

SECTION / DEPARTMENT		POLICY TITLE	
CORPORATE		CHILD PROTECTION	
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER		AUTHORISED BY	REVISION DATE
CHILD PROTECTION OFFICER		BOARD	July 2003
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PRINCIPLES:

Introduction

The objective of this policy is to ensure that Plan Australia takes all possible steps to ensure the protection of children against child abuse. This policy gives an overview of the responsibilities of each Plan participant that are outlined in the related procedure document "*Ensuring Child Protection – Plan Australia Child Protection Procedures*" which offers specific guidelines for implementing this policy.

Policy Statement

Plan Australia is committed to ensuring that all possible and necessary steps are taken to acknowledge the rights of and protect the well being of all children that we work with, including sponsored and non - sponsored children¹ in program countries and in Australia. Plan Australia is a signatory of the Australian Council For Overseas Aid (ACFOA) Code of Conduct and is required to implement "policies and procedures to promote the safety and well-being of all children accessing their services and programs-to minimise the risk of abuse of children". The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) provides a foundation for Plan Australia's work both locally and internationally. It is the responsibility of all Board, Plan Australia staff, volunteers, contractors, suppliers, donors and supporters (Plan participants) to protect children "...from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse"².

Plan Australia recognises that by the nature of its work it is at risk of being targeted by those wanting to exploit or harm children and that the effects of abuse on children are both devastating and long term, therefore will take the necessary steps wherever possible to prevent this from occurring.

Plan's child protection policy and procedures are designed to minimize the risk of abuse to children. If, at any stage, Plan's preventative measures are breached, then Plan will:

- Provide support and care for the child
- Seek justice on behalf of the child
- Learn from the situation and review and improve procedures.

Plan Australia considers child abuse unacceptable in all circumstances. All alleged cases of child abuse must be reported and in response, allegations must be investigated and acted upon with the highest priority, according to the notification and complaints mechanisms outlined in "*Ensuring Child Protection – Plan Australia Child Protection Procedures*"

An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue. In following this policy and local procedures, it is essential that all parties maintain confidentiality. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or an alleged perpetrator, should be purely on a 'need to know' basis. Unless abuse has actually been proved to have occurred, one must always refer to "alleged abuse".

¹ For the purpose of this policy and in accordance with, a child will be considered a person under the age of 18 years.

² United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child – Article 19.

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If an employee raises a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the employee.

Any employee who makes false and malicious accusations, however, will face disciplinary action. Plan will take appropriate legal or other action against other Plan participants who makes false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

An alleged perpetrator of child abuse will normally be suspended from their normal relationship with Plan during investigation of allegations. Plan will sever all relations with any Plan participant who is proven to have committed child abuse.

In deciding the appropriate course of action, note that, subject to local law, proven child abuse will normally lead, in accordance with Plan procedure, to:

- In the case of an employee: dismissal
- In the case of a contractor or consultant: termination of their contract
- In the case of a volunteer: termination of their relationship with Plan
- In the case of a board member: removal from the board
- In the case of a sponsor: termination of their sponsorship with Plan
- In all cases: criminal prosecution

Principles

- All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation regardless of their gender, race, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, social background and culture.
- Plan's vision is of a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignities. Plan's mission is to strive to achieve lasting improvements in the quality of life of deprived children in developing countries through a process that unites people across cultures and adds meaning and value to their lives.
- As part of an international non-government child centred community development organisation, Plan Australia has a duty of care to all children that we work both in Australia and in program countries.

Definitions of Child Abuse

Physical abuse

"Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This many take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, burning, shoving, or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures" (ECPAT 2001)

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Emotional abuse

“Emotional abuse is a chronic attack on a child or young person’s self esteem. It can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child or young person”. (ECPAT 2001)

Neglect

“Neglect is the failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, and supervision, to the extent that the child’s health and development are placed at risk”. (ECPAT 2001)

Exploitation

Exploitation refers to the abuse of children and their rights in circumstances such as children forced into unacceptable forms of labour, children forced to participate in acts of violence and war, trafficking of children, children forced into participating in child pornography and prostitution for the financial gain or personal satisfaction of their abuser.

