



**Partners in Aid**

AUSTRALIA

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND CODE OF CONDUCT

### Version control & review

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### 1. Background

Partners in Aid works both directly and indirectly with children through both our Education Sponsorship programs and other general project activities. Board members and volunteers visit projects in India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines on a regular basis. During these visits, direct interaction with children may occur. Child sponsors also have indirect communication, through Board members, with children whose education they are sponsoring. 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 Safeguarding Policy is to ensure, as far as possible, the safety and wellbeing of all children who are involved in Partners in Aid's programs and projects. The intention is not just to fulfil all Partners in Aid's legal obligations, but to promote a culture of child safety within the organisation. This policy outlines systems and procedures for educating, preventing, reporting, and responding to child protection issues which may arise during our activities.

### 4. Guiding Principles

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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 programs.

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

- 4.3 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 optional by the organisation.
- 4.4 Our child safe practices include promoting our child safe commitments on our website and in any promotional material that may be produced.
- 4.5 Partners in Aid has zero tolerance of abuse, bullying, sexual behaviour, transactional sexual behaviour or exploitation of any child or young person.

#### **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**

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.

##### **Neglect**

Neglect involves the persistent failure or deliberate denial to provide a child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care, to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.

**Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent, or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification – regardless of the age of majority or age of consent.

**Exploitation**

Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that are to the detriment of the child's physical and mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development.

**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 isolation, 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.

## 5. 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.

## 6. Procedures

### 6.1 Child Protection Risk Management

6.1.1 Partners in Aid will conduct a child protection risk assessment for all its development and non-development activities, which will be reviewed annually.

### 6.2 Code of Conduct for Working with Children

6.2.1 Partners in Aid has developed 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 provides guidance on maintaining professional boundaries in order to protect everyone from misunderstandings by promoting transparency and accountability.

6.2.2 The Code of Conduct will be provided for signing to all new Board and Committee members, advisors, and other volunteers, including all volunteers visiting projects or assisting with the child sponsorship programs. It will be reviewed and updated, if necessary, regularly.

### 6.3 Screening of Anyone Having Contact with Children through the Auspices of Partners in Aid

6.3.1 Partners in Aid is committed to child safe screening practices. It will not knowingly engage – directly or indirectly – anyone who poses a risk to children. Any person

interested in joining the Partners in Aid Board or any Partners in Aid Committee or volunteering to assist with projects or project-related activities that might be involved – directly or indirectly – with children will not only be provided with a copy of Partners in Aid Child safeguarding Policy to read and sign, but will be asked to complete a form that seeks information about his or her dates and places of employment, education and past and present involvement in international development and other activities.

6.3.1 Job descriptions will be provided for all Partners in Aid Board and Committee members, and for any volunteers working on other than one-off type of activities.

6.3.2 All people having direct or indirect contact with children through affiliation in some way with Partners in Aid, including all visitors to the field, will be required to provide:

- proof of identity,
- criminal record checks, including international criminal record checks if they have spent 12 months or more overseas in the last 12 months,
- up-to-date Working with Children checks, and
- verbal referee checks.

#### **6.4 Sponsorship Guidelines**

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

6.4.1. Partners in Aid will ensure that before it is sent any correspondence from sponsors to children or young people will be vetted by a Board member who is aware of child protection practices.

6.4.2 Sponsors will be discouraged from visiting sponsored children and cannot invite sponsored children to visit them. Any visits by sponsors to the 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.

6.4.3 In event of visitors planning to visit the field, a briefing will be held before departure to discuss Partners in Aid's Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. 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. Board members or volunteers who visit sponsored children will need to sign the Code of Conduct, if they have not already done so.

6.4.4 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.

6.4.5 No provision is made for sponsors to send personal gifts to their sponsored children. If sponsors do visit the children they sponsor, they are asked not to provide gifts.

6.4.6 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.

## 6.5 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.

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

6.5.2 In all cases, portrayal of children will ensure that they are portrayed as resilient and capable, not weak or vulnerable. Images will not identify the location of children or enable them to be contacted by potentially harmful people.

6.5.3 Images should never show children naked or in a sexualized manner.

6.5.4 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.

6.5.5 Although names of children are a necessary identifying feature of the child sponsorship program, names will never be used in general publications.

6.5.6 Nothing that suggests any way whereby an outsider could contact the child or his or her family will ever be published.

## 6.6 Role of volunteers

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

6.6.1 All volunteers working on child sponsorship programs 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 be required to obtain a Working with Children and Police Record Check as indicated above. They will be provided with this policy document and a volunteer position description and will be briefed by a Board member on their role and responsibilities in relation to child protection.

