

Baptist World Aid Australia's Child Safe Policy



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1 Purpose

To create a safe environment for children who participate in and benefit from Baptist World Aid Australia's (BWAA) and its implementing partners' programs.

2 Scope

This Policy applies to all BWAA activities and BWAA funded activities, whether in Australia or overseas. As such it applies to all BWAA representatives (full-time, part-time and casual employees, Board members, volunteers, contractors and consultants - irrespective of which country the job is situated in), implementing partner organisations, project participants and BWAA supporters. As part of BWAA's organisational continuous improvement process this policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

3 The Centrality of Child Protection to BWAA

Children and young people make up a third of the world's population, but being present in large numbers does not guarantee their safety. 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 abuse and exploitation. BWAA affirms the principles proclaimed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC has a vision of ending all forms of violence against children. Article 19 states:

"State Parties shall... protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse..." (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 19)

Furthermore, BWAA acknowledges that each year natural and man-made disasters affect an estimated 231 million people worldwide. During an emergency the rights, safety and well-being of girl children are especially at risk of being seriously compromised. Effective protection of disaster affected populations is of central concern to BWAA. Therefore emergency response projects follow international codes to protect children at risk¹.

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable and 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. As well as these generalised forms of abuse, children are in danger of specific forms of abuse from adults or other children, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse, and neglect. This Policy aims to address and prevent these specific forms of abuse against children who are in contact with BWAA representatives.

3.1 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

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

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.

3.2 Guiding Principles Underpinning BWAA's Commitment to Child Protection

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, and a legitimate receptacle for adult rage. 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 consortium². 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.³

4 Implementation of This Policy: Responsibilities of BWAA and Implementing Partners

BWAA is committed to contributing to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights. Therefore, it is paramount that the responsibilities of BWAA representatives are clear.

It is the responsibility of the Board and Chief Executive Officer – through departmental Directors – to ensure that all BWAA representatives in their area of responsibility are aware of, sign onto and agree (where required) to abide by Policy and applicable procedures. The Child Protection Officer and Child Safe Committee support the implementation of this Policy.⁴

BWAA representatives will:

- Sign onto and agree to abide by the BWAA Child Safe Policy.
- Sign onto the BWAA Child Safe Code of Conduct.

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

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

⁴ Implementing partners' representatives agree to abide by their organisations' Child Protection Policy and procedures. Only in special circumstances will BWAA implementing partners sign onto BWAA's Child Safe Code of Conduct.

- Respond to concerns or allegations of child abuse or exploitation in accordance with BWAA Policy and procedures.
- Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns or allegations.

Implementing partners will:

- Develop a Child Protection Policy that is based on a considered risk assessment, compliant with BWAA standards, and includes a Child Safe Code of Conduct.
- Respond to concerns or allegations of abuse in accordance with their organisation's Child Protection Policy.
- Follow BWAA's complaints handling procedure when reporting any concerns or allegations of child abuse or exploitation. This is a mandatory requirement and failure to do so may result in cessation of the partnership.

4.1 Prevention

No policy can ensure that children participating in development programs will not be abused. Therefore it is crucial that preventative measures are in place such as ensuring that risk management processes, behavioural guidelines, training and education, and child safe recruitment practices are developed and implemented.

4.1.1 Duty of Care

BWAA takes its duty of care very seriously and will comply with all Child Protection Policy and procedures.

4.1.2 Risk Management

BWAA recognises there are potential risks to children in programs funded by BWAA, and therefore manages these risks by undertaking the following preventative measures:

- Identify activities that will be 'working with children' and will support implementing partners to develop a Child Protection Policy; as a minimum, implementing partners will be expected to develop a child protection Code of Conduct.
- Proactively assessing and managing risks to children in programs we support, by reviewing the project design during the proposal assessment process and conducting regular checks throughout the project cycle.
- Proactively assessing and managing risks to children in internal systems and procedures.
- Implementing new preventative measures when gaps are identified.

4.1.3 Child Safe Code of Conduct

In order to protect children it is vital that BWAA have a clear Child Safe Code of Conduct. BWAA staff, Board members, volunteers, contractors and consultants must sign onto and agree to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

4.1.4 Use of Visual Images and Written Publications

In Australia

BWAA understands and is committed to portraying children in a positive manner in all promotional materials. BWAA will at all times 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 BWAA Use of Visual Images and Social Media Policy.

