

CHILD SAFE POLICY

Effective date

This policy is effective ongoing.

Policy Statement

Baptist World Aid Australia (“BWAA”)’s vision of “a world where poverty has ended and all people enjoy the fullness of life God intends” cannot be realised until all children experience the freedom of living in a world that is absent from exploitation and abuse. Children across the world are vulnerable, subjected to exploitation and abuse from adults or other children, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect. Children require protection from the effects of poverty, abuse, homelessness and neglect, unequal access to essential services; and, justice systems that do not recognise their special needs. Each year natural and man-made disasters affect an estimated 231 million people worldwide. Children are at much greater risk of abuse or exploitation during a disaster or emergency situation. BWAA’s emergency response projects follow international codes to protect children at risk.

This policy is guided by the following principles:

Zero tolerance of Child Exploitation and Abuse

BWAA does not tolerate child exploitation and abuse. Such action attracts criminal, civil and disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment. BWAA works to reduce the risks of child exploitation and abuse associated with delivering BWAA or BWAA funded activities including training representatives on their obligations. BWAA will not knowingly engage anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children or partner with any organisation that does not meet BWAA’s child protection standards.

Sharing Responsibility for Child Protection

There is international recognition that adults who have a formal role in working with or supporting children are in positions of trust and authority. The relationship between an adult and child is not a relationship of equals. It is a shared responsibility of all adults to prevent child exploitation and abuse. This policy recognises BWAA’s responsibilities and commitment to working with implementing partners to prevent and respond to child exploitation and abuse against children who are in contact with BWAA representatives, BWAA activities and BWAA funded activities. To effectively manage risks to children, all BWAA representatives must show that they understand and agree to comply with the

¹ Child Protection in Emergencies, Priorities, Principles and Practice, Save the Children, 2010

Policy, Code of Conduct and Child Safe Reporting Process prior to and during their employment or engagement.

Child Protection and Baptist World Aid Australia's Theology of Development
All people, including children, have been created in God's image and are equally loved by God. BWAA understands development as the process by which people are able to realise right relationships with God, one another and the earth, witnessing to the reality of God's Kingdom breaking through to the here and now. This will mean all people, and especially children, living in households where they feel safe and loved; have the opportunity to learn, grow and mature; experience intimate, loving interpersonal relationships; and, where there is adequate provision for their most important needs. It also means people living in communities where they are physically and emotionally safe; where they feel welcomed, valued and loved; and where social structures ensure justice, equity, and opportunity to participate in social life and decision making.

The discrimination and exclusion frequently experienced by children in societies means they often fail to experience this security. Wherever this occurs, we should be working towards the restoration of the patterns of right relationships that God intends, affirming children's dignity and, due to their particular vulnerabilities, the special need to respect and protect them. In the gospel narratives, we see Jesus modelling this. Jesus consistently acted to affirm the value of children and their unique strengths that others can learn from. He recognised the vulnerability of children and the duty of adults to protect them.

These fundamental implications of the gospel frame BWAA's approach to child rights and building a child safe environment in all spheres of influence.

A Human Rights Approach

BWAA acknowledges that a human rights approach to child protection nurtures the dignity of children; rejecting the notion that children are of intrinsically lower status than adults. Child abuse is a serious violation of children's rights and protecting children from all forms of abuse is a human rights imperative. BWAA affirms the principles set forth in *Setting the Standard: A Common Approach to Child Protection for International NGOs* derived from the CRC by an international consortium. These principles include:

- 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.
- Everyone has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children.
- INGOs have a duty of care to children with whom they work and with whom their representatives work.
- If agencies work through partners they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for the children in their partners' programmes.

Taking a Risk Management Approach

BWAA recognises that it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child exploitation and abuse. BWAA incorporates child protection strategies into risk management procedures.

Procedural Fairness

BWAA follows a fair and proper process when making decisions that affect a person's rights or interests and will work with implementing partner organisations to ensure they do the same.

