of waste?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does our organisation use refurbished equipment/ furniture/ etc. or buy new?• How do we heat and power the building?• Where do we reduce/ share resources with others (locally and internationally)?• How does our organisation engage with the issue of waste?• How do we challenge concepts such as consumption, and even recycling, as being complicit in linear systems of waste?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative/ evidence around energy use and choices/ decisions made.• Examples of refurbished or reused items in the office/ as part of our programmes.• Where do we source our heat and power from, and what choices do we have?• Evidence of working towards Zero Waste – Environmental or Zero Waste Policy with practical manifestation of such policies in our office’s work and programmes: refuse, reduce, repair, reimagine, re-educate, repurpose, redesign (beyond recycling/ consumption).





Respect

Respect is about openness and flexibility in how we think and act. It involves consideration and empathy for people’s diverse identities, beliefs, understandings, and situations. Our organisation commits to building the conditions for respectful relationships with everyone we work with – volunteers, staff, partners, and communities – and to critically reflecting upon our practice in an ongoing manner.

PRINCIPLE 4: Our organisation commits to creating respectful, empathetic, and open relationships with and between volunteers, partners, and communities we work with. We prioritise diversity, inclusion, and equality in all areas of our work.



4.1. We are continuously nurturing an organisational culture based on respect, empathy, and openness, and this is reflected in how we engage with our volunteers, partners, and the communities we work with.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we create the conditions where the diverse identities of everyone we work with are treated with respect and empathy, and ensure that these conditions are maintained across our programmes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code(s) of conduct;• Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion;• Cherishing diversity;• Recruitment processes;• Assessing volunteer suitability;• Accessibility of our programmes and making reasonable accommodation for disabled people;• Transparency;• Critical reflection;• Awareness of local laws and customs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code(s) of Conduct for board, staff, and volunteers which outlines the principles, personal behaviours, and actions that are required to support a nurturing and empowering organisational culture.• Partnership agreements/ Recruitment policies/ Guidelines/ Strategies which promote a culture of respect, empathy, diversity, and inclusion, and outline how this is realised in our work.• Evidence of inclusive and creative approaches to policy and strategy development, which support conditions for all stakeholders to be heard in the development process.• Training/ Mentoring/ Debriefing processes which are respectful, empathetic, and responsive, and support all stakeholders to make meaning of the volunteer journey and process the complex emotions arising from the placement in a safe, generative way.• Capacity Building Initiatives with staff/ volunteers/ partners which support an inclusive and empathetic culture.

4.2.

We recognise that the most dynamic and creative place in an ecosystem, where diverse identities are most prominent, is at the edge, and we seek to nurture an organisational culture that allows for this Edge Effect*.

