



Child Safe Policy

Policy Statement

Transform Aid International's (TAI) 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. TAI's emergency response projects follow international codes to protect children at risk.¹

Policy Objectives

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

This policy is guided by the following principles:

Principle 1: Zero Tolerance of Child Exploitation and Abuse

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

Principle 2: Taking a Risk Management Approach

TAI recognises that it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child exploitation and abuse, however through safeguarding and child protection strategies TAI aims to identify, mitigate, manage and reduce the risks to children in its operations.

Principle 3: Sharing Responsibility for Keeping Children Safe

There is international recognition that adults who have a formal role in working with or supporting children are in positions of trust, power 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. To effectively manage risks to children, all TAI representatives and Consultants must show that they understand and agree to comply with the Policy, Code of Conduct and Child Safe and SEAH Allegation Management Procedure prior to and during their employment or engagement.

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



This Policy recognises TAI'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 TAI representatives, TAI activities and TAI funded activities.

Principle 4: Procedural Fairness

TAI follows a fair and proper process when making decisions that affect a person's rights or interests and works with implementing Partners [with the expectation/on the basis] that they do the same. The principles of procedural fairness are set out in the Child Safe and SEAH Allegation Management Procedure.

Principle 5: A Human Rights Approach

TAI 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. TAI will consider the best interests of the child in all operations concerning children.

TAI affirms the principles set forth in *Setting the Standard: A Common Approach to Child Protection for International NGOs* derived from the Convention on the Rights of the Child by an international consortium of NGOs². These principles include:

- All children have equal and specific 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 representative's work.
- If agencies work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet minimum standards of protection for the children in their partners' programmes.³

Principle 6: Child Safeguarding and Theology of Development

Both the Christian scriptures and TAI's Theology of Development frame TAI's Child Safe strategy. TAI understands development as the process by which people are able to realise right relationships with God, one another and the earth. This constitutes life in all its fullness. Further, all people, including children, have been created in God's image and are aware of God's presence; knowing themselves to be loved and valued by him. Practically, 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 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 fullness of life. Wherever this occurs, Christians are called to work toward the restoration of the patterns of right relationships that God intends, affirming children's value and dignity and, due to their particular vulnerabilities, the special need to respect and protect them. In the gospel narratives, we see Jesus modelling and affirming this.

² A steering group comprising the following members: Christian Aid, NSPCC, Save the Children, People in Aid, Every Child and TEARFund.

³ *Setting the Standards: A Common Approach to Child Protection for International NGOs*, 2003



These fundamental implications of the gospel frame TAI’s approach to child rights and building a Child Safe environment in all spheres of influence.

Scope

This Policy applies to all TAI representatives and operations, whether in Australia or overseas.

Aspects of this policy apply additionally to third parties including: implementing Partners, project participants, supporters of TAI and its subsidiaries, and participants in events or trips facilitated by TAI or its subsidiaries. Where this is the case, these parties are specified in the relevant section below.

What does this policy look like in practice?

TAI takes a risk management approach to safeguard and protect children, and therefore has implemented minimum child safeguarding processes across the organisation regardless of whether operations have contact with children or not.

If there will be potential contact with children, impact on children or working with children, then strategies to mitigate and manage risk to children are developed.

TAI has implemented the following practice to mitigate, manage and reduce risk to children in its operations: -

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Recruitment and Engagement

TAI has a robust recruitment, screening process to minimise the risk of a person who poses an unacceptable risk to children being employed by the organisation. TAI must attract safe people who share TAI’s values and commitment to protect children. TAI 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 regard 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;
- Signed Safeguarding Code of Conduct prior to commencement;
- National Criminal History Check for each country in which the applicant has lived for 12 months or longer over the last 5 years, and for the individual's countries of citizenship*;
- Working with Children Check (upon recruitment and renewed in line with legislative requirements) **
- Once engaged, completion of Safeguarding training suite.

*A statutory declaration (criminal declaration form) where a foreign police check is not available 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.

