



Child Protection Policy and Procedures

Managed on behalf of the ED and Board by: Chief Operating Officer

Approved by Board: 25 November 2023

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1. Child Protection Policy

Purpose

ActionAid Australia is fundamentally committed to protecting children from violence, abuse and exploitation in all their forms and to promoting children's rights as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

ActionAid Australia has a **zero tolerance** approach to child abuse and exploitation. Children who come into contact with ActionAid Australia and the programs that it supports overseas must be protected from deliberate or unintended actions that place them at risk of child abuse, sexual exploitation, injury, discrimination and any other harm.

ActionAid Australia will take all reasonable steps to safeguard the interests, rights and well-being of those children with whom the organisation is in contact and will advocate for strengthening the protection and promotion of rights of all children in the communities in which we work. ActionAid Australia will implement procedures and practices as set out in this document to protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation by staff, partners, sponsors and other organisational representatives who have contact with children.

Scope

Protecting children from harm is the responsibility of all those who participate in the work of ActionAid Australia including:

- Board members;
- staff;
- volunteers;
- contractors e.g. consultants;
- partner organisations
- donors and supporters who visit ActionAid projects (details on policy and procedures for supporter visits are detailed in ActionAid International's *Child Protection Policy and Procedures for Supporter's Visits to ActionAid Projects*)

Each person is responsible for having a thorough knowledge of this policy and the procedures set out below, acting in accordance with this policy and complying with the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Code of Conduct.

This policy applies to all facets of ActionAid Australia's work that may be deemed to be working with, or in contact with, children – either directly or indirectly. All overseas projects and activities will be assessed to determine the level of risk they pose to children using ActionAid's Child Protection Risk Context Assessment. All programs and initiatives that work with children, or involve potential contact with or impact on children, will undergo a Child Protection Risk Assessment.

All overseas programs and initiatives must be compliant with this policy. Breach of the Child Protection Code of Conduct constitutes an act of misconduct and is grounds for disciplinary action and/or termination of employment.

Principles

This policy is informed by a set of principles that derive from the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child:

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- All children should be encouraged to fulfil their potential and inequalities should be challenged.
- All children should be encouraged to participate in demanding their rights and to hold duty bearers to account.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children.
- ActionAid Australia has a duty of care to children with whom we work and with whom our representatives work.
- ActionAid Australia's partners have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for the children in their programs.
- All decisions by ActionAid Australia and its partners will be made in the best interests of children on whom the organisations' programs and activities may have bearing.

This policy is also informed by ActionAid's *Feminist Leadership Principles*, which are embedded in ActionAid Australia's safeguarding approach:

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-care and caring for others
3. Dismantling bias
4. Inclusion
5. Sharing power
6. Responsible and transparent use of power
7. Accountable Collaboration
8. Respectful Feedback
9. Courage
10. Zero Tolerance

ActionAid Australia recognises that the abuse and exploitation of children happens in all countries and societies across the world. All child abuse involves the violation of children's rights.

Child abuse is never acceptable and a commitment to children's rights in general also means a commitment to safeguard the children with whom ActionAid Australia comes into contact with.

ActionAid Australia will not permit a person to work with children if that person poses an unacceptable risk to children's safety or wellbeing.

ActionAid Australia respects and upholds statutory law in those countries where it operates. ActionAid Australia's policy and procedures must be interpreted and enforced in accordance with local law. There may be instances where the agency policy and procedures are more stringent than local law and in these cases the ActionAid Australia policy and procedures should be followed.

ActionAid Australia respects and will generally work to promote the culture, traditions and practices in the countries/communities in which we work. However, in instances where cultural practices are clearly contrary to children's rights, ActionAid Australia will work with the community to challenge such practices (e.g., female genital mutilation; preventing girls from attending school in order to carry out domestic tasks).

The ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy aims to protect children from harm and to provide guidance to staff, partners and other relevant stakeholders so they can work safely and effectively with children.

The ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every five years or more often, in line with ActionAid Australia's regular policy review processes.

Action Statement

ActionAid Australia will meet its commitment to safeguard children through the following means:

Awareness: Ensure that all staff and others are aware of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children.

Prevention: Ensure, through awareness and personal and professional conduct, that staff and others minimise the risk to children.

Reporting: Ensure that staff and others have clear steps to follow where concerns arise regarding the safety of children.

Responding: Ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

In order that the above standards of reporting and responding are met, ActionAid Australia will ensure that it:

- takes seriously any concerns raised;
- takes positive steps to ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns;
- supports children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns;
- acts appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation;
- demonstrates responsibility to and respect for children by being sensitive in our communications that involve them; and

- is supported by stringent recruitment and selection measures that have been designed to minimise the possibility of recruiting persons who may pose a risk to children.

