

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Definitions

Child is any human being below the age of 18, unless according to the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child Protection is an activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly arising from child abuse or neglect.

Child Abuse refers to all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation (labour), including sexual abuse.

Purpose

To protect children from abuse of all kinds in the delivery of any of its aid programs; both locally and overseas.

Guiding Principles

The policy follows four guiding principles:

1. Zero tolerance of child abuse

Child abuse is not tolerated by Reledev, nor is possession of or access to child pornography. Reledev actively manages risks of child abuse associated with delivering aid activities and trains its staff on their obligations.

Reledev will not knowingly engage, directly or indirectly, anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children, nor fund any individual or organisation that does not meet Reledev's child protection compliance standards in their operations and activities.

2. Recognition of children's interests

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Reledev is committed to upholding the rights and obligations of the convention. Reledev recognises that some children, such as children with disabilities and

children living in areas impacted by disasters (natural or conflict based), are particularly vulnerable.

3. Sharing responsibility for child protection

To effectively manage risks to children, Reledev requires the active support and cooperation of contractors and NGOs implementing Reledev-funded aid activities. Contractors and NGOs must meet the terms of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) and will be held accountable, through contracts and audits, for complying with it. Reledev also encourages awareness of child protection issues among international and whole-of-government partners.

4. Use of a risk management approach.

While it is not possible to eliminate all risk of child abuse, careful management can reduce the incidence of child abuse associated with aid activities. This policy introduces risk assessments and treatments for a range of recognised risks to children.

5. Procedural fairness.

The use of fair and proper procedures when decisions are made that affect a person's rights or interests.

Procedures

Reledev endeavours to prevent any individual and/or organisation that poses an unacceptable risk to children from either working or partnering with them by:

- Rigorous screening and research processes, risk assessments, background checks, signing child protection compliance documents etc.
- Should an individual working for Reledev or a partner organisation come under investigation for the mistreatment of children, Reledev will either transfer an employee to a job not involving contact with children or cease providing funds to a partner organisation until such time that the investigation will reach a conclusion.
- If either an Employee or organisation partner under investigation are found to have breached Reledev's Child Protection Policies then termination of the relationship will take effect immediately and the investigation furthered.

Reledev trains its staff, volunteers and partners on child protection matters and requires their commitment to the CPP.

The following are specifically carried out:

- Paid staff and volunteer leaders obtain a police check before travelling to a work camp or service project.
- A character referral is required from each volunteer.
- Each volunteer receives induction on the CPP and signs a contract of compliance with this policy.
- Local partners and overseas partner NGO's are required to provide at least a statutory declaration to the effect vouchsafing the character of the staff involved in a funded project. Where this project involves contact with persons considered to be children, an agreement of compliance with the CPP must be signed prior to signing a contract for funding. Agreements with partners include causes requiring partners to have their own CPP or adhere to Reledev's policy. These partners also sign, yearly, their continued commitment to comply with CPP.
- As part of training all paid staff, volunteers and partners are made aware that they must comply with local customs regarding personal images. Consent for photographs or video imaging of children should be obtained from the children and/or their guardian before taking images. They must be informed of how the images will be used. Digital photographic files should not identify the name of the child or children. Photographs of children should ensure that they are well clothed and appropriately represented in their context.

Monitoring visits

The Program Manager will check/sight the partner agency's CPP and find out how it is implemented.

Complaints Procedures

A confidential report is submitted to the Program Manager and must be signed and dated by the informant.

The report should outline the inappropriate behaviour beyond acceptable boundaries alleged of a person and should provide objective facts.

Inappropriate behaviour may include:

- Grooming behaviour as a pattern of behaviour that is aimed at engaging a child.
- Persuading the child that a special relationship exists by spending inappropriate special time with the child, inappropriate gift giving, doing special favours, etc.
- Undressing in front of the other, sitting on the lap, talking about sex and accidental touching of genitals.
- Sexual misconduct which includes a range of behaviour aimed at involving the child in sexual acts.
- Inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature.
- Comments that express a desire to act in a sexual manner.
- Unwarranted and inappropriate touching.
- Personal correspondence (including email) with a child in respect to the adult's sexual feelings for a child.
- Deliberate exposure of children to displays of pornography or possession of pornography in the workplace or project site.

Response to a reported allegation will involve interviewing complainant, witness and the subject of the complaint.

At all times the Officer overseeing the investigation will seek to:

- a. act fairly and without bias;
- b. conduct an investigation without undue delay;
- c. ensure the case is not investigated or determined by someone with a conflict of interest;
- d. ensure the outcome is supported by evidence;
- e. take steps to maintain confidentiality for the sake of all parties involved in the investigation.

An investigation report will be submitted in writing to relevant parties providing appropriate recommendations. These may include:

- Counselling where a misunderstanding or lack of understanding of how certain words or behaviours are understood. In this case, an apology and a commitment never to repeat the offence will be required.
- Termination of employment or engagement.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every five years with accreditation.

The policy will be revised when needed.

For Reledev's child protection reporting procedure please refer to procedure 8/11

For Reledev's child protection code of conduct Compliance Agreement please refer to form 3/11

For Reledev's training guidelines for volunteers participating in service projects/work camps refer to guideline 4/12

For Reledev's Procedures regarding images of children for work related purposes refer to procedure PR 5/11

Annex 1 on the following page is an Assessment form for use in activities with exposure of children

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ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT FORM

Assessing an activity's exposure to children

1. Questions that need to be asked about the nature of the project:
 - a. Are children the direct beneficiaries of the project?
 - b. Is a benefit for children an outcome of the project?
 - c. What is the motive for exposing volunteers to poor communities and their children e.g. visits to orphanages, school hygiene and sanitation
2. Questions that need to be asked about the type of activities comprising the project.
 - a. Will volunteers have contact with children? What sort of relation with children will the activity facilitate?
 - b. Will volunteers have access to children's homes or quarters? Is going to children's homes absolutely necessary? Is there an alternative to going to children's homes?
 - c. Can activities involving children be done in teams?
 - d. Can activities involving children be supervised by an adult? Will community representatives be present at activities that involve children e.g. local teachers, local elders?
 - e. Will activities give rise to certain forms of manifesting emotional attachment e.g. gift-giving or hugging of children?

Examples of High risk activities	Comments/reason	Risk Mitigation measures
Personnel doing things directly with the disabled children	Such children are vulnerable and cannot defend themselves	Assess the real need for certain activities that deal with or involve
Personnel working directly with orphans or abandoned children	Such children are emotionally vulnerable	'children'
Activities located in shelters, orphanages or schools	Access to many children	Foresee how the activities will affect not only the volunteers but the beneficiary children (emotional attachments, gift giving, etc)
Work in women's refuge	Children may be present and women may despair of their children	Organise tasks such that:
Activities located away from community or in isolated, secluded or inaccessible locations	Community based activities that involve children	- no one is alone with a group of children or a single child (the child being either the volunteer or a member of the beneficiary community)
Projects that involve recreational activities for children Youth clubs/groups Sports for children e.g. requiring swimming, bathing, changing of children	Direct access to children includes physical proximity	- there are no one-on-one activities with children (volunteers or of the beneficiary
Education activities for children at all school levels	Access to groups of children	
Mother's and child's health	Direct access to children in intimate terms	
Activities requiring staff to visit a child's home or to come see the personnel	Access to quarters	
One on one activities: educational, mentoring, skills training	Personal and proximate access	



Personal hygiene and sanitation, especially school sanitation projects	Access may lead to very direct contact	community)
Personnel working with a group of young persons	Access and continued company or proximity to persons under 18	- there is always a supervising adult in a group