



Partners in Aid

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND CODE OF CONDUCT

### 1. Background

Partners in Aid works both directly and indirectly with children through our Child Sponsorship programmes and general project activities. Board members and volunteers visit projects in India, Bangladesh and the Philippines on a regular basis. During these visits, direct interaction with children occurs. Child sponsors have indirect communication with sponsored children via board members. It is therefore critical that Partners in Aid has clear and well communicated strategies for ensuring that children and young people are protected from direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional harm or abuse as a result of these activities, and that clear processes for responding to child harm, abuse or neglect are developed and followed.

### 2. Partners in Aid Commitment to Child Protection

Partners in Aid affirms its commitment to the welfare of children and their protection from abuse and exploitation. Partners in Aid upholds the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), and in particular Article 19, which states

*“State Parties shall protect the child ... from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.”*

We believe that child protection is both an organisational and an individual responsibility. Every person who shares in the work of Partners in Aid, including Board members, specialist advisors, other members, project partners, volunteers, sponsors and supporters, also shares the responsibility to take every precaution to protect the children and families we assist and to adhere to the guidelines and expectations in this policy.

### 3. Purpose

The purpose of this Child Protection Policy is to ensure, as far as possible, the safety and wellbeing of all children who are involved in Partners in Aid’s programmes and projects. The intention of this policy is to promote a culture of child safety within the organization and to fulfill all Partners in Aid’s legal obligations. This policy outlines systems and procedures for educating, preventing, reporting and responding to child protection issues which may arise in the course of our activities.

### 4. Guiding Principles

Partners in Aid acknowledges the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’s fundamental principle that children have their own indivisible rights. We take our responsibility to ensure the rights of children and their protection from harm very seriously.

All Partners in Aid members, board members, volunteers, sponsors, advisors and project partners have a duty of care to the children and young people who are involved in our projects and

programmes. This duty of care extends to ensuring that all actions possible will be taken to ensure that children and young people are protected from foreseeable harm. It extends to all children regardless of their background, abilities or personal characteristics.

All Partners in Aid members, board members, volunteers, sponsors, advisors and project partners will be required to be aware of this policy and to adhere to the principles and guidelines it contains. Adherence is not considered to be optional by the organisation.

## 5. Definitions

### **Child and young person**

A child or young person is regarded to be any person under the age of 18 years, unless a nation's laws recognise adulthood earlier.

### **Child Protection**

Is the term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being harmed or abused

### **Child Abuse**

Child abuse includes physical, sexual or emotional harm neglect, bullying, child labour and domestic violence. It occurs across cultures, and can be inflicted by men or women on boys and girls.

### **Child-Sex Tourism**

ECPAT International defines child-sex tourism as:

'...the commercial sexual exploitation of children by men or women who travel from one place to another, usually from a richer country to one that is less developed, and there engage in sexual acts with children, defined as anyone aged under 18 years of age.' (ECPAT International, 2006)

### **Bullying**

Bullying is the deliberate and repetitive use of power by an individual or group, with an intent to injure either physically or emotionally.

### **Exposure to Domestic Violence**

Domestic and family violence occurs when someone tries to control their partner or other family members in ways that intimidate or oppress them. Controlling behaviours can include threats, humiliation ('put downs'), emotional abuse, physical assault, sexual abuse, financial exploitation and social isolations, such as not allowing contact with family or friends (Australian Law Reform definition)

Children are harmed by witnessing domestic violence and are also often directly harmed by the perpetrator.

## 6. Scope

This Policy applies to all Partners in Aid members, board members, volunteers, sponsors, and advisors. The policy also extends to Partners in Aid project partners and associated implementing organisations.

## 7. Procedures

### **7.1 Child Protection Risk Management**

Partners in Aid will conduct a child protection risk assessment for all its development and non-development activities which will be reviewed annually. This assessment will be included in the working document of procedures.