Definitions

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| <p>Child</p> | <p>“Any individual under the age of 18, irrespective of local country definitions of when a child reaches adulthood.”</p> <p>This definition is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A child in this policy is a person under the age of 18 years.</p> <p>Whilst a person under the age of 18 may have reached the age of majority, age of sexual consent, or voting age, this does not alter their inherent vulnerability as a child.</p> | | | | | |
| <p>Child abuse</p> | <p>Child abuse is defined as an act by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that endanger a child or young person’s physical or emotional health or development.¹ Child abuse can be a single incident but usually takes place over time.</p> <p>Child abuse is primarily understood as acts committed by adults or older adolescents against children. However, it is also recognised that certain actions or the failure to act by governments and other authorities can breach children’s rights and can result in serious harm to children.</p> <p>ActionAid Australia classifies child abuse according to five main types:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="483 1163 1323 1736"> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 1163 690 1436"> <p>Physical Abuse</p> </td> <td data-bbox="690 1163 1323 1436"> <p>Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="483 1436 690 1736"> <p>Emotional Abuse</p> </td> <td data-bbox="690 1436 1323 1736"> <p>Emotional or psychological abuse involves a sustained pattern of verbal abuse and harassment that results in damage to a child or young person's self-esteem or social competence. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, constant criticism, belittling, intimidating or isolating the child or young person.</p> </td> </tr> </table> | | <p>Physical Abuse</p> | <p>Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.</p> | <p>Emotional Abuse</p> | <p>Emotional or psychological abuse involves a sustained pattern of verbal abuse and harassment that results in damage to a child or young person's self-esteem or social competence. It can take the form of name calling, threatening, ridiculing, constant criticism, belittling, intimidating or isolating the child or young person.</p> |
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¹ Definition of child abuse is taken from Australian Institute of Family Studies, Fact Sheet: Child Protection in Australia. Children See. Children Do. Make your Influence Positive. 2008

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| | <p>Child Sexual Abuse</p> | <p>Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent or adult for his or her own or another's sexual stimulation or gratification, or economic gain. This can also include exposure or failure to prevent the exposure of children to all forms of pornography and sexual acts.</p> <p>Please refer to ActionAid Australia's Safeguarding and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Policy, specifically section 3 on "Definitions", for a comprehensive list of acts that constitute sexual abuse.</p> | |
| | <p>Neglect</p> | <p>Neglect is the deliberate denial to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision to the extent that the child's health and development are at risk.</p> | |
| | <p>Exploitation</p> | <p>Exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child.</p> <p>There are two main forms of child exploitation that are recognised:</p> <p><u>Sexual exploitation</u>: the abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the exploitation of another as well as personal sexual gratification.</p> <p><i>Examples: Child prostitution, trafficking of children for sexual abuse and exploitation, child pornography, sexual slavery.</i></p> <p><u>Economic exploitation of a child</u>: the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour. Economic exploitation implies the idea of a certain gain or profit through the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. This material interest has an impact on the economy of a certain unit, be it the State, the community or the family.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <p><i>Child soldiers and the recruitment and involvement of children in armed conflict, child</i></p> | |

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| | | <i>bondage, the use of children from criminal activities including the sale and distribution of narcotics, the involvement of children in any harmful or hazardous work.</i> | |
| Child Protection | <p>Child Protection is the protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. It is the actions taken to promote the welfare of all children and protect them from harm. In practice it means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting children from abuse and maltreatment or preventing harm to children's health or development • Ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care. • Taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes; and • Ensuring an organisation's processes or procedures do not deliberately or inadvertently cause harm to children. | | |
| Grooming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grooming is when an individual deliberately tries to gain a child's trust for the purpose of carrying out sexual abuse or exploitation. • An offender may seek to build a sexual relationship with a child having purposefully built a trusting relationship with them in advance in order to enable this (e.g. favouring a child, giving them gifts, using sexualised language or physical contact, or exposing the child to sexual concepts and sexualised language). This can happen face to face or online. It is common for children not to understand that they have been groomed or that this is a form of abuse. • Offenders may also groom adults in order to enable the abuse of children in their care to take place (for example, persuading those around them that they are safe and responsible individuals so that they allow children into their care or do not believe children when they raise concerns about this individual). | | |
| Digital harassment, exploitation, and abuse | <p>Any form of harassment, exploitation and abuse that happens on the internet. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online grooming for sexual exploitation • Sexting • Commercial sexual exploitation e.g. obtaining child abuse material online, accessing dark web forums e.g. to profit from sexual exploitation and abuse. • 'Revenge porn' - this involves the sharing of sexually inappropriate and explicit images of a person without their knowledge and consent. | | |

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| Survivor | <p>A person who has experienced sexual abuse, exploitation, or harassment.</p> <p>The terms 'victim' and 'survivor' can be used interchangeably. 'Victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors. 'Survivor' is the term generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resiliency.</p> <p>ActionAid uses the term survivor as part of our survivor-centered approach as it emphasises the power of the individual, which the term 'victim' can remove, and their agency. However, it is important that those affected by sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse can choose the term they prefer.</p> |
| Survivor-centred approach | <p>A safeguarding approach puts the survivor of violence or harm at the centre of any response and process. Recognising that violence, particularly sexual violence, is carried out in order to remove the power and agency of the person experiencing the harm, a survivor-centred approach works to place the power back with the survivor.</p> <p>Survivor-centred approaches must consider the rights, choices, dignity, confidentiality, and safety of the survivor. This ensures that the survivor, their family, and their community do not come to any further harm as a result of having chosen to report an incident.</p> |

Responsibilities of Management and Staff

All ActionAid Australia representatives (i.e. staff, program partners, Board members, volunteers, and contractors in Australia and overseas) have a responsibility to identify and mitigate/manage risks to children.