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

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

The appropriate response to a change in circumstances will be considered by TAI on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate person/s, e.g., as per the Crisis Management Policy, Disciplinary Policy and related procedures.

All employment contracts contain provisions for disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal for any person who breaches the Child Safe Policy or Safeguarding Code of Conduct. Response measures



for breach of this Policy and the Safeguarding Code of Conduct are detailed in the TAI Disciplinary Policy.

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

The Safeguarding Code of Conduct outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to children and vulnerable adults. All TAI representatives must review the Policy and sign the Safeguarding Code of Conduct, agreeing to comply with the principles and standards they contain. A breach of the Code may result in disciplinary action including termination of employment or engagement.

Increasing Awareness of Child Safeguarding Obligations Under the Policy

The Safeguarding Committee will increase awareness of child protection among TAI 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 TAI employees will be trained on this policy 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 Safeguarding Committee sets and reviews the Child Safe training agenda to ensure training is ongoing and relevant. All TAI employees receive;

- Child Safe Training as part of orientation and induction
- Job specific training
- A yearly refresher (to be provided biennially by an external organisation)

Use of Visual Images, Written Publications and Social Media

TAI must always portray children in a dignified and respectful manner and not as vulnerable or submissive. 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.

Refer to the Informed Consent and Communication Resources Policy for TAI's policy on obtaining consent for communication resources featuring children, including photographs, films, and direct quotes.

Visits to International Projects

TAI recognises the need to implement specific guidelines to manage the child safeguarding risks when allowing people to engage with international programs through participation in 'Supporter Trips' and/or visits to TAI projects. TAI proactively manages these risks by undertaking the following preventative measures:

- TAI must facilitate all TAI initiated Supporter Trips and/or visits to TAI projects.
- TAI must facilitate a National Police History Check for all people participating in Supporter Trips and/or visits to TAI projects
- All people participating in Supporter Trips and/or visits to TAI projects sign the TAI Safeguarding Code of Conduct.



- TAI must conduct pre-visit Child Safe training covering Child Safe Policy, Safeguarding Code of Conduct, Child Safe and SEAH Allegation Management Procedure and practical examples of Child Safe while on the visit including taking and using photographs.
- TAI must advise the implementing partner if the Supporter Trip and/or visit to TAI projects is cancelled due to a person not providing a National Police History Check, or if a check contains information that would disqualify the person from visiting the program.
- TAI will not intentionally facilitate a direct introduction between Supporter/Child Partner during a Supporter Trip and/or visit to TAI project/s.

Supporter Program Communication

TAI 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:

- Not facilitating contact outside letter writing. This applies during sponsorship and thereafter, TAI strongly discourages communication between an existing or former project participant and supporter outside of the letter writing program.
- 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 CYCC Program Guidelines.

Risk Assessment

The Safeguarding Committee will undertake an annual Safeguarding Self-Audit. The audit will identify the activities that have potential contact with children, assess the risk and review staff awareness regarding safeguarding policies and matters.

TAI assesses the safeguarding risk presented by its partnerships through regular due diligence and capacity assessment requirements, as detailed in the TAI Partnership Framework.

TAI requires implementing Partners to conduct a safeguarding risk assessment during project design, and then to provide an updated assessment on an annual basis, in line with the annual project planing cycle. These assessment are reviewed by Programs staff for inclusion of consideration of risks to children. TAI staff and advisory support are available to Partners to support in the development, monitoring and review of safeguarding risk assessments.

Reporting Child Exploitation and Abuse

All TAI representatives, implementing Partners and third parties must report any concerns they have for the safety or wellbeing of a child including child exploitation and abuse allegations, the possession of child exploitation material, and Safeguarding Code of Conduct or policy non-compliance. The Child Safe and SEAH Allegation Management Procedure must be followed.

⁴ Preventative measures outlined in the TAI 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.



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

TAI must immediately notify the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Conduct and Ethics Unit (via childwelfare@dfat.gov.au) of any concerns relating to the abuse or exploitation of children in DFAT-funded activities, including suspected or alleged instances of child abuse. TAI may notify DFAT of any concerns relating to the abuse or exploitation of children in activities that are not funded by DFAT.

