



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Oceania Australia Foundation Limited (OAF) understands child protection as preventing and responding to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect of children. The aim of this document is to implement an effective child protection policy to apply to all of OAF's activities and to all volunteers, personnel, partners and contractors.

OAF's approach to child protection

OAF learns through working with local communities, as each community throughout the vast region of the Pacific is different. Unique cultural factors influence the establishment of formal or informal child protection mechanisms or arrangements that help keep children safe. OAF learns from and works with local communities to strengthen existing community based child protection mechanisms.

To do this, OAF:

- works closely with partner communities for extended periods of time to learn how children are protected from risk and harm;
- identifies existing groups (both those originating from within the community and those initiated by outside groups) to understand their approach to protecting children;
- works with communities to develop community understanding;
- reinforce values and attitudes that respect children's rights to care and protection while respectfully opposing attitudes and practices that are detrimental to the rights of children.

Across all of its activities, OAF:

- always endeavors to work in and recognise the best interests of the child;
- actively engages with children and youth, especially through grassroots leadership programmes, scholarship and educational opportunities and sport to involve them as much as possible (and where appropriate) as participants;
- works in a culturally sensitive way;
- works to minimise the potential risks to children through complying with its child protection policy, sharing responsibility for child protection with supporting partner organisations and comprehensive risk assessments and strategies to minimise risks to children;
- does not assume western child protection models will necessarily work in Pacific Island countries, but maintains a zero tolerance of child exploitation, child sex tourism and child abuse;
- will refer cases of alleged abuse to appropriate authorities where it becomes aware;
- ensures that it keeps abreast of and complies with all changes to child protection requirements including the Child Protection Policy (DFAT) <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/child-protection-policy.pdf>;
- encourages all personnel to identify and report exploitation and abuse; and

- when using children's images in its marketing material or otherwise, OAF will at all times portray children in a respectful and appropriate way.

OAF Screening and Code of Conduct

OAF maintains appropriate screening processes for all volunteers, personnel, contractors and partners who are in contact with children. These screening measures include verbal referee checks and working with children checks (if appropriate).

As part of the engagement process, all volunteers, personnel, contractors and partners are required to read and sign the OAF Child Protection Code of Conduct (see **Attachment 1**).

Within the roles and responsibilities set out in MOU's with its partners, OAF will ensure mutual responsibility for implementing child protection measures and reporting allegations.

If:

- this policy is breached by any party or any party refuses to agree to comply with this policy; or
- the OAF screening processes identifies that any party engaged with or working for OAF has convictions for any child abuse of any kind (including, but not limited to, child sex tourism); or
- allegations of abuse are made against a party.

OAF will:

- refer any allegations to appropriate authorities (where applicable); and/or
- ensure that any such personnel will not be engaged to or continue to work for or be engaged with OAF if in the view of the Board of OAF that particular person poses an unacceptable risk to children; and/or
- ensure that any such personnel will not work for or be engaged with OAF if any personnel otherwise refuse to comply with this policy.

Incident reporting

Any incidents will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out in **Attachment 2**.

This policy is to be reviewed by the Board of OAF at least every 5 years.

March 2016

Attachment 1

OAF Child Protection Code of Conduct

I, _____ [insert name], acknowledge that I have read and understand OAF's Child Protection Policy, dated March 2016, and agree that in the course of my association with OAF, I must:

- > treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
- > not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- > not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts;
- > wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
- > not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- > not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible;
- > use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- > not use physical punishment on children;
- > not hire children for 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;
- > comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;
- > immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures; and
- > immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with OAF that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, I must:

- > assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child;
- > obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used;
- > ensure 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 images are honest representations of the context and the facts; and
- > ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

I understand that the onus is on me, as a person associated with OAF, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse.

Signed:

Date:

Attachment 2

Incident Reporting Procedure

Where an incident arises relating to a child the following procedure is to be adhered to:

1. As appropriate, seek medical attention for the child and inform the child's parent/guardian.

2. As appropriate, request that accused person/s leave the immediate area.

3. Immediately and confidentially inform the most senior OAF or partner organisation member on-site (or otherwise appropriate OAF or partner organisation member).

4. Ask the child whether they would like a parent/guardian or a support person to be present. Ensure child is attended to and supervised by relevant person.

5. Confidentially complete the OAF Incident Report Form (**attached**) detailing the incident as much as possible.

6. Email the OAF Incident Report Form to OAF (Helen McMurray) and contact OAF to ensure the Form has been received in a timely manner.

7. OAF shall determine the next course of action, which may include:

- contacting local child support services ;
- contacting the police;
- providing support to impacted staff and others;
- advising DFAT of the allegations;
- ultimate dismissal of the offending person/s.

