

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. PURPOSE

This policy provides a framework for protecting children from exploitation and abuse of all kinds in ALWS supported programs and within ALWS itself.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all ALWS employees, volunteers, study tour participants, members of congregational tours, board members, interns, contractors and consultants (referred to as 'personnel'). This policy also applies to ALWS implementing partners (referred to as 'Partners') and sub-contractors.

3. RATIONALE

Children throughout the world living in any socio-economic context are at risk of child abuse and exploitation. However, recorded data illustrates that children living in poverty are at the greatest risk of a wide range of forms of child abuse and exploitation. Forty million children below the age of 15 suffer from abuse and neglect and require social assistance and health care; an estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked every year; over one million children enter the commercial child sex trade annually; 250 million children are involved in child labour, more than 180 million are working in hazardous situation or conditions; one in seven girls will experience some form of sexual abuse in their childhood¹ and children with disabilities are 1.7 times more likely to suffer from violence than their non-disabled peers².

Added to this is the fact that children in emergency situations are especially susceptible to abuse and exploitation. In an emergency or crisis situation, children are vulnerable when they become part of a displaced or traumatised population. Other factors that increase a child's vulnerability to abuse and exploitation include disability, or being orphaned, displaced, homeless or abandoned.

Exploitation and abuse adversely affects a child's development and well-being. Children who are exploited and abused have a greater likelihood of long term consequences such as mental health issues, reduced educational outcomes, drug and alcohol abuse and increased likelihood of coming into contact with the law.

While most child abuse occurs within families and communities, children also experience abuse and exploitation in organisations which are mandated to provide them with support and services. Therefore, Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS) is committed to following Christ's example to care for children:

"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. Mark 10:14-16.

¹ Guidelines for the Development of a Child Protection Policy, ACFID Code of Conduct, July 2008

² UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006

4. CONVENTIONS AND OBLIGATIONS

ALWS is dedicated to promoting children's basic rights and ensuring that their welfare and physical security is recognised, safeguarded and protected in accordance with national and international standards. ALWS implements its work in a way that is consistent with the Child Protection Policy and Procedures of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA), the DFAT Child Protection Policy the ACFID Code of Conduct.

Child Protection Policy and Procedures of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA)	This policy aims to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all children who engage with the Lutheran Church of Australia
https://www.lca.org.au/services-resources-training/policies/	
DFAT Child Protection Policy (and guidance documents)	DFAT's Child Protection Policy provides a framework for protecting children from exploitation and abuse in the delivery of Australia's overseas aid program. The policy applies to all DFAT staff, including those based overseas, volunteers and to all contractors, civil society organisations, individual contractors and Australian Volunteers for International Development core partners funded by DFAT.
https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/child-protection-policy.aspx	
ACFID Code of Conduct	The ACFID Code of Conduct is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing transparency and accountability of signatory organisations. Child Safeguarding is a key component of the ACFID Code.
https://acfid.asn.au/content/commitment-14-we-advance-safeguarding-children	
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In 1989, world leaders decided that children needed a special convention just for them because people under 18 years old often need special care and protection that adults do not.
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx	

5. DEFINITIONS

ALWS regards **children** as those who are under the age of 18, in accordance with the DFAT Child Protection Policy, LCA Child Protection Policy and the United Nations Convention of Rights of the Child.

Abuse occurs when adults or other children hurt children either physically or in some other way. Abuse comes in many forms:

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. It may include a repeated rejection or belittling of a child, or the making of threats, which has the intent to scare and frighten. It can also result from excessive demands that place expectations on a child beyond their capacity, or by witnessing forms of violence, including domestic violence.

Neglect is 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. In a development or emergency context, the risk of this form of abuse can also be evident when someone uses their position to withhold assistance in order to gain favours or advantage.

Physical abuse refers to the use of physical force against a child that results in harm.

Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. This form of abuse may be intentional, the indirect consequence of physical punishment or aggression, or arise from neglect where the child is exposed to physically dangerous and life-threatening situations.

Sexual abuse occurs if a child is pressured or forced to take part in any kind of sexual activity, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. It is 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.

Exploitation refers to one or more of the following:

- Committing or coercing another person to commit acts of abuse against a child
- Possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material (material that explicitly or implicitly depicts a child as a victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse or material that represents a child who is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in a sexual pose or activity, or is in the presence of a person who is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or activity)
- Committing or coercing another person to commit an act of grooming (behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity), including online grooming.
- Child labour - work that children should not be doing because they are too young to work, or because it is dangerous or otherwise unsuitable for them.

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. This includes indirect contact with children in the community.

Working with children: Being engaged in an activity with a child where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and contact is not incidental to the activity.