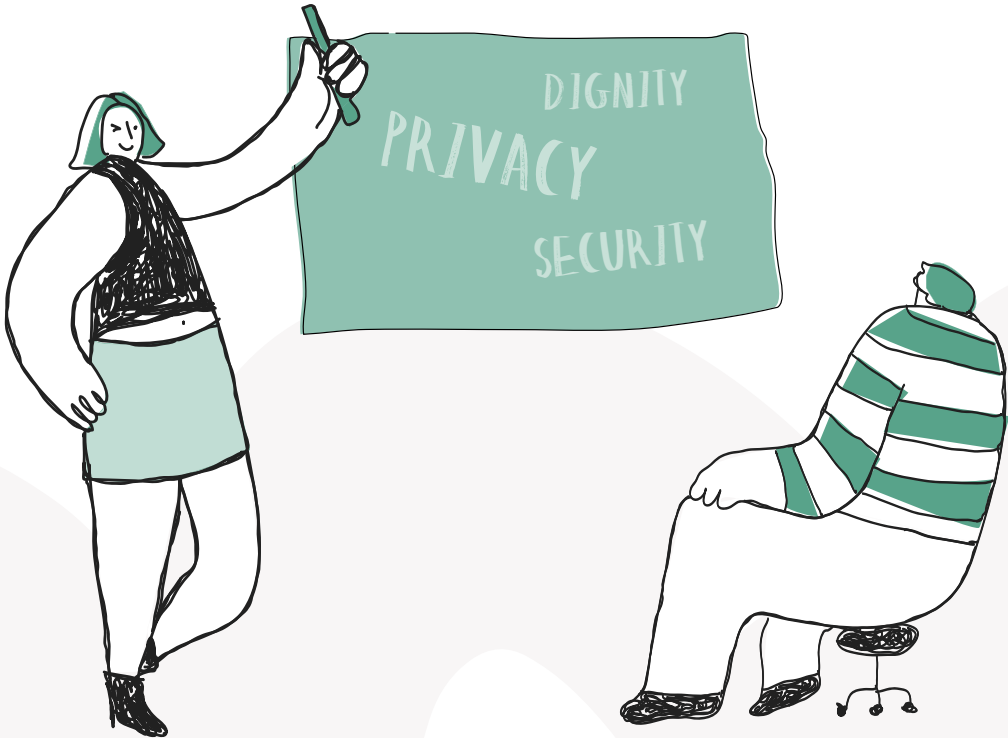
Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: Where does the Edge Effect manifest in our organisation, and how do we work to move through our stretch zone?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Edge Effect;Stretch Zone;Who is on the 'edge'?Diversity of people and approaches;Cherishing diverse experiences and perspectives;Neurodiversity;Challenging normativity. <p><i>*Edge Effect and Stretch Zone – in nature, there is a greater diversity of life in the 'transition zone' where the edges of two adjacent ecosystems overlap, such as land/water, or forest/grassland. This typically is where most innovation, creativity, diversity and emergence happens.</i></p> <p><i>For organisations the edge is where positions and values are the most stretched and challenged. Who is on the 'edge' and how are we including them in our programmes?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Training and mentoring processes which seek to nurture the dynamism and creativity of our volunteers, partners, and the communities we work with.Capacity building of staff/ volunteers/ partners in areas related to creativity and transformative change.Recruitment policies/ Guidelines/ Strategies which show a commitment to reaching people 'on the edge' and challenging normativity through our programmes.



4.3.

We are committed, through our approach to communications, to upholding the dignity, privacy, and security of all the people we work with.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How does our approach to communications ensure that the dignity, privacy, and security of our volunteers, partners, and the communities we work with is upheld?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ethical portrayal of volunteers, partners, and communities we work withSafe communications cultureCommitment to upholding dignity, privacy, and securityBalancing emancipatory messaging with organisational fundraising pressuresSaviourism, anti-racism, cultural sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Promotional/ Recruitment/ Fundraising materials which are inclusive, respectful and acknowledge the diverse identities of volunteers, partners, and the communities we work.Partnership Agreements/ Staff and Volunteer Handbooks which promote a safe approach to communication.Training materials/ Workshops which explore ethical communications and promote a safe culture.Promotion of and engagement with ethical communication resources including promotion of the Dóchas Ethical Communications Guidelines and engagement with Comhlámh's Etrick resources and conversation circles.





Integrity

Integrity is about honesty, transparency, quality, and accountability. We uphold good governance, accountability and safeguarding across our work. We commit to looking honestly at ourselves, our policies, and practices, identifying where and how we need to change and then to making those changes.



PRINCIPLE 5: Our organisation is committed to honesty, transparency, quality, and accountability in all aspects of its our work.

5.1.

We are committed to openness and honesty, and work to develop an organisational culture which upholds the dignity of our volunteers, partners, and the communities we work with.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we promote an open and honest organisational culture which upholds the dignity of our volunteers, partners, and the communities we work with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code(s) of Conduct;• Inclusive approach to policy development;• Procedures and response mechanisms;• Policies and procedures;• Framing of communications and fundraising approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code(s) of Conduct/ Partnership agreements/ Staff and Volunteer Handbook which outline acceptable behaviours, set realistic expectations, and have clear procedures for responding to grievances.• Use of inclusive methodologies during the development of code(s) of conduct/ agreements/ handbooks which support conditions for all stakeholders to be heard in the development process.• Approaches to communications and fundraising which uphold dignity and are in line the Dóchas Ethical Communications Guidelines.• Evidence of the meaningful input of partners in the development of communication and fundraising materials.

