

## 1. Introduction and Purpose

This Child Protection Policy (CPP) confirms the National Council of Churches in Australia's (NCCA) commitment to child protection. The NCCA will actively ensure that child protection strategies are adhered to throughout its work, including the work of agencies and individuals with which it engages. Specific sections of the CPP refer to the partnership work of Act for Peace, the international aid agency of the NCCA.

## 2. Statement on Commitment to Child Protection and Guiding Principles

The NCCA is committed to the safety and well being of all children. The NCCA takes its duty of care seriously and will aim at all times to provide the safest possible environment for children. This will be achieved by identifying and managing risks that may lead to harm, and dealing immediately with concerns and reports if they arise.

The NCCA agrees that all children have a right to be safe at all times, and that all children should be equally protected and assisted regardless of their gender, nationality, religious or political beliefs, family background, economic status, physical or mental health or criminal background, and that any form of child abuse or exploitation is unacceptable.

The NCCA agrees to and upholds the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) 1989, the universal foundation for child protection which states that children have a right to survival, development, protection and participation, the fundamental principle being that children have their own indivisible rights. The NCCA agrees to and upholds the Optional Protocol to the UNCROC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child; and relevant International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions. All decisions regarding the welfare and protection of children are based on the Best Interests of the Child Principle<sup>1</sup>. Where possible, children will be consulted in the development of the CPP and the implementation of child safe practices.

In countries where NCCA staff and others travel, and in countries where Act for Peace partner programs exist, the NCCA is obliged to and agrees to adhere to local and international child protection criminal laws which prohibit the abuse and exploitation of children, and international laws and conventions in relation to all forms of child abuse and child exploitation, including but not limited to: child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, child labour and child pornography.

Adherence to this CPP is a mandatory requirement for all NCCA staff and others. All staff and others engaging with the NCCA will be made aware of the CPP and their responsibilities as stated in the CPP during orientation.

This CPP has been reviewed to ensure compliance with AusAID Guidelines<sup>2</sup>, ACFID Code of Conduct<sup>3</sup> and ACT International policies and procedures<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/HUMAN\\_RIGHTS/briefs/brief\\_1.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/HUMAN_RIGHTS/briefs/brief_1.html)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?ID=7954\\_7703\\_6074\\_4255\\_4227](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pubout.cfm?ID=7954_7703_6074_4255_4227)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.act-intl.org/manual.php>



### 3. Definitions

**Act for Peace:** The international aid agency of the NCCA.

**Commission for Christian World Service:** Governing body for Act for Peace.

**Best Interests of the Child Principle:** This principle refers to decisions considering that the child receives the maximum benefit possible from services provided, and that the positive impacts of any course of action outweigh any negative impacts<sup>5</sup>.

**Bullying:** Bullying is the inappropriate use of power by an individual or group, with intent to injure. It is usually deliberate and repetitive. Bullying may be physical or psychological (verbal and non-verbal).

- Physical bullying includes pushing, hitting, punching, kicking or any other action causing hurt or injury.
- Verbal bullying includes insults, taunts, threats and ridicules.
- Psychological bullying includes physical intimidation and ostracism.

**Child Abuse:** Abuse happens to male and female children of all ages, ethnicity and social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and political persuasion. Child abuse includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, bullying, discrimination, child labour and domestic violence. Abuse can be inflicted on a child by men or women, as well as by children and young people themselves.

**Child or young person:** A child or young person is regarded to be any person under the age of 18 years, unless a nation's laws recognise adulthood earlier.

**Child Protection:** Child Protection is the term used to describe the responsibilities and activities undertaken to prevent or stop children being abused or maltreated.

**Child-Safe Environment:** A child-safe environment is one free from real and potential harm.

**Child-Sex Tourism:** Child-sex tourism is defined as “the commercial sexual exploitation of children by men or women who travel from one place to another, usually from a richer country to one that is less developed, and there engage in sexual acts with children, defined as anyone aged under 18 years.” (ECPAT International, 2006<sup>6</sup>).

**Country Director:** The person holding the most senior position in an overseas partner agency, or the person designated by them to address child protection issues.

---

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/HUMAN\\_RIGHTS/briefs/brief\\_1.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/HUMAN_RIGHTS/briefs/brief_1.html)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ecpat.net/EI/index.asp>



**Discrimination:** Discrimination includes the exclusion of, mistreatment of, or action against an individual based on social status, race, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, political affiliation or disability<sup>7</sup>.