## **7.2 Code of Conduct for Working with Children**

- 7.2.1 Partners in Aid will develop a Code of Conduct for all members, board members, volunteers, sponsors, and advisors and anyone acting on behalf of the organisation when dealing with children and young people. The Code of Conduct will provide guidance on maintaining professional boundaries in order to protect everyone from misunderstandings by promoting transparency and accountability.
- 7.2.2 The Code of Conduct will be provided for signing to all new board members, all sponsors and all volunteers visiting projects or assisting with the child sponsorship programmes. It will be reviewed and updated regularly.
- 7.2.3 In addition to the Code of Conduct, all board members, donors and volunteers visiting projects will have current Working with Children checks at the time of the visit.

## **7.3 Sponsorship Guidelines**

Partners in Aid acknowledges that child sponsorship programmes, which facilitate relationships between adult sponsors and children in receipt of sponsorship, are complex and present a potential risk in terms of child protection. We acknowledge that this harm can occur intentionally or unintentionally.

- 7.3.1. Partners in Aid will ensure that any correspondence from sponsors to children or young people will be vetted by a board member who is aware of child protection practices.
- 7.3.2 Sponsors will be discouraged from visiting sponsored children and cannot invite sponsored children to visit them. Any visits by sponsors to children they sponsor, will only occur with the consent of the Partners in Aid board, the project Partner Organisation and the child's parent or guardian.
- 7.3.3 No provision is made for sponsors to send gifts to their sponsored children. If sponsors do visit the children they sponsor, they will be asked to only provide small gifts to a value of less than \$15.
- 7.3.3 Reports from Partner Organisations, sponsored children and their families or their schools will be vetted by a trained board member before being sent on to the sponsor.
- 7.3.4 Board members or volunteers who visit sponsored children will have signed the Code of Conduct and be made aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection.
- 7.3.5 Board members who are also child sponsors have a particular responsibility when visiting projects where they may come into contact with their sponsored children. They must be clear in all their communication and actions that they are visiting as a board member, not a sponsor, they should not identify themselves as a sponsor to the children, and must ensure that they adhere to all the guidelines in this policy.

This aspect of the policy will be reviewed by the board following project visits by board members who are also sponsors.

## **7.4 Use of children's images**

Partners in Aid uses images of children when communicating with adult sponsors about their sponsored child or young person. Partners in Aid also occasionally uses images of children and young people in newsletters and other publications.

- 7.4.1 Permission will be obtained from children and their parents before their images are used in publications. A record of each permission will be kept.

- 7.4.2 In all cases, portrayal of children will ensure that they are portrayed as resilient, capable and not weak or vulnerable. Images will not identify the location of children or enable them to be contacted by potentially harmful people.
- 7.4.3 Images should never show children naked or in a sexualized manner
- 7.4.4 Guidelines for taking photos will be provided to all board members, donors or volunteers who visit projects and may take photos. Guidelines for storing images securely will also be provided to board members. This includes on the website, social media and in all other media.
- 7.4.5 Although names of children are a necessary identifying features of the child sponsorship programme, names will not be used in general publications

### **7.5 Role of volunteers**

Volunteers assist with the administration of the child sponsorship programme in Australia and occasionally visit the children and young people in their country of residence.

- 7.5.1 All volunteers working on child sponsorship programmes in Australia or visiting children in country will be screened by board members, be required to understand, agree to and sign the Code of Conduct for Working With Children, as well as required to obtain a Working With Children Check if in Victoria, be provided with this policy and a volunteer position description, and be briefed by a board member on their role and responsibilities in relation to child protection.
- 7.5.2 A briefing covering all these matters will be provided by the board prior to any project visit by a volunteer or supporter. Board members will also be required to demonstrate current understanding of child protection procedures, this policy and commitment to the Code of Conduct prior to overseas project visits.

### **7.6 Reporting Child Abuse**

Partners in Aid acknowledges that child abuse and neglect reporting procedures vary between countries and that those which apply in Australia may not apply in the countries where we work.