5.2.

We support our volunteers to make meaning of their experience, and to have realistic expectations about what their placement might achieve.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we ensure that our volunteers, partners, and the communities we work with have realistic expectations about what the placement can achieve, and are supported to make meaning of this experience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training and mentoring which use GCE approaches;• Intercultural education;• Ethnocentrism, saviourism;• Debriefing;• Psychosocial supports;• Support for next steps post-placement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training/ Mentoring/ Debriefing processes which use GCE approaches and are delivered by appropriately skilled, qualified, and experienced personnel.• Capacity building of staff/ volunteers/ partners in areas related to psycho-social support, health and safety, and debriefing.





PRINCIPLE 6: Our organisational culture centres on the protection of all people, including staff, volunteers, partners, programme participants and community members. We recognise that in certain situations, children and some adults may be more vulnerable to abuses of power and may require additional protections. We actively prevent harm and implement safe programmes. We respond appropriately when things go wrong, we reflect, learn, and hold ourselves to account against safeguarding standards.

6.1.

Safer organisational culture: We analyse the power dynamics in our organisation and programmes and act to educate and inform so that we address power imbalances and sustain a safer organisational culture.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we cultivate an open culture across our organisation and programmes that promotes holding each other accountable for the protection of everyone?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who do we seek to protect?• How do we define those in need of protection?• How do we protect those in need of protection?• How do we cultivate an open culture across our organisation and programmes that promotes holding each other accountable for the protection of everyone?• Is there zero tolerance of unacceptable behaviours?• How do our organisational cultures enable all staff, volunteers, partners and programme participants in all their diversity and uniqueness, to feel included, listened to, respected and celebrated?• How are all our staff, volunteers, partners and programme participants made aware of what to expect from staff and volunteers and enabled to report if expected standards of behaviour are not met?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training materials/ Records/ Certificates of attendance for staff and volunteers’ participation in training on topics such as power and privilege, anti-racism.• Diversity data.• Feedback from staff, volunteers and programme participants (e.g. staff exit interviews, volunteer de-briefing and evaluations).• Case studies of incidents.• Completion of activities from the Safeguarding Culture Assessment Toolkit, developed by the Comhlámh Safeguarding Working Group.

6.2.

Safer leadership and accountability: Our leaders and board members model leadership behaviours which create safe environments and demonstrate accountability for safeguarding.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do leaders and board members promote an organisational culture which prohibits misconduct and welcomes reports of concerns?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do our board members understand their safeguarding governance role?• Do we have a named safeguarding board member?• What is our board’s role in ensuring organisational safeguarding risks are mitigated?• Is safeguarding a standing item on board and leadership and/or team meetings?• Do we have a named Safeguarding Lead/ Focal Point?• How empowered are we all to challenge the behaviours of our leaders and board?• How do leaders and board members promote an organisational culture which prohibits misconduct and welcomes reports of concerns?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaders and board members’ role descriptions showing clearly defined accountabilities for safeguarding.• A resourced safeguarding implementation plan which is approved by leaders and/ or board members.• Documented and anonymised minutes of meetings showing learning from safeguarding incidents, as appropriate.• Safeguarding on the organisational risk register.• Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Focal Point(s) whose role and contact details are publicly available to all.



6.3.