Sexual abuse

“Sexual abuse is when a child or young person is used by another child, adolescent, or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. There are two categories:

Please note: some of the language used over- page is explicit and may offend

Sexual abuse

CONTACT	NON CONTACT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touched and fondled in sexual areas • Forced to touch another person’s sexual areas • Kissed or held in a sexual manner • Forced to perform oral sex • Vaginal or anal intercourse • Vaginal or anal penetration with object or finger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obscene calls/obscene remarks on computer or in notes • Voyeurism • Exposed to pornography • Sexually intrusive questions or comments • Forced to self-masturbate or watch others masturbate • Indecent exposure

(ECPAT 2001)

As an organisation Plan Australia is to always be aware, vigilant and uncompromising when implementing our Child Protection Policy. Following are some examples of where the Child Protection Policy should be considered:

- When facilitating staff/sponsor/donor/supporter visits to program countries
- When we engage in activities with children locally in Australia
- When developing initiatives and projects involving child participation
- When storing and distributing sensitive and confidential information on children – such as family Profiles and sponsorship mail

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- When sending sponsor mail to sponsored children
- When promoting our work through the use of images of children
- When children from program countries visit Australia

Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the Board/National Executive Director – through department directors to ensure that all Plan participants in their area of responsibility are aware of and agree to abide by this policy and applicable local procedures while working for Plan.

All participants are responsible for raising concerns however distressing that may be. The welfare of the child must come first. If, in good faith, it is suspected or known that abuse is or has occurred, it must be raised in line with the child protection procedures (of the relevant Plan country if in a Plan program country or another donor country), even if the person suspected of committing the abuse is in a senior position. If warning signs are ignored, a child may remain unprotected and subject to further abuse.

In the event of someone disclosing alleged abuse (particularly children), the response must always be calm and supportive. For specific guidelines see - *“Ensuring Child Protection – Plan Australia Child Protection Procedures”*
Plan participants must:

- Familiarise themselves with situations which may present risks and through relevant induction and training learn how to deal with those situations;
- Contribute to an environment where children are able to recognise unacceptable behaviour and feel able to discuss their rights and concerns;
- Ensure that they and others meet children openly;
- Raise concerns about any case of suspected abuse in accordance with applicable local procedures.

Plan participants must not:

- Take children unaccompanied to their home or hotel room
- Physically, sexually or emotionally assault or abuse a child
- Develop sexual relations with a child that are illegal under the laws of the country of either the child of the Participant
- Allow a sponsor to be alone with a Plan assisted child – (sponsored or non-sponsored)
- Misuse information that identifies sponsored children, families, or their community members in a way that breaches their privacy or dignity.
- Promote Plan in a way which exploits children or violates their dignity and personal rights

For further guidelines see *“Ensuring Child Protection- Plan Australia Child Protection Procedures”*.

Management Responsibilities

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To ensure a working environment that promotes and understands child protection, the National Executive Director, Board and department directors of Plan Australia must ensure that:

- The recruitment procedure is based on best practice in relation to child protection and includes reference checks and a police check/national name check through the police department and that no staff member or volunteer begins their position without the form having been returned with “no disclosable outcomes”
- That Plan Australia’s child protection policy and procedures forms part of the induction given to all new staff and volunteers
- That all Plan staff, volunteers, contractors, suppliers and sponsors/supporters visiting program countries understand and commit to adhere to Plan Australia’s Child Protection Policy (via a signed statement). In addition, that they also understand and adhere to related procedures, policies and codes of conduct
- That Plan suppliers and contractors provide an acceptable degree of privacy and protection when working with Plan information and marketing materials outside the Plan Australia office
- That all Plan Australia staff and volunteers are trained in child protection issues
- That all sponsors and supporters visiting program countries also have a police check (national name check) and that no visit is arranged by ANO staff without the form being returned with “no disclosable outcomes”
- Repeat visits by sponsors and donors/ supporters are monitored
- That the notification and complaint mechanisms outlined in “*Ensuring Child Protection – Plan Australia Child Protection Procedures*” are followed in all instances of alleged child abuse or exploitation
- That advocacy for child rights and protection is encouraged and resourced
- That child protection procedures represent best practise, are current and up to date
- That the Child Protection Policy is reviewed every three years
- A Child Protection Officer is appointed within the Plan Australia office

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PROCEDURES:

Ensuring Child Protection- Plan Australia Child Protection Procedures

FORMS:

National Name Police Check form
 Sponsor Visit Notification forms
 Policies and Procedures Declaration – Induction procedures (via email)

REFERENCES:

1. NAPCAN 1996. *Are you worried about recruiting a child abuser into your organisation?* NAPCAN Victoria and Scout Association of Australia, Victoria.
2. ECPAT2001 *Choose With Care- Building child safe organisations*, ECAPT Australia – a Childwise project
3. Plan Australia Code of Conduct
4. Plan Australia Recruitment Policy
5. Plan Australia Induction Policy
6. ACFOA Code of Conduct – amended Sep 2002