- 7.6.1 Nonetheless, Partners in Aid will adopt the following key principles of responding to and reporting child abuse or neglect:
- What to report –any observation or belief that a child is being or has been abused, physically, sexually or emotionally, or neglected. Any report by a child which suggest they have been or are being abused or neglected. Any observation or belief that an adult is or may be exploiting abusing or neglecting a child.
  - When to report – immediately.
  - Who to report to –if the abuse or neglect is occurring in Australia or the perpetrator is acting in Australia, report to the police or the state child protection authority. If there is a suspicion of child sex exploitation, pornography, sex tourism or similar, report to the Australian Federal Police. All incidents should also be reported to the Board Chair of Partners in Aid.
    - if the abuse or neglect occurs overseas, it should be reported to the Manager of the project of our Partner Organisation. The contact details for our Partner Organisations will be on the website. If not possible, or if no action, to the Chair of the Partners in Aid Board. It should also be reported the Board Chair of Partners in Aid and to the police.
  - What will happen next?  
In Australia, the police or child protection authority will conduct an enquiry and take appropriate action. If the incident involves a member, sponsor, volunteer or someone connected to Partners in Aid, the Board will take action appropriate to the

outcome of the authority's investigation. This may involve ceasing the membership or sponsorship of the person, taking some other corrective action or no action, depending on the investigation outcome.

Overseas, the Manager of the project in our Partner Organisation and the Board Chair of Partners in Aid will liaise over the appropriate course of action which will include an investigation, steps to protect the child, appropriate reporting to relevant authorities in both countries and appropriate action in-country to minimise the likelihood the incident occurs again.

- 7.6.2 All incidents or reports will be taken seriously by Partners in Aid and acted upon immediately. All actions will be taken in the best interests of the child or young person. Details of these procedures are contained in the Procedures Manual.

### **7.7 Educating the organisation**

Partners in Aid will ensure Child Safeguarding is an integral part of the induction for new Board members and volunteers. Board members will be expected to take up opportunities for professional development in child protection through organisations such as ACFID and encouraged to share their learning with the Board and volunteer base.

All Board members, volunteers and advisors will be expected to adhere to the Child Protection Code of Conduct which will be reviewed regularly in collaboration with our Partner Organisations and with input from children and young people who are involved in our programmes.

### **7.8 Working with Partners**

- 7.8.1 Partner Organisations will be made aware of this policy and the expectation that they too will adhere to it in the absence of an equivalent child protection policy in their organisations.
- 7.8.2 This policy will form part of all Partnership Agreements between Partners in Aid and our Partner Organisations.
- 7.8.3 Staff employed by Partner Organisations who work with children should be recruited using child safe practices.
- 7.8.4 Board members responsible for projects will discuss the requirements of the policy and Partners in Aid's expectations during regular project visits. A simple checklist recording current adherence to these expectations will be completed and reported to the Board following the project visit. This will occur in the first instance within 12 months of adoption of this policy.

## **8 Review**

The policy and the Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually with particular reference to any potential risks to child safety observed in the course of monitoring and evaluating projects.

## **9 References**

ACFID Code of Conduct

<http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/files/>

AusAID Child Protection Policy:

[http://www.usaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?Id=7954\\_7703\\_6074\\_4255\\_4227](http://www.usaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?Id=7954_7703_6074_4255_4227)

Convention on the Rights of the Child:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Australian Government, Australian Law Reform Commission

<http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/family-violence-and-commonwealth-laws%E2%80%94social-security-law/definition-family-violence>

## Appendix 1



### Partners in Aid

## Code of Conduct for Working with Children

Partners in Aid works both directly and indirectly with children through our Child Sponsorship programmes and General Project activities. Board members and volunteers visit projects in India, Bangladesh and the Philippines on a regular basis. During these visits, direct interaction with children occurs.

Board members and volunteers also have indirect contact with children through administrative work on the child sponsorship programme, and handling images while preparing and maintaining the website, social media and other communications.

Partners in Aid's commitment to child protection is articulated in its Child Protection Policy.

To assist implementation of this policy, this Code of Conduct will be understood and agreed to by all Board Members, Volunteers, Donors and Partner Organisations who have any connection with children who benefit from PIA's programmes.