**Duty of Care:** Duty of Care is a common law concept that refers to the responsibility of the organisation and individual to provide children with an adequate level of protection against harm. It is the duty of the organisation and its individuals to protect children from all reasonably foreseeable risk of or real injury.

**Emotional abuse:** Emotional abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or frightened by threats. This may involve name calling, being put down or continual coldness from parent or caregiver, to the extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth.

**Exposure to Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence occurs when children and young people witness or experience the chronic domination, coercion, intimidation and victimisation of one person by another by physical, sexual or emotional means within intimate relationships<sup>8</sup>.

**National Council of Churches in Australia:** The use of the term NCCA in this policy refers to all staff, Executive Members, Board Members, Commissions, Committees, Networks and Working Groups of the NCCA.

**Neglect:** Neglect is the persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide a child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.

**Others:** Within reference to this policy 'others' include volunteers in Australia, and volunteers, trustees and partners overseas.

**Partner:** For the purposes of this policy, Partner refers to any organisation or person that the NCCA partners with to deliver program services. Act for Peace partners are formally engaged through the signing of a Partnership Agreement.

**Physical abuse:** Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may take any form of physical treatment including but not limited to slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take any form including but not limited to bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

**Protection:** Protection includes ensuring that individual basic human rights, welfare and physical security are recognised, safeguarded and protected in accordance with international standards.

---

<sup>7</sup> ACT International Code of Conduct on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse of Power and Corruption for Staff members of the ACT International Alliance. 10.12.200.

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from the Australian Medical Association definition.



**Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse is actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions<sup>9</sup>.

**Sexual exploitation:** Sexual exploitation is any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Sexual exploitation includes using one's position of authority, influence or control to pressure, force or manipulate someone to do something against their will knowingly or unknowingly, by threatening them with negative repercussions such as withholding project assistance, not approving an employee's work support requests, threatening to make false claims about an employee in public etc.<sup>10</sup>.

**Sexual harassment:** Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome sexual advance, comment, expressed or implied sexual demand, touch, joke, gesture, or any other communication or conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, written or visual, by any person to another individual within the scope of work. Sexual harassment may be directed at members of the same or opposite sex and includes harassment based on sexual orientation. Sexual harassment can occur between any one or more individuals<sup>11</sup>.

**Staff:** Staff refers to full time, part time, or casual persons working in Australia or overseas, and those engaged on short term contracts such as but not limited to: consultants, researchers, photographers etc., working in Australia or overseas.

#### 4. Context

Child abuse is a global problem that affects both boys and girls. It has existed since the beginning of time and is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social practices. Children can be abused physically, sexually, psychologically, emotionally and or through neglect and or discrimination. Children living in poverty are more at risk of child abuse and exploitation.

While most child abuse occurs within families and communities, children may experience abuse and exploitation in organisations which provide them with support and services. Physical and emotional abuse and neglect in organisations and institutions may be unsystematic and unplanned, the result of poor conditions, bad work practices and negligent management. However child abuse, in particular sexual abuse in organisations may also be planned and premeditated. Child sex offenders target organisations working with children, in particular organisations where their abuse may go undetected, including those with inadequate recruitment and supervision practices.

#### 5. Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all staff and others in Australia or overseas.

---

<sup>9</sup> ACT International Code of Conduct on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse of Power and Corruption for Staff Members of the ACT International Alliance. 10.12.02.

<sup>10</sup> ACT International Code of Conduct on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse of Power and Corruption for Staff Members of the ACT International Alliance. 10.12.02.

<sup>11</sup> ACT International Code of Conduct on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse of Power and Corruption for Staff Members of the ACT International Alliance. 10.12.02.



## **6. Child protection risk management**

The NCCA recognizes that there are a number of potential risks to children in our work, particularly in those programs where staff or others come into contact with children. In recognizing these risks, staff and others will proactively assess and manage risks to children to reduce the risk of harm.

All partners receiving funding from Act for Peace will sign a Partnership Agreement outlining child protection responsibilities. Act for Peace staff will assist partners to conduct assessments of child protection needs and implement relevant child protection strategies as required. Programs/disaster responses that involve direct work with children are considered a higher risk, and therefore require more stringent child protection procedures. Risk assessment guidelines for partners and programs are included in Annex 1.

## **7. Child sponsorship guidelines**

The NCCA is not currently involved in child sponsorship programs. If partners are or become involved with Child Sponsorship Programs, the partnership will be reviewed and Child Sponsorship Guidelines will be implemented if the partnership continues (see Annex 2).

## **8. Use of children's images**

NCCA material will at all times portray children in a respectful, appropriate and consensual manner. Guidelines on the use of children's images are included in Annex 3.