Communities involved in TAI activities and TAI funded activities must be informed on how to raise a concern through TAI or the implementing Partner about their safety or wellbeing of a child.

Measures for Breach of the Policy and Safeguarding Code of Conduct

Any TAI representative who breaches this Policy and/or Safeguarding Code of Conduct will be managed according to the Disciplinary Policy. In addition, to measures set out in the Disciplinary Policy, TAI will make reports to DFAT and relevant local authorities where it is required to or chooses to do so. TAI's Disciplinary Policy applies alongside any criminal investigation that may apply.

Implementing Partners

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

TAI will not knowingly engage Partners with any individual or organisation who poses an unacceptable risk to children or does not meet TAI's child safeguarding compliance standards. Implementing Partners are required to ensure adequate quality standards for safeguarding are met by any boundary partners, or other relevant participating entities, engaged through funded delivery of TAI programs.

It is a requirement that any individuals or partner organisations engaged by TAI report concerns, suspicions or allegations of child exploitation or abuse in TAI or TAI funded activities to TAI. The TAI Child Safe and SEAH Allegation Management Procedure details how TAI monitors and supports partner-led response and investigation to allegations of child safeguarding incidents.

Responsibilities

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

The Safeguarding Committee is responsible for;

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



This policy will be available on TAI's Policies and Procedures SharePoint. intranet.

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

Governance

TAI reports numbers of Safeguarding incidents to its Board on a regular basis to allow Board oversight of Safeguarding. The details are not provided to protect children and vulnerable individuals.

Definitions

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, and 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: Program activities that prevent and respond to the denial of children’s protection rights (e.g. community based child protection systems strengthening, project activities that prevent child trafficking)

Safeguarding Code of Conduct: outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to children and other vulnerable individuals.

Child Safeguarding: Preventative measures we put in place to ensure that our organisation, partner organisations and project activities do not cause harm to children (e.g. policies and procedures put in place to ensure as an organisation we are ‘child safe’)

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

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

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.⁵

Supporter Trip: A TAI initiated and organised visit to one or more TAI projects

TAI Representatives: TAI activities and TAI funded activities, including TAI subsidiaries, whether in Australia or overseas:

- TAI employees
- TAI volunteers
- TAI interns and work experience students
- TAI Board members

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.

Related Policies and Procedures

This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding Committee Terms of Reference
- Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- TAI Code of Conduct
- Child Safe and SEAH Allegation Management Procedure
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy
- Informed Consent and Communication Resources Policy
- Child Safe Statement
- Background Checking Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Child [Partner] Death Procedure
- Training Agenda
- TAI Consultant Service Agreement
- Policy Development Policy
- Policy Development Procedure

³ When defining abuse, physical, neglect, emotional and sexual abuses are the common categories used to explain the different forms of abuse. The definitions outlined above apply only as guide when considered for global application. TAI has adopted the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) - UK (NSPCC) – <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect>



External References

This policy draws from domestic and international standards and guidelines, including:

[ACFID Code of Conduct](#)

[Australian Government DFAT Child Protection Policy](#)

Australian Privacy Principles January 2014

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child> Setting the Standard: A common approach to child protection for International NGOs: [Setting the Standards: A Common Approach to Child Protection](#)

CPHA Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action:
https://alliancecpa.org/en/CPMS_home

External Conduct Standards

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/acnc-external-conduct-standards>



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24/4/2015	2	Reordering of information, rewriting to make language more succinct, cross checking against DFAT and other industry leaders to ensure policy exceeds standards required.	Director of Business and Board of Directors
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18/07/2019	5	Minor update by adding ACNC External Conduct Standards as an External Reference	Policy QA Coordinator
01/11/2019	6	Alignment with PSEAH Policy and Procedures	Policy QA Coordinator
09/05/2022	7	Reviewed and minor updates made to align with current practice.	Safeguarding Committee

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: If this Policy is revised, please ensure that the Supporter Trip Booklet titled "Travelling with TAI" is updated to align.