Scope and purpose

BWAA is the major operating subsidiary of TAI, established in 2013 as a space for churches, denominations and agencies to come together to end poverty through community development work and advocacy with Christian Partners in Asia. BWAA also mobilises supporters in Australia via high quality education, advocacy and marketing resources. BWAA is focused as the primary 'brand' to engage with our Australian Baptist constituency. All representatives of BWAA are employed by Transform Aid International ("TAI").

This Policy applies to all BWAA representatives; BWAA activities and BWAA funded activities, whether in Australia or overseas:

- employees
- volunteers
- interns and work experience students
- board members
- contractors and consultants
- Implementing partner organisations
- project participants
- supporters and subsidiaries

Policy Objectives

The objective of this policy is to create and maintain protective environments for children in the delivery of BWAA activities or BWAA funded activities.

What does this policy look like in practice?

Recruitment and Engagement

BWAA has a robust recruitment, screening process to minimize the risk of a person who poses an unacceptable risk to children being employed by the organization. BWAA must attract the safest people who share BWAA's values and commitment to protect children. BWAA must ensure the Background Checking Policy and Procedures are followed when conducting checks to screen potential representatives.

Procedures include:

- Applicants will be requested to disclose whether they have been charged with child exploitation offences in Australia or overseas in the Job Application Form or Consultant Agreement.
- Behavioural interview questions about child protection are used to determine past actions, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, and values in regards to children and young people and working with them.
- Two verbal reference checks - including question relating to the applicant's general conduct and questions regarding any concerns about candidate's conduct when working or interacting with children and young people. One reference must be from the person's current or most recent employer
- Sign Child Protection Statement and Code of Conduct prior to commencement
- National Criminal History Check and Working With Children Check**
- Once engaged, complete the child protection induction module and attend Child Protection training session per the Child Safe Training Agenda

A statutory declaration (criminal declaration form) outlining efforts made to obtain a foreign police check, and disclosing any charges and spent convictions related to child protection, may be accepted in lieu.

** WWCC or equivalent will be undertaken as allowed by legislation.

These procedures must be evidenced by:

- Job Application Form
- Documented criminal record checks
- Documented verbal referee checks
- Interview plans incorporating behavioural-based interview questions that are specific to working with children
- Documented request for an applicant to disclose whether they have been charged with child exploitation offences and their response

BWAA Representatives are responsible for reporting a change in their circumstances to BWAA management or CSC, for example:

- involvement in criminal activity
- Criminal or civil court proceedings relating to child exploitation and abuse.

All employment contracts must contain provisions for disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal for any person who breaches the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.

Child Safe Code of Conduct

The Child Protection Code of Conduct outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to children. All BWAA representatives must sign the Policy

and Code of Conduct and agree to comply with the principles and standards they contain. A breach of the Code may result in disciplinary action including termination of employment.

Increasing Awareness of Child Protection Obligations Under the Policy

The Child Safe Committee will increase awareness of child protection among BWAA Representatives through ongoing education and training, technical advice, collaboration with all programs and departments, child protection program design and providing day to day guidance.

Training

All staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors will be trained so that they understand why it is necessary to protect children, their responsibilities in protecting children including mandatory reporting of concerns or allegations about child exploitation and abuse. Training as set out in the training agenda is mandatory.

The Child Safe committee sets and reviews the Child Safe training agenda to ensure training is ongoing and relevant. All BWAA representatives receive:

- Child Safe Training as part of orientation and induction
- Job specific training (where set out in the agenda)
- A yearly refresher (to be facilitated bi-yearly by an external organisation)

Use of Visual Images, Written Publications and Social Media

BWAA must portray children in a dignified and respectful manner and not as vulnerable or submissive at all times. Photographs, films of children and website publications must respect and be in the best interest of the child, and comply with the Code of Conduct.