### 1. General Principles

#### 1.1 Maintaining boundaries

Board members, volunteers and sponsors are responsible for establishing and maintaining clear adult/child boundaries between themselves and children with whom they have direct and indirect contact. These boundaries serve to communicate what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and to protect everyone from misunderstandings.

Board members and volunteers have a duty of care to the children who benefit from projects supported by Partners in Aid. This means they must ensure that children are not exposed to risk of harm and that any harm or abuse that is observed or known about must be acted upon to protect the child.

### 2. Guidelines and Expectations

Board members, volunteers and donors, and partner organisations will adhere to the following guidelines in all contact whether direct or indirect with children:

#### 2.1 General

Board members, volunteers and donors, and partner organisations should practise awareness of their own behaviours and how these may be perceived by others. They should behave in a

manner which is consistent with Partners in Aid core values of integrity, dignity and effectiveness and should understand their responsibilities in terms of duty of care.

The following guidelines for communication, direct contact and images of children should be adhered to at all times.

## **2.2 Child labour**

No child labour, as defined by the recipient country's laws, will be used in the course of project implementation.

## **2.3 Communication with children**

In communication with children, board members, volunteers and supporters will:

- treat them with respect and dignity at all times;
- not be inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory;
- not demonstrate favouritism towards some children over others;
- be positive and encouraging;
- not be humiliating, belittling or degrading;
- respect cultural sensitivities, and
- ensure that the words they use in the presence of children are appropriate for children

## **2.4 Contact with children**

Whether through direct or indirect contact with children, board members, volunteers and supporters will observe the following guidelines.

- Physical contact with children should be avoided. In particular, displays of affection such as inappropriate holding, kissing, cuddling, or punitive actions such as smacking, hitting or physical assault
- Sexual conduct towards children is unacceptable and illegal and will be referred to the authorities in Australia where relevant, and in the country where it occurs.
- Visiting Board members, volunteers and supporters should not be alone with a child, and should not take a child to their hotel, home or hostel. They should not share a room, a bed or other sleeping arrangements with children. Partner organisations should have similar restrictions where relevant and appropriate to safeguarding of the children with whom they interact in the course of project implementation.
- Children's dignity and privacy must be respected. Assisting a child with activities such as bathing, dressing and toileting should not be undertaken where the child is capable of these activities.
- No illicit drugs will be consumed in the presence children. No alcohol or illicit will ever be provided to children in any context.

## **2.3 Photography**

Images of children can only be reproduced or published with their informed permission and that of their family.



Photos of children will portray them as resilient, capable and not weak or vulnerable. Images will not identify the location of children or any other information which might enable others to locate and contact them.

## **2.5 Child Sponsorship**

Child sponsors in general will not have direct contact with child beneficiaries of the programme. Communication between sponsors and children and their families is conducted through the board member responsible for the programme. This means that letters from sponsors to children, from children to sponsors and reports from children's schools to sponsors are vetted by the board member.

Any inappropriate letters or photos from sponsors will not be sent to the child. Any communication from children to sponsors which may lead to harm to the child or miscommunication will not be sent on to sponsors.

Direct contact details, or information which could lead to locating a child directly, including via the internet or social media, will not be made available to sponsors and any newsletter articles, photos or other media about sponsored children will not identify their location.

Sponsors are discouraged from visiting sponsored children. In the case where a board member or volunteer who sponsors a child also visits a project where they may contact that child, the Child Safeguarding Policy should be adhered to, including a briefing prior to travel.

## **2.6 General**

Board members, volunteers and supporters should practise awareness of their own behaviours and how these may be perceived by others.

They should ensure that the above guidelines are followed to prevent misunderstandings, and to protect themselves from false or unfair allegations.

They should not condone or support behaviour which is abusive or harmful towards children.

Any incident of child harm or abuse involving a board member, volunteer or supporter must be documented giving time and place of event, and people involved, to be tabled at the next board meeting for follow up action.

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Print Name:**

**Witness:**