Safer policies and procedures: We have easily understandable policies and procedures which are known and understood, and document expected standards of conduct and the organisational commitments to implement these policies and procedures.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: Who needs to be protected in our organisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">What potential harms do they need to be protected from?Who is involved in the creation of our policies, e.g. staff, volunteers, partners, programme participants, community?How are rights embedded into our Code(s) of Conduct and safeguarding-related policies?How are our Code(s) of Conduct and safeguarding-related policy commitments enacted in our organisation?How are our Code(s) of Conduct and safeguarding-related policies communicated to all? Do they require translation? Do we need a child/ reader-friendly version?When, and how, are our policies and Codes communicated to staff, volunteers, partners and programme participants?Have our Codes and Policies been approved?Have our Codes and Policies been reviewed within the last three years?How is implementation of our policy reviewed and assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Safeguarding policy(ies) and procedure(s), which are compliant with Irish legislation and reflect international best practice standards, protect staff, volunteers, partners and programme participants and all those in contact with the organisation.Code(s) of Conduct which prohibit all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, bullying and harassment and are compliant with international standards including the IASC 6 core principles SEA.Signed documentation that staff and volunteers understand the safeguarding-related policies, Code(s) of Conduct and consequences of breaching these.Minutes of board and/ or staff meetings noting review and approval of safeguarding-related policies and Code(s) of Conduct.



6.4.

Safer People: Our organisational recruitment practices screen out unsuitable staff and volunteers. All our staff and volunteers understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are supported to act in line with these.

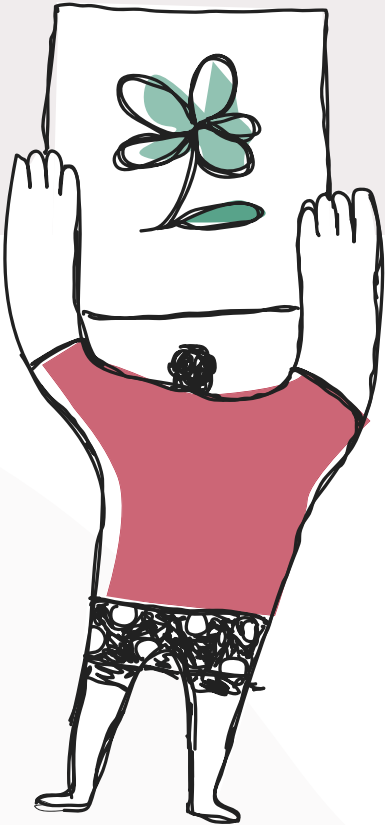
Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: What safer recruitment practices do we have in place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How do we ensure that all staff and volunteers understand their safeguarding responsibilities?What materials and training do we provide to inform staff, volunteers, partners, programme participants and community members of our Code(s) of Conduct and safeguarding-related policies? To whom?How do we include safeguarding throughout the volunteer and employee lifecycle?How do we include safeguarding in the references of volunteers and staff when they leave us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sample of anonymised recruitment documents for staff and volunteers: advertisement; application forms; candidate's identity and qualifications check; interview questions; criminal background checks (or self-declaration); at least two referencesPre-departure or induction training materials or records or certificates of attendance of a safeguarding inductionRecords/ certificates of attendance of staff annual refresher trainingRecords/ certificates of attendance role specific training, e.g. specific training for programmes staff, volunteers, leaders or safeguarding focal points



6.5.

Safer programmes: We understand the safeguarding context of our programmes and integrate safeguarding throughout our programme management cycle.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we assess safeguarding risks and include mitigations in our programme designs and programme implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How do we identify and mitigate the different vulnerabilities and risks to different people?To what extent do we consider diverse identities when assessing risk and putting mitigations in place?How do we assess safeguarding risks and include mitigations in our programme designs and programme implementation?How are our activities with programme participants risk assessed and adapted to mitigate safeguarding risks?To what extent are programme participants included in the risk identification and development of mitigation strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local mapping of support services, laws and cultures which influence safeguarding is in place.Risk assessment and mitigation plans for programmes and activities.Programme plans and budgets include safeguarding activities.Monitoring and evaluation plans monitor the safe implementation of the programme(s).



6.6.

