

To Meg Gardinier and Katsuhiko Takeda
Co-Chairs CEO Forum

Subject **Proposed Environmental Sustainability Standards**

Date Wednesday 23 September 2020

From Paul Brown

This paper proposes that the CEO Forum support the draft Environmental Sustainability Standards, and forward them to the Board for formal approval of these standards.

Background

During the course of discussions regarding the ChildFund Alliance Strategic Plan for years 2021-2025, the CEO Forum and Board approved a new value proposition for ChildFund. Within this value proposition are eight principles, including Principle Seven, which states:

“We care deeply for the earth and how its health impacts children and future generations, as evidenced by programs and shared standards that care for the environment and mitigate against harm.”

At the time of developing the value proposition, ChildFund did not have these shared standards. The CEO Forum agreed to convene a Working Group to draft a suite of environmental sustainability standards. The group included Cristina Velázquez Calleja (Educo), Lisa MacSpadden (ChildFund Alliance Secretariat), Naomi Rutenberg (ChildFund International), Shona Jennings (Barnfonden), Sungho Lee (ChildFund Korea), and Paul Brown, (ChildFund New Zealand).

The group reviewed a broad range of sustainability standards including those used by other agencies and global organisations, and reached the following conclusions:

- There is a comprehensive industry dedicated to standard setting, and any standards we develop will need to be deliberate and focused;
 - We could develop sustainability standards for beyond environmental sustainability however we noted:
 - The Terms of Reference requested that we focus on environmental sustainability, and
 - It may be too difficult to operationalise too many standards at once.
- Standards are not merely compliance tools, they can be dynamic – that is, we can review and enhance standards as we progressively improve our performance.
 - Using standards and comparing how we ‘rank’ against these creates learning and growth;
 - We can also develop standards that allow each member to set their own goals within each standard (to encourage continuous improvement).
- Any standards we develop will need to consider how we behave in a during-- or post-COVID- 19 world -- particularly with regards to how our teams travel internationally, which has impact on the planet but also relates to other factors including:
 - Increasing scrutiny about effectiveness, (do we really need to travel?), as with other industries, we too have been learning rapidly how to use virtual technology to achieve outcomes that previously were thought to require physical interactions;
 - There is growing concern that given the difficult economic situation, any international travel could be perceived as extravagant;
 - Through COVID-19, there has been increased appreciation of localization.
- The group recommends that we discuss how drastically reducing visits to programme countries will affect our work.
 - This discussion could consider the risks including not being able to meet donor-accountability requirements and potentially weakened partnerships;

- The discussion could identify processes needed so we can remotely manage relationship-forming, contextual understanding, monitoring and compliance checks.
- There is a lot of consensus across our sector about a workable sustainability standards framework, with many using four components. We propose our suite of standards also follow these components:
 - Education & Advocacy,
 - Programs,
 - Internal operations,
 - Learning.
- Further to this, leveraging the Global Standard for CSO Accountability (which uses the same components in its robust framework) would be an appropriate starting point for ChildFund Alliance.
 - The Global Standard for CSO Accountability is considered the pinnacle framework by civil society, and is a reference standard that aims to transform how organizations understand and practice accountability;
 - Note: Accountable Now, Australian Council for International Development, Interaction and the International Civil Society Center are some of the partners with The Global Standard for CSO Accountability.

Recommendation

The Working Group welcomes feedback from the CEO Forum and seek approval for the draft standards shared below.

Timeline

Standards to the CEO Forum for feedback	Paul Brown	25 September
Feedback to Working Group from CEO Forum	Co-Chairs	9 October*
Revised standards (based on feedback)	Paul Brown	15 October*
Final standards to CEO Forum for endorsement by Board	Co-Chairs	16 October*

*This is a modification to the previous timeline. We will need to send the final standards to the CEO Forum and Board on 16 October.

ChildFund Alliance Environmental Sustainability Standards

Why have Environmental Sustainability Standards?