## **9. Employment of staff and volunteers**

The NCCA is committed to child safe recruitment, selection and screening practices. These practices aim to recruit the safest and most suitable people to work in our programs. Our child safe recruitment practices are included in Annex 4.

## **10. Child abuse reporting processes and how to respond to a child who has been abused**

The NCCA will take all concerns and reports of child abuse seriously and immediate action will be taken. Staff members or others reporting child protection concerns will be supported by the NCCA throughout the process of assessing the claim.

Who should report?

- It is mandatory for all NCCA staff and others to report concerns of child abuse.

What should be reported?

- Any disclosure or allegation from a child, community member, staff or other regarding the safety, abuse, discrimination or exploitation of a child.
- Any observation or concerning behaviour exhibited by NCCA staff or others that breaches the NCCA code of conduct for working with children (see ANNEX 5).
- Any organisational or programmatic issues, plans or strategies that may lead to child protection concerns.

When to report?



- Child abuse concerns should be raised immediately.

Who to report to?

- In Australia: If the situation to be reported occurs within Australia reports should be made to the Director of Support Services or the Act for Peace Child Protection Officer.
- Overseas: If the situation to be reported occurs overseas reports should be made to the Country Director of the Partner Agency supported in that Country or the Cluster Lead/designated child focused agency in a disaster/emergency setting, the Act for Peace Child Protection Officer and the Director of Support Services.

### **11. Involving children and young people**

The NCCA is committed to child and youth participation. If the NCCA engages in programs which directly relate to children we will provide opportunities for children's views to be heard.

### **12. Educating the organisation on child abuse and the child protection policy**

The NCCA is committed to providing child protection training for staff and others. The CPP is included in the orientation of all new staff. Annual refresher sessions will be provided at staff meetings. The Director of Support Services, CPO, and Policy and Program staff will be encouraged to attend training on child protection policies and practices provided by recognised external agencies.

The CPP will be made available to all staff and volunteers and will be incorporated into the NCCA and Act for Peace Policies and Procedures Manuals.

### **13. Reviewing the Child Protection Policy**

The NCCA's Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required by changes occurring in the NCCA, AusAID, ACFID or ACT Alliance regulations, or State or National Legislation. The Director of Support Services and the CPO will manage the review of the CPP in consultation with staff and Senior Management.



**ANNEX 3:**

**Use of Children's Images**

NCCA material will at all times portray children in a respectful and appropriate way.

- A child should always be portrayed 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.
- A child and its family must always be asked for consent when using their images. When asking for consent to use the image, details should be given as to how and where this image will be used.
- Children should be portrayed as part of their community.
- Local cultural traditions should be assessed regarding restrictions for reproducing personal images.
- Images should be an honest representation of the context and the facts.
- There should be no identifying information of the child used in the publication of images with their location. All recorded identifying details are to be stored confidentially.
- When sending images electronically, file labels should not reveal identifying information.
- All photographers will be screened for their suitability, including police checks where appropriate.



**ANNEX 4:**

**Child Safe Recruitment Practices**

The NCCA engages the following child safe recruitment practices:

- Promoting our child safe commitment on our website.
- Providing copies of our website links to the CPP to all job applicants.
- Requiring applicants to submit a detailed application form when applying for a position. This form will ask for extensive information about the applicant's background such as dates and places of employment, education and other activities.
- Assessing all positions for level for risk in relation to contact with children.
- Providing job descriptions for all staff and others engaged to work for the NCCA which describe key selection criteria and outline tasks and accountabilities.
- Conducting interviews for all positions, ideally face-to-face, but telephone interviews may be necessary in the international context.
- Including behavioural-based questions at interviews and asking for examples of the candidate's past behaviour and experiences.
- Requiring all staff and others working directly with children to provide an Australian Federal Police Check or a relevant criminal history check (this may depend on the country or countries of most recent residence). Any non staff member placed on an emergency response register will have annual Australian Federal Police Check.
- Requiring candidates who may be working directly with children in Australia to provide a Working with Children Check (depending on the jurisdiction).
- Ensuring that all positions include a probationary period (depending on the length of the contract).
- Including identifying issues relating to child protection training in staff performance reviews.
- Requiring all staff and others to read and sign the Code of Conduct during their orientation session and within two weeks of employment/engagement. The preferred applicant will be made aware of this requirement prior to employment.
- All current staff and volunteers will be issued a copy of the CPP and required to sign the Code of Conduct within two weeks of receipt.
- Reserving the right to refuse employment to or terminate any person's employment if they may pose a risk to children.