Supporter Engagement in International Programs

BWAA recognises the need to implement specific guidelines to manage the child protection risks when allowing supporters to engage with international programs. BWAA proactively manages these risks by undertaking the following preventative measures:

Supporter Visits to International Programs

- TAI must facilitate all supporter visits
- TAI must facilitate a National Police History Check and Working With Children Check (WWCC)* for all Supporters on participating in field visits
- All supporters participating in field visits sign the TAI Child Safe Statement and TAI Child Safe Code of Conduct.

- TAI must conduct pre visit Child Safe training covering Child Safe Policy, Code of Conduct, Child Safe Reporting Process and practical examples of Child Safe while on the visit including taking and using photographs.
- TAI must advise the implementing partner if the supporter visit is cancelled due to supporter not providing a WWCC, or if a check contains information that would disqualify the supporter from visiting the program.

* WWCC check will be undertaken per legislation of each state and territory.

Supporter Program Communication

BWAA understands that sponsorship as a funding mechanism facilitates relationships between an adult supporter and a child in a development program across international borders. This form of funding can potentially increase the risk to children participating in the program.⁴ These risks will be mitigated by:

- Providing all supporters with a Supporter Welcome Booklet that clearly outlines BWAA child protection and behavioural guidelines.
- Screening all supporters' communication to ensure that no political, religious, or inappropriate comments which could cause offence or are unsuitable to the context are included.
- Concluding a relationship between a supporter and a child partner if a supporter has not followed CCCD Program Guidelines.

Risk Management

BWAA will undertake a child protection risk assessment on all BWAA activities and events that have contact with children. BWAA and/or implementing partners will undertake a child protection risk assessment on annual program plans and BWAA will review implementing partner policies for risk assessments on activities and events and provide support as required.

The assessment should identify risks, classify any high risk activities, and document steps being taken to reduce or remove these risks. Child Protection Risk Assessments should be undertaken at the program design and monitored and checked during the proposal assessment process and throughout the project cycle.

The Child Safe Committee will undertake a yearly organization wide Child Safe Risk Assessment on all activities that have contact with children on children's sensitive information.

⁴ Preventative measures outlined in the BWAA Child Safe Policy have been taken from the ACFID Guidance for the Development of a Child Protection Policy. Specific guidelines are outlined in the Supporter Welcome Booklet.

Reporting Child Exploitation and Abuse

All representatives, implementing partners and third parties must report any concerns they have for the safety or wellbeing of a child including child exploitation or abuse, the possession of child exploitation material, or policy noncompliance. The Child Safe Reporting Process (see attached) must be followed.

BWAA will treat all concerns raised seriously and ensure that all parties will be treated fairly. BWAA will meet country, state or territory specific legislative requirements. Any person who intentionally makes a false allegation or malicious allegation will face disciplinary action.

BWAA must immediately notify the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Child Protection Compliance Section of any concerns relating to the abuse or exploitation of children in DFAT funded BWAA/BWAA funded activities.

Communities involved in BWAA activities and BWAA funded activities must be informed on how to raise a concern about their safety or wellbeing or that of another child.

Measures for Breach of the Policy and Code of Conduct

The following measures can be applied for any BWAA representative who breaches the Child Protection Policy and/or Code of Conduct:

- Meeting to discuss breach and opportunity for person to provide their account/understanding of the situation
- Performance management
- Further education on the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct
- Formal warning and monitoring
- Transfer to other duties
- Suspension pending investigation
- Internal investigation
- Report to Police
- Termination of employment

These measures will apply alongside any criminal investigation where relevant.

Implementing Partners

Implementing Partners have their own Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct in place. BWAA will assess and support partners to socialise and implement their own policies using BWAA's and DFAT (when required) Policy and Code of Conduct as a minimum standard.

BWAA will not knowingly engage partners with any individual or organisation who poses an unacceptable risk to children or does not meet BWAA'S child protection compliance standards.

It is a requirement that any individuals or partner organisations engaged by BWAA report concerns, suspicions or allegations of child exploitation or abuse in BWAA or BWAA funded activities. Implementing partners must adhere to the Child Safe Reporting Process.