Implementing Partners

Implementing partners are required to portray children in a respectful, appropriate and consensual way. Photographs, films of children and website publications must respect and be in the best interest of the child and conform with organisational policy and procedures.

4.1.5 Training

In Australia

All staff, Board members, volunteers and contractors will be trained so that they understand why it is necessary to protect children. As a part of the induction process all staff⁵ will be informed of BWAA Child Safe Policy and procedures. Job-specific child protection training is available and can be arranged by the relevant departmental Director. The Child Protection Officer and Child Safe Committee are to ensure that training for all staff is ongoing and relevant.

Implementing Partners

To ensure that children are protected, and staff and volunteers understand the importance of putting a child safe protection mechanism into place, it is required that implementing partners conduct regular training with staff and volunteers.

4.1.6 Recruitment

In Australia

BWAA follows strict guidelines in the recruiting of BWAA representatives, including behavioural interviewing questions, pre-interview screening and written and verbal reference checks, as well as a National Police check. These are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that they accurately reflect current child safe recruitment practices. BWAA recruitment guidelines are outlined in the Recruitment Policy and procedures.

Implementing Partners

BWAA is committed to working with its implementing partners to strengthen their recruitment processes to ensure that they adhere to the labour and employment codes of each country, and to their Child Safe Policy and procedures, including appropriate screening and recruitment checks.

4.1.7 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

- Facilitating all supporter visits and ensuring that National Police checks are undertaken.
- Conducting briefing meetings to provide supporters with an overview of the BWAA Child Safe Policy.
- Ensuring that all supporters participating in field visits sign onto the BWAA Child Safe Policy.
- Ensuring that all supporters participating in field visits sign onto the BWAA Supporter Child Safe Code of Conduct.

⁵ Staff in this instance includes; full and part-time employees, board members and volunteers

- Advising the implementing partner in the event the supporter visit is cancelled due to supporter not providing a National Police check, or if a check contains information that would disqualify the supporter from visiting the program.

SAO 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.⁶ These risks will be mitigated by:

- Providing all supporters with a welcome pack 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 SAO Program Guidelines.

4.2 Response: Concerns/Incidents/Allegations Handling

The development, implementation and monitoring of a complaints handling system is vital in protecting children and ensuring that their best interests are central to the decision making process regarding concerns or allegations of abuse or exploitation. It is essential that BWAA has clear and transparent procedures in place to ensure that project participants, implementing partners, staff and other stakeholders can report concerns or allegations of child abuse and/or inappropriate behaviour.

In Australia

Any report or concerns regarding the abuse or exploitation of a child will be investigated immediately according to the complaints handling mechanism outlined in the BWAA Child Safe Concerns/Incidents /Allegations Handling procedure.

Implementing Partners

It is a requirement that all implementing partners report concerns, suspicions and allegations to BWAA that relate to any person associated with BWAA supported activities. Implementing partners must adhere to the BWAA Child Safe Concerns/Incidents/Allegations Handling procedure.

4.3 Support

In Australia

Child abuse is a difficult and emotional subject for the child victim and for the staff dealing with the issue. BWAA will support staff who disclose abuse, refer concerns or are involved when an incident has happened through our Employee Assistance Program.

Implementing Partners

BWAA encourages implementing partners to develop and implement support systems to ensure that staff who have disclosed abuse, referred concerns or are involved when an incident occurred are referred to an organisation that can offer the required counselling or treatment. Where possible, BWAA will provide support and guidance through the support process.

⁶ 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 SAO Program Guidelines document.

5 Related Documents

5.1 Internal documents

- Field Visit Procedure: [Field Visit Procedure](#)
- Child Safe Code of Conduct: [Child Safe Code of Conduct](#)
- Child Safe Complaints Handling Procedure: [Child Safe Complaints Handling Procedure](#)
- Guidelines for Writing a Letter: [SAO Children Letter Writing Guide](#)
- Marketing Consultancy Pack: [Guidelines for Consultants](#)
- Programs Consultancy Pack: [Guidelines for Consultants](#)
- Recruitment Policy
- SAO Child Sponsorship - A Sponsors Guide: [A Sponsors Guide](#)
- Supporter Child Safe Code of Conduct: [Supporter Code of Conduct](#)
- Use of Visual Images and Social Media Policy

5.2 External Documentation

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

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](#)

6 Definitions

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

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.⁷

⁷ 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. BWAA has adopted the NSPCC – EveryChild Child Protection Policy, Procedure and Guidance definitions of abuse.