Volunteer refers to unpaid community members who participate in ALWS activities for an extended or repeated period of time.

Casual Helper refers to unpaid community members who assist in ALWS activities in a capacity that:

- Is for a short period of time (a day or less)
- Is in an environment that is supervised by ALWS staff and, if at a hosting organisation, also by the staff of the hosting organisation.
- If the activity involves contact with children, the helper is within sight or hearing of other adults at all times.

6. GOAL

To promote the safety and wellbeing of all children accessing programs carried out or supported by ALWS to minimise the risk of abuse, exploitation and harm of children.

7. OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

The objectives reflect ALWS' practical approach to meeting this goal through and with its partners in overseas projects as well as in its operations within Australia. The objectives, followed by how they will be implemented, are:

7.1 To ensure that ALWS will not permit a person to have contact with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety and wellbeing.

- By promoting our child safe commitment on our website, in other promotional material and in all job advertisements.
- By assessing the level of risk for all positions. Positions working directly with children will require the highest level of screening and the applicant must possess relevant qualifications and experience in working with children.
- By requiring staff to provide proof of identity and relevant qualifications at the point of recruitment.
- By recruitment processes for all staff, contractors, board members and volunteers in contact with children that include requests for disclosure whether they have been charged with child abuse or exploitation offences, verbal referee checks and behavioural-based interview questions for candidates that apply for positions that involve working with children.
- With criminal record checks before engagement in a position with contact with children for any personnel of ALWS. In cases when a criminal record check is not possible, a statutory declaration will be used instead. Checks will be conducted for each country in which the individual has lived for 12 months or longer over the last 5 years, and for the individual's countries of citizenship.
- By induction processes for all personnel that includes signing a Code of Conduct that addresses child safeguarding and by not engaging personnel if they refuse to sign it. By induction processes for ALWS casual helpers that include signing the ALWS Casual Helper Code of Conduct and explanation of how to report child-related concerns.
- By all positions being subject to a probationary period.
- By provision in employment contracts for suspension or transfer to other duties of any employee who is under investigation regarding child abuse, exploitation, or policy or code of conduct non-compliance.
- By a provision in all employment contracts that the organisation has the right to dismiss, suspend or transfer the employee to other duties if they breach the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct or fail to disclose a prior conviction or dismissal on child safeguarding-related matters.

7.2 To provide a clear guide of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when working with children for ALWS personnel

- By ensuring all personnel understand and sign the ALWS Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (either as a stand-alone document, or within the ALWS Code of Conduct) at the point of recruitment and prior to contact with children.
- By ensuring the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct aligns with the DFAT Child Protection Policy.

- By adding to or revising the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct in response to changes in ALWS' activities, context, and incidents that ALWS encounters. Staff input and engagement will be sought for these additions and revisions to promote ownership and of and commitment to the Code.
- By using child friendly approaches to communicating our Code of Conduct and reporting processes when working with children in Australia and overseas.

7.3 To educate and train personnel and communicate the policy to all stakeholders

- By inducting staff and board members on the Child Safeguarding Policy and related documents within two weeks of them commencing.
- By communicating and promoting the ALWS Child Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and Reporting Procedure on the ALWS website and in public communications.
- By providing training to staff within a year of them commencing and refresher training at least every three years. This training may be internal or external and vary depending on the risk profile of their role
- By providing volunteers who engage in admin/office activities with induction to the ALWS Child Safeguarding Policy and Reporting Procedure, signing of the ALWS Code of Conduct, and following the recruitment processes listed in 7.1
- By ensuring that any volunteers or contractors who travel to communities that are not their own as part of ALWS activities will be briefed on the ALWS Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct and undergo recruitment processes listed in 7.1
- By ALWS board members undertaking training related to Child Safeguarding at least every five years.
- By the ALWS Programs Team working with implementing partners to build capacity in Child Safeguarding and to meet the requirements outlined for partners in this policy.

7.4 To work with implementing partners to ensure child safe environments

- By including clauses on Child Safeguarding in all partnership agreements and contracts.
- By ensuring ALWS has knowledge of their partners' Child Safeguarding capacity and practices through the assessment tools for partners and questionnaires and checklists for emergency responses.
- By working with long term implementing partners to meet the same standards for Child Safeguarding as outlined in the DFAT Child Protection Policy. This will involve regular use of the Child Safeguarding Partner Assessment Tool to benchmark Child Safeguarding practices and support improvement.
- By requiring short term implementing partners (such as for emergency response) to, at a minimum, have a Child Safeguarding or Child Protection Policy, and a Code of Conduct with child safe inclusions.
- By requiring and supporting all implementing partners to conduct a Child Safeguarding Risk assessment of at least the activities that ALWS is supporting. These risk assessments will be monitored by ALWS and the partner throughout the life cycle of the project.
- By supporting implementing partners to access Child Safeguarding training and technical support to improve their Child Safeguarding practices.
- By working with networks such as Lutheran World Service and ACT Alliance to promote Child Safeguarding.