## 6.7 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.

6.7.1 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 is being neglected; any report by a child which suggest they have been or are being abused or neglected; and any observation or belief that an adult is or maybe

exploiting, abusing, or neglecting a child.

- *When to report:* immediately.

- *Whom 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 and is observed during an in-country visit, it should be reported to the manager of the project of our Partner Organisation. The chair of Partners in Aid should be informed simultaneously. If it is not possible to report it to the relevant Partner Organisation, or if no action is taken, again, this should be reported to the Chair of the Partners in Aid Board, and, where appropriate, it should also be reported to the police.

Contact details for reporting to Partners in Aid are as follows:

Phone: +61 3 9704 6315

Email: [admin@partnersinaid.org.au](mailto:admin@partnersinaid.org.au)

- *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 minimize the likelihood of the incident occurring again.

6.7.2 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.

## 6.8 Educating the Organisation

6.8.1 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.

6.8.2 All Board members, volunteers and advisors will be expected to adhere to the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct which will be reviewed regularly in collaboration with our Partner Organisations.

## 6.9 Working with Partners

6.9.1 Partner Organisations will be made aware of this policy with the expectation that

they too will adhere to it in the absence of an equivalent child protection policy in their organisations.

- 6.9.2 This policy will form part of all Partnership Agreements between Partners in Aid and our Partner Organisations.
- 6.9.3 Staff employed by Partner Organisations who work with children should be recruited using child safe practices.
- 6.9.4 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.

## 7. 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.

## 8. References

ACFID Code of Conduct

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

AusAID Child Protection Policy:

[http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?id=7954\\_7703\\_6074\\_4255\\_4227](http://www.ausaid.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%94socialsecurity-law/definition-family-violence>

# Appendix 1

## Code of Conduct for Working with Children

Partners in Aid works both directly and indirectly with children through our Child Education Sponsorship programs and our general project activities. Board members and volunteers visit projects in India, Sri Lanka 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 program, and through 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 Safeguarding Policy. To assist implementation of this policy, this Code of Conduct has been developed. It must be understood and agreed to by all Board Members, Volunteers, Donors and Partner Organisations who have any connection with children associated with any PIA activities. Strict adherence to the Code is required in all contact, whether direct or indirect, with such children. This will also help to prevent misunderstandings, and to protect them from false or unfair allegations.

In the presence of children, Board members, volunteers and sponsors should always 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.

### 1. General Principles

#### 1.1 Maintaining Boundaries

1.1.1 Board members, volunteers and sponsors should practise awareness of their own behaviour and how it may be perceived by others. They are responsible for establishing and maintaining clear adult/child boundaries between themselves and children with whom they have contact. These boundaries serve to communicate what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and to protect everyone from misunderstandings. Board members, volunteers and sponsors

#### 1.2 Child Labour

1.2.1 No child labour, as defined by the recipient country's laws, will be used during any project implementation.

#### 1.3 Communication with Children

1.3.1 In communication with children, Board members, volunteers and supporters will:

- always treat them with respect and dignity,
- not say or do anything inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory,
- not demonstrate favouritism towards some children over others,
- be positive and encouraging,
- not say or do anything that could be perceived as humiliating, belittling or degrading;
- respect cultural sensitivities,
- not bring or provide gifts for individual children, and
- ensure that the words they use in the presence of children are appropriate for children to hear.

#### 1.4 Contact with children

1.4.1 Physical contact with children should be avoided. In particular, displays of affection such as inappropriate holding, kissing, cuddling, or punitive actions such as smacking.



- 1.4.2 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.
- 1.4.3 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.
- 1.4.4 Partner Organisations should have similar restrictions where relevant and appropriate to safeguard the children with whom they interact in the course of project implementation.
- 1.4.5 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.
- 1.4.6 No illicit drugs will be consumed in the presence children. No alcohol or illicit will ever be provided to children in any context.

### **1.5 Photography**

- 1.5.1 Images of children can only be reproduced or published with their informed permission and that of their family.
- 1.5.2 Photos of children must portray them as resilient, capable and not weak or vulnerable.
- 1.5.3 Images will not identify the location of children or any other information which might enable others to locate and contact them.

### **1.6 Child Sponsorship**

- 1.6.1 Child sponsors in general will not have direct contact with child beneficiaries of the program. Communication between sponsors and children and their families is conducted through the Board member responsible for the program. 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.
- 1.6.2 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.
- 1.6.3. 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 no newsletter articles, photos or other media about sponsored children will identify their location.
- 1.6.4. 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.

### **1.7 Recording of Any Incidence**

- 1.7.1 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. The procedure for responding to such incidences is outlined in the Policy above.

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**AGREEMENT**

I have read and understood this document and agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Print Name:**

**Witness:**