In the ChildFund Alliance 'Principles of Working Together', we state: *We care deeply for the earth and how its health impacts children and future generations, as evidenced by programs and shared standards that care for the environment and mitigate against harm.* (Principle 7)

The following environmental sustainability standards have been prepared to address the shared standards requirement noted in this principle. They supplement the current ChildFund Alliance Governance, Programme, Finance and Fundraising Standards.

These standards describe what ChildFund Alliance aspires to, as agreed by the members. They enable members to share the same understanding of what good practice looks like concerning how we demonstrate care for the environment, and how we mitigate against harm. Their intention is to guide each member towards becoming more environmentally responsible in their internal operations, programming and advocacy work, as well as collectively across ChildFund Alliance.

As members of ChildFund Alliance, we recognise that environmental degradation places decades of development efforts at risk. Human activity has altered ecosystems and their ability to support life, wellbeing and human development. Further to this, our experience highlights the differential impact that environmental degradation has on children, given that they represent an especially vulnerable group within communities. Their vulnerability limits their ability to respond to environmental pressures, and places them at a higher risk from a range of resulting impacts that affect their prospects to good health, education, safety and wellbeing.

ChildFund Alliance is committed to working in partnership with communities to create and deliver environmentally sustainable solutions. Sustainability is based on the principle that everything we need for our wellbeing depends on our natural environment. As an alliance, we aim to meet the needs of the present, while not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

While the focus of our sustainability efforts is firstly on environmental issues, the resultant activities also have economic, social and cultural dimensions that must be considered when seeking to enhance communities' environmental sustainability. Therefore, when acting sustainably towards the environment we must also think innovatively to ensure that economies become stronger, inequality and poverty is alleviated and vulnerable groups and cultures are supported, while also ensuring that we do no harm to our natural world.

Our mission centers on working with children and their communities, and to promote just and equitable societies that guarantee children's rights and wellbeing. A healthy environment is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of many Rights of the Child. Although the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child contains no explicit mention of the right to a healthy environment, many of its articles include significant environmental components. Furthermore, ten of the seventeen United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are directly related to environmental aspects, (our work regularly touches upon SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 12, Responsible Consumption; SDG 13, Climate Action and SDG 15, Life on Land).

With this in mind, we consider these standards as an appropriate starting point for ChildFund Alliance. We will enhance them as we learn, and they will help us to provide the environmental protection for today's children and for generations to come.

Definitions

Standard: The agreed level of what is considered acceptable to ChildFund Alliance members.

Criteria: How do we expect to see this in ChildFund’s work?

Evidence: What could you show to prove compliance?

Environmental Sustainability: Strategies and actions that protect the natural environment and enhance its ability to support wellbeing for the present and ensure a secure existence for future generations, while also considering the short-to-long term economic, social and cultural conditions and impacts.

Sustainability: The ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Using an independent accountability system

ChildFund Alliance members commit to reporting their commitments to these standards through an independent review mechanism, and to learning and improving because of feedback received. The current annual reporting mechanism is Accountable Now, which all ChildFund Alliance members have agreed to join by FY22. Accountable Now is a comprehensive reporting framework, with an Independent Review Panel assessing each member’s performance against a set of 12 commitments. The Panel provides recommendations for progress and improvement – their goal is to support dynamic accountability, where members can reflect on what they have achieved, how they have achieved, it and how they can further improve. In this way, learning and improvement is promoted. For these Environmental Sustainability Standards, we can report through Commitment 3: Healthy Planet.

Accountable Now

Commitment 3: Healthy Planet

We will protect the natural environment and enhance its ability to support life for future generations

1. Listen to people and consult experts to understand the environmental issues faced by people and nature, and how best to address them.
2. Lead by example: Map our organisation’s environmental impact, minimise it to the extent possible and be open about our successes and failures.
3. Motivate and support people to protect the environment and promote systemic change for a healthy planet.
4. Collaborate with actors from different sectors to develop innovative systemic solutions to environmental issues.”