Management

The ActionAid Australia Leadership Team and managers are responsible for promoting children's rights and championing the protection of children. Management is responsible for implementation of the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedures as set out in this document and will comply with the Child Protection Code of Conduct.

Particular responsibilities as detailed in the following procedures include building child protection awareness, advocacy, rigorous recruitment and selection practices, training, sponsorship controls, responding appropriately to allegations, systems and administration.

Executive staff and managers are responsible for promoting child safe messages in their work including appropriate child-safe communications on websites, brochures, recruitment materials and publications.

Staff

ActionAid Australia staff and representatives are responsible for having a thorough knowledge of the ActionAid Australia policy and procedures as set out in this document, acting in accordance with these policies and procedures and complying with the Child Protection Code of Conduct.

Program Partners

All ActionAid Australia program partners overseas are required to comply with this policy. ActionAid Australia will appraise partner's policies and practices in relation to Child Protection prior to entering into a funding agreement, where practicable, and will undertake regular due diligence of partners to confirm policy compliance, as well as continuously work to strengthen capacity and good practice.

Questions and Contacts

Staff who have questions or concerns or require further information in relation to the child protection policy and procedures should contact their manager or supervisor, or the Country Director (in program countries) or ActionAid Australia Executive Director in Sydney.

2. Child Protection Code of Conduct

Introduction

All ActionAid Australia representatives (i.e. ActionAid Australia staff, program partners, Board members, volunteers, and contractors in Australia and overseas) will conduct themselves in a manner that promotes children's rights and protects children from harm.

Children are at risk of abuse from a variety of sources. It is the responsibility of all ActionAid Australia representatives to minimise this risk by setting a positive example, undertaking active prevention efforts, identifying and managing potential risks and responding to allegations of abuse. The Child Protection Code of Conduct describes the basic expectations of ActionAid Australia representatives, particularly regarding their contact and dealings with children.

All ActionAid Australia representatives will be required to sign an undertaking to comply with this Code. All ActionAid Australia partner organisations that are implementing aid activities are required to sign an undertaking to comply with this Code. (See **Annexure C**).

Core Principles

ActionAid Australia has identified four core principles that relate to child abuse and exploitation and the conduct of humanitarian and development workers:

1. Exploitation and all forms of abuse of children by humanitarian and development workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
2. Where a humanitarian or development worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding any type of child abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, s/he must report such concerns via the prescribed ActionAid Australia reporting mechanisms.
3. Humanitarian and development workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents exploitation and all forms of abuse of children and promotes positive staff conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.
4. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.

ActionAid Australia Representatives Undertaking

ActionAid Australia representatives will act at all times to ensure children's safety and protection.

Specifically, ActionAid Australia representatives will:

- take action to inform themselves and others on the ActionAid Australia policy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- maintain and promote a safe environment for children to participate in ActionAid Australia's activities;
- treat all children and young people with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
- conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the values of ActionAid Australia;
- provide a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers;
- respect cultural differences;
- encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, staff and volunteers, and ensure that children and young people participate in the decisions that affect them;
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
- comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;
- report any concerns or allegations of child abuse according to the prescribed ActionAid Australia procedures;
- be transparent in their actions and whereabouts at all times;
- take responsibility for ensuring they are accountable and do not place themselves in positions where there is a risk of allegations being made;
- self-assess their behaviours, actions, language and relationships with children;
- speak up when they observe concerning behaviours of colleagues; and
- immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during a person's association with ActionAid Australia, that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

ActionAid Australia representatives will not:

- engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children;
- use inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, offensive, culturally inappropriate or discriminatory language when speaking with a child or young person;
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- Behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child;
- give or provide children with alcohol or illegal drugs;

- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes;
- invite unaccompanied children into their home/hotel, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case they must obtain their manager's permission, and ensure another adult is present if possible;
- smack, hit or physically assault children;
- physically punish or discipline children (excluding own children);
- engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts, recognising that mistaken belief of the age of the child is not a defence;
- behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child;
- participate in or condone any behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
- act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children;
- hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way;
- seek to make contact and spend time with any child or young person outside the program times;
- use ActionAid Australia's computers, mobile phones, blackberries, video or digital cameras inappropriately, nor use them for the purpose of exploiting or harassing children or to access child pornography through any medium;
- hire minors as domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.

Use of children's sounds and images for work-related purposes

When recording, photographing or filming a child for work-related purposes, ActionAid representatives must:

- be trained on sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse (SHEA) and Safeguarding prior to the content collection;
- before recording, photographing or filming a child, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images;
- before recording, photographing or filming a child, obtain informed consent from the child (where feasible) and a parent or guardian of the child, and explain how the recording, photograph or film will be used;
- ensure recordings, photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;

- ensure recordings and images are honest representations of the context and the facts;
- ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form; and
- Ensure that content collected is strictly for work-related purposes – ActionAid Australia representatives must not use the content for personal use unless authorised to do so by a relevant ActionAid representative (such as a relevant member of the Leadership Team).