Safer partnerships: We work with local partners to safeguard all staff, volunteers, programme participants and community members. We ensure robust safeguarding systems are in place, supported by mutual learning and development of good practice.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we ensure that partners' safeguarding policies and practices are keeping people safe?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How do we assess and support partners' safeguarding capacity?How do we ensure that partners' safeguarding policies and practices are keeping people safe?How do we ensure that our relationship with partners is one of mutual respect and learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Our partner selection guidelines show safeguarding due diligence as part of the selection process.Partnership agreements which address safeguarding.Evidence our organisation has identified and provided the safeguarding support, as appropriate.

6.7.

Safer communications: We incorporate safeguarding measures into all forms of reporting and communications activities.

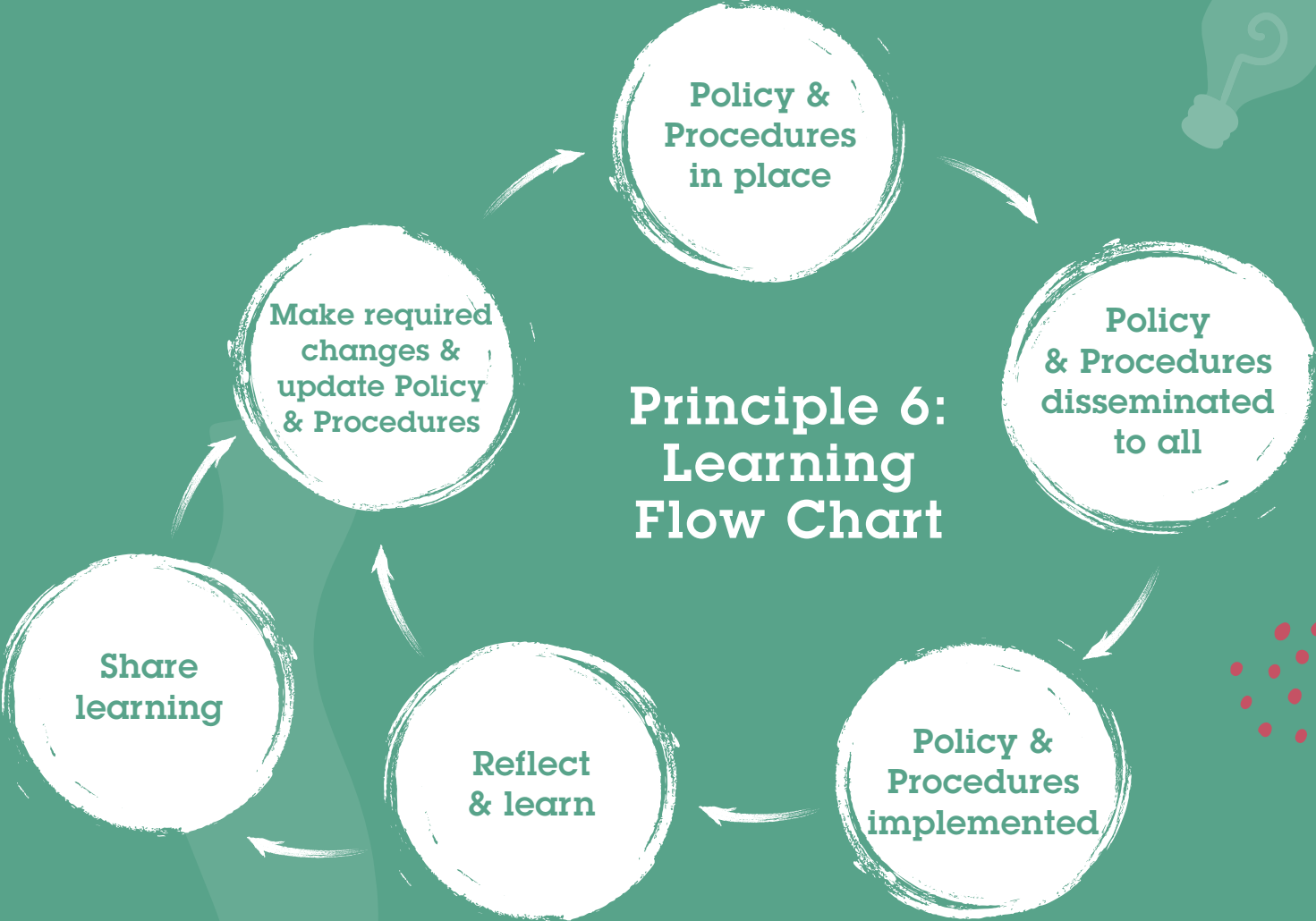
Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we publicly demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do we recognise the importance of having a positive and safe public profile?How do we store information securely?What standards do we apply to the use of programme participants' information and images?Do we have a policy and procedures to safeguard the personal information related to safeguarding incidents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sample consent form.Communications and social media policy/ guidelines shows the safe generation, storage and use of programme participants' images and information.IT policy/ Guideline shows data is securely managed and checks to ensure neither hardware nor software is used to generate, store or share illegal or sexually explicit material.Public declaration of commitment to principles of the Dóchas Ethical Communication Guidelines.