Standards, Criteria and Evidence

Standard 1: Education and Advocacy

Member is a global voice with and for vulnerable children on the threat of environmental degradation and climate change to child rights and violence against children, in both development and humanitarian settings.

Criteria:

- 1.1 Member educates the public and authorities about the risks posed to children due to environmental degradation and climate change, highlighting how these are root causes of violence against children. The member rallies support on the need for environmental protection and climate action and the promotion of child rights and child protection.
- 1.2 Member advocates to governments to deliver financial resources and political action to ensure children’s vulnerability to environmental degradation and climate change is prioritized. Further, their rights to survival, development, protection and participation, as promised under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are upheld. Member also asks for the explicit measurement of child-focused indicators in environmental and/or climate reporting.
- 1.3 Member helps elevate child and youth participation for advocacy at local, national and international levels at environmental and/or climate change related forums.

Evidence:

- 1.1 Media and public engagement activities demonstrate informative messaging about the environment, climate change, child rights, child protection and child participation.
- 1.2 Reporting on advocacy events highlight a child-focussed rationale for environmental protection and/or climate action.
- 1.3 Examples of how children and youth have been empowered with the skills, knowledge and confidence to claim their rights.
- 1.4 Examples of opportunities facilitated for children and youth to participate in decision-making forums where their voice contributes to decisions made.

Standard 2: Programs

In the communities where they work and operate programs, Member's programs demonstrate a commitment to strengthen community resilience, and to protect the natural environment and enhance its ability to support life for future generations.

Criteria:

- 2.1 Environmental planning is incorporated into ChildFund's country and community-level development plans. This includes identification of risks, opportunities and the impact of proposed initiatives on the environment.
- 2.2 Programming demonstrates an anticipatory approach to climate change through a child-focused lens (an anticipatory approach means acting ahead of the impact that could reasonably be expected, so that communities are prepared and chances of it escalating to a humanitarian crisis are reduced).
- 2.3 All projects include an environmental assessment; are assessed to ensure environmental considerations are appropriately accounted for and prevention of any environmental impact is prioritised over mitigation.
- 2.4 Participants actively take responsibility, make decisions and are empowered to raise their voice on issues concerning the management of their environment.

Evidence:

- 2.1 Project management tools are being used to ensure the identification of risks, opportunities (for environmental protection or improvement or to reduce climate change), and the impact of the project on the environment are part of standard procedure.
- 2.2 Communities have child-focused disaster risk reduction plans.
- 2.3 Community-level consultation is documented and there is training demonstrating that community members, including children, are engaged in activities aimed at creating systematic improvements concerning the environment.

Standard 3: Internal operations

Member has in place processes to minimise the environmental impacts of their internal operations.

Criteria:

- 3.1 Internal operations measure and minimise greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3.2 Internal operations minimise environmental impact and waste generation.
- 3.3 Environmental criteria are included in purchasing policies.

Evidence:

- 3.1 Evidence is provided that a greenhouse gas emission measurement system is in place and procedures are followed to minimize and/or mitigate carbon emissions.
- 3.2 Evidence is provided if an environmental performance improvement plan is in place, especially regarding waste generation minimization.

Standard 4: Learning

Member has an environmental policy that describes its commitment to protecting the natural environment and enhancing its ability to support life for future generations, which is reviewed regularly in consideration of areas for improvement as guided by independent assessors.

Criteria:

- 4.1 ChildFund Alliance members and country offices have an environmental policy that aligns with the intent of these standards.
- 4.2 Member commits to regularly reviewing its policies and procedures for environmental sustainability and actively pursues continuous improvement.

Evidence:

- 4.1 Provision of environmental policies implemented in the organization's head office, the partner's in-country program office and field offices. Examples are given to demonstrate how procedures have led to alternatives or additional actions.
- 4.2 Details provided on staff training on the environmental policy and in the effect of environmental degradation and climate change on child rights.
- 4.3 Responses to independent assessors (such as Accountable Now) demonstrate how member is learning and improving their environmental sustainability performance.