Responsibilities

Child Protection is everybody's responsibility as outlined in the Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct. Specific roles have responsibilities and accountabilities for child protection including Human Resources (HR), Child Safe Committee (CSC), Child Protection Officer (CPO), Board Members, Directors, and Managers. These roles are explained in the Child Safe Committee Terms of Reference, position descriptions and this policy.

The Child Safe Committee is responsible for;

- Responding to reports of child exploitation and abuse; and policy non compliance
- Conducting child protection risk assessments, audits and spot checks
- Monitoring internal and external compliance with the policy
- Providing child protection training
- Reviewing the policy

This policy will be available on the intranet.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner as required.

Definitions of Child Safe Policy

Abuse: Includes but is not limited to:-

- physical abuse—the use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning
- neglect—the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and well-being
- emotional abuse—refers to a parent or caregiver's inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child's self-esteem or social competence

- sexual abuse—the use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or significantly older child or adolescent. Sexually abusive behaviours can include fondling genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism and exposing the child to, or involving the child in, pornography.

Child: A person under the age of 18 years. This is the UN definition of a child.

Child Abuse Material: Material that depicts (expressly or implicitly) a child under 18 years of age as a victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse.

Child Exploitation or Abuse:

One or more of the following:

- committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child
- possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material
- committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming.

Child Exploitation Material: Material, irrespective of its form, which is classified as child abuse material or child pornography material.

Child Pornography: In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'child pornography' means 'any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.' For further information regarding child pornography offences, refer to the Criminal Code Act 1995.

Child Protection: An activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly arising from child exploitation and abuse.

Child Protection Code of Conduct: outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to children.

CSC: The Child Safe Committee is made up of one or more representatives from each functional team within BWAA. The Child Safe Committee is responsible for the development, implementation and promotion of the Policy and Code of Conduct and;

- Responding to reports of child exploitation and abuse; and policy non compliance
- Conducting child protection risk assessments, audits and spot checks
- Monitoring internal and external compliance with the policy
- Providing child protection training

- Reviewing the policy

Contact with Children: Working on an activity or in a position that involves or may involve contact with children, either under the position description or due to the nature of the work environment.

Criminal Record Check: A check of an individual's criminal history record. In Australia, national criminal record checks are available through state and territory police departments. They take around 20 working days. The type of employment should be specified as 'overseas employment.' Overseas, different checking procedures apply in each country and may take six weeks or longer. Individuals need to consent to a criminal record check and should be informed of the purpose for which the resulting police clearance certificate will be used, including sighting by DFAT.

Grooming: Generally refers to behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity. For example, an offender might build a relationship of trust with the child, and then seek to sexualise that relationship (for example by encouraging romantic feelings or exposing the child to sexual concepts through pornography).

Online grooming: The act of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient who the sender believes to be under 16 years of age, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender. For further details, refer to the Criminal Code Act 1995, Division 474 (telecommunications offences, subdivision C).

Physical injury: May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child including fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing, ill health to a child.

Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development, such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Emotional abuse: Persistent or emotional ill treatment of a child that adversely affects their development. May involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate, there only to meet the needs of another; or where inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. In addition it includes children who are regularly frightened, exploited or corrupted.

Sexual abuse: Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. This may also include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

TAI representatives:

- TAI employees
- TAI volunteers
- TAI interns and work experience students
- TAI Board members
- Individual Contractors and Consultants
- Implementing partner organisations
- Project participants
- Supporters of TAI and TAI'S subsidiaries

Unacceptable Risk: The portion of identified risk that cannot be tolerated, and that must be either eliminated or controlled. For people deemed an unacceptable risk, control mechanisms are not considered appropriate.

External References

This policy refers to

[Australian Government DFAT Child Protection Policy](#)

Australian Privacy Principles January 2014

[The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of November 1989.](#)

Setting the Standard: A common approach to child protection for International NGOs: [Setting the Standards: A Common Approach to Child Protection](#)

The Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief: [Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non Governmental Organisations \(NGOs\) in Disaster Relief](#)

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