Data Collection and Protection

With the gathering, storing, or sharing of any data related to children for work-related purposes (such as fundraising, communications, and incident management), ActionAid representatives must:

- Explain to the child and their parent or guardian while obtaining informed consent how ActionAid intends to use and store their data; and
- Comply with relevant Australian, local and international data protection laws.

A breach of the Code of Conduct or breach of ActionAid Australia’s child protection procedures are grounds for disciplinary action, may lead to dismissal from employment or service, and may result in legal proceedings.

3. Child Protection Procedures

ActionAid Australia commits itself to a number of processes in adopting a child safe culture.

3.1 Recruitment

3.1.1 Interview and Selection Process

ActionAid Australia’s commitment to the protection of children is evidenced through the strict guidelines relating to the recruitment of staff, particularly those who will be in direct contact with children. These guidelines, which form part of the broader ActionAid Australia Recruitment and Selection Manual, are regularly reviewed and updated, ensuring that at all times they accurately reflect child safe recruitment and screening standards.

The guidelines include:

- a clear statement that confirms ActionAid Australia’s commitment to child protection on the Job Vacancy page of the ActionAid Australia website and on all jobs posted to external websites;
- targeted interview questions and a documented request for disclosure of any conduct that may be contrary to child protection;
- conducting reference checks; and
- conducting national police checks where feasible.

Guidelines on recruitment practices, including interview and reference check questions, are set out in **Annexure A**. All ActionAid Australia employment contracts include a clause in relation to child protection, which is signed prior to commencing work with the organisation. All new employees are informed of ActionAid Australia's Child Protection Policy and Procedures during the induction process, with employees required to sign an acknowledgement that they have read the document and will comply with its requirements.

If it is discovered that any employee (or potential employee) is prohibited from working with children under Australian law, their employment will be immediately terminated, and the relevant authorities will be notified.

3.1.2 Criminal Background Check

ActionAid Australia will undertake police checks in accordance with current DFAT guidelines.

Currently, a police check must be obtained upon recruitment for staff and consultants who will be working on or visiting projects. This includes all staff in overseas offices. For consultants, ActionAid Australia will accept a police check for a period of 12 months after issue.

A police check must be obtained for each country the person has lived in for 12 months or more over the past five years *and* for his or her countries of citizenship.

All personnel working with or in contact with children, including volunteers, child sponsors and donors, will be asked to obtain a police check. The police check will be requested for all full-time, part-time, and casual employees including long-term contract appointments, regardless of location.

These checks will be conducted at the commencement of employment, with follow-up checks conducted every 3 years for those who are working with children. ActionAid Australia will inform all prospective staff of this requirement and will never knowingly employ anyone convicted of a child related offence or permit a person to work with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children. If a potential employee declines to undergo a police check, the offer of employment will be withdrawn.

Where a police check cannot be obtained all reasonable measures, including background and reference checks, will be undertaken to ensure the person does not pose a risk to children.

All ActionAid Australia's program partners will be similarly required to conduct criminal background checks on staff, contractors and volunteers involved in any ActionAid Australia funded project. Where criminal checks are unavailable or known to be unreliable, statutory declarations will be required from all the above personnel before they are recruited or appointed to a role with the partner organisation.

3.2 Training and Development

3.2.1 Training in ActionAid Australia Sydney Office

All staff, volunteers, Board members, partners and others covered under this policy will receive information relating to ActionAid Australia's Child Protection Policy during the induction process. Further training will be tailored to individual team requirements. Staff are responsible for reading and upholding ActionAid Australia's Child Protection Policy and Procedures and Code of Conduct. Child protection training will be conducted at least annually for staff.

3.2.2 Training in Program Countries

It is the responsibility of the relevant Country Director to ensure that all relevant staff are informed about ActionAid Australia's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

In order to deliver quality programs it is necessary for staff in program partners to have direct contact with children. As such, additional training on child protection and working with children will usually be required and will be arranged by the relevant manager or Country Director. Training should at all times be culturally appropriate, taking into account different cultural perspectives on child protection.

Program partners should work to develop, document and implement staff training and awareness related to the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

3.4 Program Planning and Implementation

ActionAid Australia will work with its program partners to undertake a Child Protection Risk Context Assessment (an Annex to the Programs Manual) to determine the level of risk projects pose to a child. For those programs determined to be of a 'moderate' or 'high' risk, or where it is determined that the project will be working with children or will come into contact with children, a Child Protection Risk Assessment is undertaken. ActionAid Australia will work with program partners to ensure that the risks identified through this assessment are monitored, and actions taken to mitigate them. Throughout the life of the project cycle, ActionAid Australia will work with partners to identify new risks, and update any changes to risk ratings or mitigation strategies as required.

Program risk management, including child protection risk management, is an integral part of the implementation, reporting and monitoring of projects supported by ActionAid Australia.

3.5 Digital Safeguarding

The increasing use of digital technology in community development has subsequently increased the risk of online child safeguarding violations, such as online sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse.

