

Christian Brothers Congregation Statement re Safeguarding Children

The immense cry of pain of abandoned and abused children from many regions of the earth must inspire in public institutions, private associations and all people of good will a new awareness of everyone's duty to protect, defend and educate these frail creatures with love and respect.

If it is to be effective, all action to safeguard children and adolescents should be accompanied by proper consideration of their fundamental rights. Juvenal has expressed this well in his well-known maxim: *The greatest reverence is due to a child* (cf. Satyres, XIV, 47). Furthermore in the Gospel Jesus points to children as our "models" of life and firmly condemns those who do not respect them. (Pope John Paul II to the World Conference of Women Parliamentarians for the Protection of Children, 18 October 2004)

This Statement affirms the commitment of the Congregation of Christian Brothers to the welfare and happy growth of children, and to safeguarding children and young people in all of our Centres of Activity around the world. While our Centres are located in a variety of countries and settings, with different jurisdictions having variation in how Child Abuse is formally defined, we believe that any practice that is harmful to children and young people must never be condoned.

Children and young people are among the most vulnerable in any society, and hence need special care and nurturing. Unfortunately, abuse and exploitation of children and young people happen in all countries and societies across the world. The Congregation of Christian Brothers accepts that it is the responsibility of all working in and with the Congregation to commit together to prevent the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children and young people in their care, and to protect them from neglect and exploitation. All who work in and with the Congregation have an important role in the identification and reporting of Child Abuse.

As a Congregation working directly or indirectly with young people, we recognise our highest priority is to create safe and secure environments for children and young people. This commitment is embedded in the Gospel values of freedom, justice, love and respect, and in international and domestic law.

Each of our Provinces and Regions has developed its own Policy for Safeguarding Children incorporating these Gospel values and based on the requirements of its particular local civil and legal jurisdictions. The aim of each policy is to achieve the highest level of care and protection for children and young people and to articulate the steps that will be taken to achieve best practice by all in safeguarding the young.

Accordingly, the Congregation Leadership Team exercises its responsibility and accountability in the care of children through ensuring that each of the Provinces has a Policy for Safeguarding Children, and implements that policy with commitment.

The Congregation of Christian Brothers, in addressing the issue of Child Abuse, confirms its commitment to upholding the rights of all children as stated in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):

States Parties (and other organizations responsible for the care, development and wellbeing of children) shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Br Philip Pinto

Congregation Leader, Congregation of Christian Brothers

April 2012