7.5 To utilise a risk management approach to Child Safeguarding

- By undertaking risk assessments which identifies risks to children and documents steps being taken to reduce or remove these risks for all activities which involve children for:

- Overseas programs (this risk assessment will be undertaken by the implementing partner with support and oversight of the ALWS Program Officer)
 - Activities based in Australia which involve children will be identified and assessed for risk to children.
- By these overseas and in-Australia risk assessments being logged in a child safeguarding risk assessment register.
- By the inclusion of risks to child protection being included in the Program Effectiveness Framework Risk Matrix and the ALWS organisational risk matrix, both completed at least annually.

7.6 To support child friendly programs

- By providing feedback to, and engaging in, discussion with partners to ensure that:
 1. The child who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right and opportunity to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child.
 2. In actions concerning children, the best interests of the child or children shall be a primary consideration.
 3. The responsibilities, rights and duties of parents and guardians to provide for the upbringing and development of their children are respected.
- By ensuring that in child focused projects, indicators and data are disaggregated by age and gender.

7.7 To ensure that protection and support to children does not discriminate

- By recognising, in program design and implementation, the personal dignity and rights of children towards whom is owed a special responsibility and duty of care, respect, protection and assistance, regardless of their gender, race, colour, language, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, political or other beliefs, family background, economic status, physical or mental health, criminal background, or opinions, or those of their family members.

7.8 To incorporate the voices of children in shaping the development programs that affect them and support child participation in activities that target children

- By encouraging and supporting implementing partners to provide opportunities for children to seek, receive and impart information and ideas and to involve children in the identification, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the program cycle. This will include efforts to ensure inclusion of children with disabilities.
- By supporting partners to increase child participation in child focused activities with guidance from the resources provided in the Annexes of this policy (Child Fund Child Youth Participation Manual and Chapter 12 of the OXFAM Child Safeguarding Toolkit).
- By supporting partners to develop Codes of Conduct and reporting processes that are accessible to children.

7.9 To ensure that the capture and use of children's images and stories is done in a respectful and appropriate way

- By ensuring ALWS and partner staff ensure depictions of children are respectful, dignified, truthful, culturally appropriate and do not reveal identifying information by following the processes found in the ALWS Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct and ALWS Code of Conduct.

- By only collecting stories and photos with the consent of children and their parents/guardians.
- By briefing any photographers or journalists on ALWS' Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct and having them sign the Code of Conduct before having any contact with communities and/or children.
- By ensuring all images stored in the ALWS image library that include children are checked by the Child Safeguarding Focal Point to ensure they meet ALWS' standards regarding permission, privacy and dignity.
- By using the Communications Compliance Checklist to ensure any images or stories of children published meet ALWS' standards regarding permission, privacy and dignity.

7.10 A commitment to immediately report any concerns or allegations of child exploitation or abuse or non-compliance with the Child Safeguarding

Policy

- By ensuring staff, volunteers and board members of ALWS and partner organisations are aware of and have access to the ALWS Child Safeguarding Reporting Procedure.
- By supporting implementing partners to have their own robust reporting procedures, that include notifying ALWS of any cases related to ALWS supported activities.
- By immediately notifying DFAT's Child Protection Compliance Section if any personnel involved in a DFAT funded program are accused of, charged with, arrested for, or convicted of criminal offences relating to child exploitation and abuse.

7.11 To undertake periodic assessments of our own and its implementing partners' child safeguarding practices.

- By assessing implementing partners' practices through use of assessment tools at least every 18 months for long-term partners.
- By a member of the management team taking a stocktake of ALWS registers and systems at least every 18 months to ensure they are up to date and functioning, including:
 - Child Safeguarding Screening register (includes Code of Conduct, Referee Checks, Interview Questions, Signed Declaration of no Child Abuse, Criminal History Checks, Working with Children Checks)
 - Child Safeguarding Training register
 - Child Safeguarding Risk Register
 - Spot check of a staff member from each team regarding their understanding of the Child Safeguarding Reporting Process and Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (to assess Child Safeguarding processes, not to assess the staff member)

7.12 Provision for policy review at least every three years

- By taking into account implementation experience, as well as best practice standards and policies that are available at the time of the reviews and will be presented to the Board for consideration and approval.
- By consulting with DFAT and ACFID on Child Safeguarding policy review (and this communication be documented).