6.8.

Reporting and responding – We empower, equip, and encourage everyone to report suspected safeguarding failures. We take these reports seriously and seek to learn from these failings.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
<p>KEY QUESTION: How do we create a culture where safeguarding reports are welcomed and accepted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How do we include staff, volunteers, partners, programme participants and community in the design of the safeguarding reporting mechanism that they will be using?How do we explain to everyone how safeguarding reports can be made, about what, how we will respond and how we will protect all those involved?How do we identify and remove the barriers that may prevent different groups of staff, children and communities from speaking up and reporting concerns?Are we prepared for finding and accessing trained and experienced investigators?How do we centre the adult survivor in our response to complaints?How do we act in the best interests of the child in our response to complaints?How do we learn from safeguarding failings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Documented child/survivor-friendly reporting and investigation procedure.Information and resources which show what behaviours to expect from volunteers, partner and VSA staff and what to do when expected standards of behaviour are not met.Documented whistle-blower protections.Documented disciplinary procedure which shows that action, up to and including termination, will be taken for substantiated reports.

Learning from Principle 6





PRINCIPLE 7: Our organisation is committed to child-safe volunteering.

7.1.

We commit to raising awareness among our volunteers, partners, and the communities we work with about the harm caused by orphanage volunteering and institutions and to only facilitate volunteering opportunities that put the best interests of and wellbeing of children and families first.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
KEY QUESTION: How do we demonstrate a commitment to promoting child-safe volunteering?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Endorsement of the Comhlámh Put Children First: End Orphanage Care and Volunteering Campaign.• Promotional and training materials that raise awareness about the harm caused by orphanage volunteering and institutions. For example, using the Just Care: Just Volunteering GCE resource.• Promoting the individual Put Children First: End Orphanage Care pledge.

7.2.

If working with orphanages/institutions for children, we only send skilled volunteers in a capacity-building role to support de-institutionalisation. These skilled volunteers have the relevant expertise to support de-institutionalisation strategies and processes and if direct work with children is planned, are trained to work with vulnerable and traumatised children.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
KEY QUESTION: In any engagement with orphanages/institutions for children, how are our volunteers working to support de-institutionalisation, and are they appropriately qualified?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteer role description which outlines how they are working to support de-institutionalisation.• Volunteer qualifications which demonstrate how they are appropriately qualified.

7.3.

If working with orphanages/institutions for children we support the development of sustainable and responsible de-institutionalisation strategies and structures, which work to safeguard each child’s best interests and/or develop and implement a withdrawal plan to phase out from this work.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
KEY QUESTION: Do we have a sustainable and responsible approach to de-institutionalisation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• De-institutionalisation strategy.• Withdrawal plan.

7.4.

If our organisation has an association with orphanages/institutions for children, we commit to directing funds raised by volunteers toward supporting our de-institutionalisation strategies and processes and/or strengthening the capacity of families and communities to care for children.

Areas to Consider	Suggested Evidence
KEY QUESTION: Is our organisation directing funds to support de-institutionalisation strategies and/or strengthening family-based care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding strategy that supports de-institutionalisation/family-based care.



your notes

your notes

your notes

your notes



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