In the instances where children are provided access to technology, such as laptops, or participate in online platforms and digital spaces as part of an ActionAid programme,

ActionAid representatives must ensure that children are made aware of the safety risks and how to report any concerns relating to potentially harmful behaviours.

There are a range of risks to children and young people in the online context. These include:

- Contact Risks – children can be at risk of contact behaviours such as bullying or grooming;
- Content Risks – children and young people can access content that is discriminatory, violent, sexual or extremist; and
- Conduct Risks – children can adopt risky behaviours such as creating their own sexual content without recognition of the impact (e.g. sexting, sending images of themselves to others) or bullying another young person.

Additionally, children in politically sensitive or conflict environments who engage in online spaces, particularly related to campaigning, advocacy or civic action can be subject to harmful consequences. This can include physical or threats to physical harm, social isolation or exclusion, and imprisonment. Marginalised groups such as women and girls, and the LGBTQIA+ community are at particular risk of experiencing this harm. Any risk assessment of a project with a component of online programming for children will be developed collaboratively between ActionAid representatives, relevant partners, and children, and prevention and mitigation strategies will be created.

3.6 Emergency Response

ActionAid will work with humanitarian response partners to consider risks to children when developing and implementing disaster response activities as the potential for harm to and abuse of children in disaster and emergency contexts is greatly increased.

The following provisions during emergencies will be carried out to mitigate risk:

- Ensure that ActionAid's Child Protection Policy is made available to all stakeholders involved in the emergency response, translated into a local language, and communicated to and understood by all stakeholders. This includes carrying out training, as appropriate, to ensure all ActionAid staff and other representatives are aware of our approach. Referral and support mechanisms must be mapped as soon as possible.
- HR will follow safer recruitment and selection procedures during an emergency. For example, the recruitment process will include questions regarding protection of children for those working directly with children and communities.

3.7 Content Gathering, Marketing, and Communications

As stipulated in Section 2 of this policy, before recording, photographing or filming a child, ActionAid Australia or its program partners will obtain informed consent from the child (where feasible) and a parent or guardian of the child, and explain how and where the recording, photograph or film will be used.

All independent photographers will be appropriately screened and briefed on child protection as is required for all ActionAid Australia representatives. They will also be required to sign this Policy and Code of Conduct.

ActionAid Australia will undertake all reasonable precautions to protect paper and electronic information about children, including the removal of meta data on content collected to protect the location of the child. At all times staff are required to adhere to ActionAid Australia's Privacy Policy.

Pictures, images, or other likenesses of children and/or information related to children that could compromise their care and protection will not be made available through any form of communication media.

In order to protect children, the following are adhered to in the production of all marketing and communications materials:

- Children's full names are not published (or names are changed)
- No detail is published on the place of residence of the children.
- No other information is provided that could be used to identify or locate the children.
- The image shows children in their context, as active and resourceful.
- Children are portrayed as dignified and presented in a respectful manner
- Children are not depicted in erotic, seductive or provocative poses or context and are adequately clothed.

3.6 Allegation Reporting and Management

The development, implementation and continual monitoring of an effective allegation and incident management system is essential to ActionAid Australia's efforts to protect children from all forms of abuse and to ensure due process for any ActionAid Australia representatives involved in an allegation.

The potential for staff, donors or partners to seek access to children for abusive purposes is acknowledged by ActionAid Australia. This threat is treated with the utmost importance and seriousness and ActionAid Australia is committed to doing all it possibly can to prevent the abuse of children and to hold accountable those who harm children.

3.6.1 Obligation to Report Suspected Incidents of Child Abuse

It is mandatory for any allegation, belief or suspicion of child abuse as defined in this policy (past or present) by an ActionAid Australia or partner employee, volunteer, consultant, donor, partner or board-member to be reported immediately as detailed below. If a person knowingly chooses not to report an incident, then they will be subject to disciplinary action including possible termination of employment.

A child or person reporting an incident must be taken seriously and listened to carefully. Once an allegation is made there should be an immediate response that protects the child from further potential abuse or victimisation. The family of the child

victim should be informed of the allegation, action proposed and they should be consulted where possible as to the process to be followed.

Concerns can be raised through a variety of ways to ensure accessibility and inclusivity – avenues of escalation include:

- The Incident Report Form (**Annexure B**)
- Email;
- Letter;
- Phone call; and
- Verbally.

When concerns arise, all parties will be directed through a formal complaints process by ActionAid Australia's Executive Director, Chief Operating Officer or Safeguarding Focal Point. The complaints mechanism in place strives to be accessible (including disability-friendly), survivor-centred, and relevant to the local contexts that ActionAid works in, and ActionAid will strive to develop child-friendly complaints mechanisms in all programming directly involving children. The Chief Operating Officer may consult with legal counsel, external expert investigators and/or police authorities if appropriate, and steer the investigation process accordingly. When an allegation is made to ActionAid Australia, DFAT must be immediately informed that an investigation is being undertaken and consulted throughout the process. DFAT will be notified in writing through the Conduct and Ethics Unit at the email address: childwelfare@dfat.gov.au.

3.6.2 Allegations Made in Australia

All incidents or suspicions of child abuse, including the inappropriate use of printed and digital materials (past or present) by an ActionAid Australia representative in Australia must be reported immediately either to their manager or the Executive Director of ActionAid Australia **and** the Chief Operating Officer. In the instance that a suspicion or incident is initially reported to a Manager, it then becomes the Manager's responsibility to report to the Executive Director. The person making the allegation is required as soon as possible (usually within 24 hours) to document the allegation, including the time, place, and any witnesses on the Incident Report Form at **Annexure B**.

If the allegation is in relation to the Executive Director then the matter must immediately be reported to the Chair of the ActionAid Australia Board and the Chief Operating Officer. If the allegation relates to a child who is a resident in Australia or there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child in Australia may be at risk, the Executive Director or Chair of the Board of ActionAid Australia will immediately report the matter to the relevant state child protection authorities. An allegation of physical or sexual abuse or exploitation as defined in this policy and involving a child in another country will be reported to the Australian Federal Police.

In all reports of suspected child abuse involving an ActionAid Australia employee, sponsor or other representative, the Executive Director or Chair of the Board of ActionAid Australia will conduct or arrange an internal investigation in a timely manner

and may involve external legal, mediation or expert advice and participation if required. Depending on the nature of the allegation and what is found during the internal investigation the Executive Director may refer the matter to the police. If the matter becomes part of a criminal investigation, ActionAid Australia will cooperate fully with the relevant authorities which may include discontinuing the internal investigation whilst a police investigation is undertaken.

At all times ActionAid Australia will act in the best interests of the child. This may involve the standing down of the alleged perpetrator while an investigation takes place. Any member of staff who has been stood down will receive full pay and is entitled to a fair and just process including appropriate information about the investigation process. No assumptions are to be made regarding guilt or innocence, with the investigation process remaining confidential until a decision has been reached by management. Regardless of the decision made, the process must be documented and filed, with all printed and electronic matter being kept in a secure and confidential place at all times.

The investigation process will conclude one of the following:

- There are possible grounds for criminal or statutory proceedings and the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedures have been breached. In this case the matter will be referred to appropriate authorities (if it hasn't already) and disciplinary action including consideration of termination of employment will ensue.
- There is no basis for referral to criminal or statutory proceedings however the staff person has breached the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Disciplinary action will be conducted including possible termination of employment.
- If there is no basis found for the allegation in which case the person will resume normal duties. If it is found that the allegation was vexatious, appropriate disciplinary action in relation to the person making the allegation will be taken which may include termination of employment.

3.6.3 Allegations made about an ActionAid Australia representative, including donors, or ActionAid Australia partner organisation representative operating in ActionAid program countries.

All incidents or suspicion of child abuse occurring must be reported immediately to the Country Director. The Country Director must then inform the ActionAid Australia Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer in the Sydney office. If the allegation is in relation to the Country Director, then the matter must be reported immediately and directly to the Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of ActionAid Australia. The person making the allegation is required as soon as possible (usually within 24 hours) to document the allegation, including the time, place and any witnesses on the Incident Report Form at Annexure B.

The Country Director or ActionAid Australia Executive Director is responsible for instituting appropriate action including:

- taking immediate steps to secure the safety and well-being of the child or children concerned;
- conducting or arranging an internal investigation to determine if the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedure has been breached. The internal investigation must be conducted in a timely manner and may involve external legal, mediation or expert advice and participation if required;
- making a report to local statutory authorities – where such a system exists complying with relevant statutes and protocols and cooperating with local authorities. This may involve notifying appropriate authorities prior to the outcome of any internal investigation if local law requires this;
- determining whether referral of information to the Australian Federal Police or other international authorities is appropriate and possible;

At all times ActionAid Australia will act in the best interests of the child. This may involve the standing down of the alleged perpetrator while an investigation takes place. Any member of staff who has been stood down will receive full pay and is entitled to a fair and just process including appropriate information about the investigation process. No assumptions are to be made regarding guilt or innocence, with the investigation process remaining confidential until a decision has been reached by management. Regardless of the decision made, the process must be documented and filed, with all printed and electronic matter being kept in a secure and confidential place at all times.

The investigation process will conclude one of the following:

- There are possible grounds for criminal or statutory proceedings and the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedures have been breached. In this case the matter will be referred to appropriate authorities (if it hasn't already) and disciplinary action including consideration of termination of employment will ensue.
- There is no basis for referral to criminal or statutory proceedings however the staff person has breached the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Disciplinary action will be conducted including possible termination of employment.
- There is no basis found for the allegation in which case the person will resume normal duties. If it is found that the allegation was vexatious, appropriate disciplinary action in relation to the person making the allegation will be taken which may include termination of employment.

3.6.4 Allegations made about an ActionAid Australia representative, including donors, or ActionAid Australia partner organisation representative operating in a country with no ActionAid office.

Any incident or suspicion relating to child abuse involving an ActionAid Australia representative or partner organisation representative must be reported to the Head of the partner organisation in country and to the Executive Director and Chief Operating

Officer of ActionAid Australia. If the allegation is in relation to the Head of the Partner organisation, then the matter must immediately be reported to the Executive Director of ActionAid Australia. The person making the allegation is required as soon as possible (usually within 24 hours) to document the allegation, including the time, place and any witnesses on the Incident Report Form at Annexure B. All such matters are confirmed in writing.

The head of the partner organisation of the country in which the allegation is made liaises with ActionAid Australia and follows its own legislative or internal procedures to investigate and address the allegations. Procedures by the head may include acting immediately if there is risk to the child, performing an internal investigation by an investigation team, informing the regional representative and if appropriate/possible, according to the nature of the concerns and the local prevailing circumstances, reporting the incident to external authorities as required by local laws.

The investigation team will develop a detailed investigation plan based on established local procedures. Once the investigation is completed, a full report (findings, recommended actions) will be shared with/approved by the Executive Director of ActionAid Australia. Depending on the nature of the allegations the Executive Director may refer the matter to the AFP. All steps taken are to be extensively documented and filed. A copy of all documentation is to be kept by ActionAid Australia in a secure place.

Possible outcomes after the conclusion of the investigation include:

- There are possible grounds for criminal or statutory proceedings and the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedures have been breached. In this case the matter will be referred to appropriate authorities (if it hasn't already) and disciplinary action including consideration of termination of employment will ensue.
- There is no basis for referral to criminal or statutory proceedings however the staff person has breached the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Disciplinary action will be conducted including possible termination of employment.
- There is no basis found for the allegation in which case the person will resume normal duties. If it is found that the allegation was vexatious, appropriate disciplinary action in relation to the person making the allegation will be taken which may include termination of employment.

In situations whereby ActionAid Australia policies or standards are more stringent than local laws, ActionAid Australia policy and procedures should be followed. However, in a situation where the involvement of local authorities is necessary, ActionAid Australia recognises that their actions must in no way contravene local laws.

3.6.5 Allegations made about a representative from another humanitarian or development organisation that has no formal linked relationship with ActionAid Australia

Any incident or suspicion relating to child abuse involving the representative of another non-related humanitarian organisation must be reported to the Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of ActionAid Australia. The person making the allegation is required as soon as possible (usually within 24 hours) to document the allegation, including the time, place and any witnesses on the Incident Report Form at Annexure B. All such matters are confirmed in writing.

The Executive Director will inform the relevant organisation of the allegation and request that they undertake an investigation into the allegation. The organisation would follow its own legislative or internal procedures to investigate and address the allegations. If the alleged incident took place in a country where there is an ActionAid Australia office, then the Executive Director will inform the relevant Country Director.

If the allegation relates to a child who is resident in Australia or there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child in Australia may be at risk, the Executive Director will immediately report the matter to the relevant state child protection authorities.

3.6.6 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is crucial to a fair and effective reporting procedure, and an essential component of ActionAid Australia's survivor-centred approach to child protection and safeguarding. It is unacceptable and potentially defamatory for concerns of child abuse (and alleged abusers) to be spread throughout the organisation and/or communities rather than being directed through a formal complaints process. All participants must understand the importance of following the set reporting lines when concerns arise. Confidentiality protects the child, the notifier, the respondent and the organisation, and ensures a fair and proper process.

ActionAid Australia understands that in some cases reporting of incidents and allegations may occur even if the child or party concerned is reluctant to give their consent.

3.6.7 Investigation of Complaints

Internal investigations as outlined above will undertake a confidential, thorough, impartial and prompt process. The investigation team may include an external expert investigator/s if deemed appropriate. The investigation may consist of interviews with witnesses and others as appropriate, collection of information about the alleged conduct, gathering of documentation, or other procedures as appropriate. The individual alleged to have violated this ActionAid Australia policy would have the opportunity to present his or her view of the events in question. ActionAid Australia will hold its determination until the investigation is completed.

3.6.8 Reprisal

ActionAid Australia will not tolerate any form of coercion, intimidation, reprisal or retaliation against any employee who reports any form of abuse or exploitation, provides any information or other assistance in an investigation.

Annexure A**RECRUITMENT PRACTICES**

Child related positions must be identified at the recruitment requisition stage of recruitment. As a guide, if a position has contact with children on a regular basis, it must be deemed to be a "child related position". It is the Hiring Manager's responsibility to ensure that the following practices are implemented.

Past History

The Hiring Manager must ask every applicant to provide a complete work history and ensure that there are no suspicious patterns or unexplained gaps in the applicant's work history. Copies of all qualifications must be obtained and retained on the applicant's file.

Interviews

If there are any unaccounted-for breaks in employment the Hiring Manager should use the interview to discuss these with the applicant.

The Hiring Manager must inform all candidates that ActionAid Australia is a child-safe employer, and these questions are standard for **all** interviews.

Question for all positions.

- What is your understanding of the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy & Code of Conduct? How do you think it would apply to you in this role and what steps would you take to comply with the Policy/Code of Conduct?
- Is there any past behaviour you wish to disclose that may be contrary to child protection principles? (This may be requested over the email prior to any offer of employment or included and documented during the recruitment process).

Questions for child related positions

- Do you have any concerns about working directly with children?
- Have you worked with children before? If so, what are some of the methods you have used to motivate children?
- Please tell us about a time in which a child you were responsible for, did something very unexpected or inappropriate. What happened and how did you handle it?
- Can you give an example of where you have acted to protect a child? What did you learn from this and how has it impacted on your current work practices.

Reference Questions

The Hiring Manager must inform each referee that ActionAid Australia is a child-safe employer and advise that this question is standard for all reference checks:

"Do you have any concerns about recommending this person to work directly with children?"

Reference checks can also be used to raise any issues that may have been cause for concern during the interview process.

Annexure B**INCIDENT REPORT**

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of complainant: | |
| Address/contact details: | |
| Age: | |
| Sex: | |
| Name of alleged victim (if different from complainant): | |
| Address/contact details: | |
| Age: | |
| Sex: | |
| Name(s) and address of parents, if applicable: | |
| Has the alleged victim given consent to the completion of this form? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Date of incident(s): | |
| Time of incident(s): | |
| Location of incident(s): | |
| Physical & emotional state of victim (Describe any cuts, bruises, lacerations, behaviour, and mood): | |
| Witnesses' names and contact information: | |
| Brief description of incident(s) (attach extra pages if necessary): | |
| Name of accused person(s): | |
| Job title of accused person(s): | |
| Organisation accused person(s) works for: | |
| Address of accused person(s) (if known): | |
| Age: | |
| Sex: | |
| Have the police been contacted? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | |
|--|---|
| If yes, what happened? | |
| If no, does the alleged victim want police assistance, and if not, why? | |
| Has the alleged victim been informed about available medical treatment? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If yes, has the alleged victim sought medical treatment for the incident? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| If yes, who provided treatment? | |
| What immediate security measures have been undertaken for victim? | |
| Who is responsible for ensuring safety plan (Name, Title, Organisation): | |
| Any other pertinent information provided in interview (including contact made with other Organisations, if any) | |
| Details of referrals and advice on health, psychosocial, legal needs of victim made by person completing report: | |
| Report completed by: <i>Name Position/Organisation</i> <i>Date/Time/Location</i> | |
| Has the complainant been informed about the organisation's procedures for dealing with complaints? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Complainant's consent for data to be shared with other entities (check any that apply): | Police <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| Date report forwarded to relevant management structure | |

Annexure C

**Child Protection Policy and Procedures and
Code of Conduct Undertaking**

I,acknowledge that I have read and understood the

ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy and Procedures and Code of Conduct.

I agree to comply with the Policy and Procedures and Code of Conduct. I understand that a breach of the ActionAid Australia Child Protection Policy or Procedures or Code of Conduct are grounds for disciplinary action, may lead to dismissal from employment or service, and may result in legal proceedings.

.....
Name Organisation

.....
Signed Date

This undertaking is to be signed by:

1. All ActionAid Australia representatives.
2. All ActionAid Australia partner organisations that are implementing aid activities.
3. All contractors and suppliers working with ActionAid Australia.

Changes to Policy

| Nature of Change | Date of Approval by Board |
|--|------------------------------|
| First developed and approved | August 2011 |
| Policy updated in consultation with DFAT, to ensure greater clarity about what constitutes contact with children, and increase who must sign on to the policy | October 2014 |
| <p>Policy updated to meet changes in DFAT Child Protection requirements. Key changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating the titles of senior managers to reflect the current titles; • defining the difference between working with, and contact with, children; • a requirement that ActionAid Australia must complete a full Child Protection Risk Assessment in instances where its representatives work means that they are 'working with children'. Where representatives' work means that they are 'in contact with children', they must adhere to the existing standards and processes in the policy; • a new Annexure C – the Child Protection Risk Assessment. This annexure is under review by programs staff to determine usefulness in current form. • a requirement that all ActionAid Australia representatives immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during a person's association with ActionAid Australia, that relate to child exploitation and abuse. • When an allegation is made to ActionAid Australia's Chief Operating Officer, DFAT must be immediately informed that an investigation is being undertaken and consulted throughout the process. • All references to AusAid changed to DFAT. | 12 May 2017 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police background checks have been revised, from once every 12 months for existing employees who will be working with children to once every 3 years. This is in line with DFAT's approach to review police checks at least every 5 years. | 12 th August 2017 |

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update to align with DFAT’s updated Child Protection Policy January 2018. This has included the following specific changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an updated Child Protection Risk Rating tool which indicates whether a full Child Protection Risk Assessment needs to be conducted for a given program. The Child Protection Risk Rating tool has been included as an updated annex to the Programs Manual (and taken out of this policy). ○ It is recognised that most AAA-supported programs will pose a ‘moderate’ risk to children as the programs will (a) involve incidental/indirect contact with children and therefore pose a ‘moderate’ risk; and (b) most partners will have moderate capacity to manage child protection risks and therefore pose a ‘moderate’ risk; ○ Inclusion of 9 child protection standards mandated by DFAT. | 24 October 2018 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update to align with ACFID Child Protection Code of Conduct to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Banning of supply/provision of alcohol and drugs to children ○ Address the giving of gifts to children (discouraged) | 27 Feb 2021 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update to align with AAI policy revisions | 25 Nov 2023 |