

Child Protection Policy

1. Statement of Intent

Operation Blue is committed to the safety and well-being of all children. Every individual or organisation that works with children under any Operation Blue project has an obligation to protect children from exploitation and abuse. Our collective responsibility is to implement this policy, and to use a risk management and common-sense approach to create and maintain protective environments for children involved in our projects.

In practice, Operation Blue is committed to:

- The welfare and rights of children and young people.
- Compliance with all relevant legislation and Child Rights and welfare in order to provide what is in the “best interest of the child” including labour laws that apply to children.
- Encouraging all volunteers to give respect and dignity to all children and young people.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Abuse	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical abuse – the use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. • Neglect – 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 wellbeing. • Emotional abuse – a parent or care giver’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. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child’s self-esteem or social competence. • Sexual abuse – the use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or significantly 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.
Child or Children	In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ‘ <i>child</i> ’ means every human being under

	the age of 18 unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. For the purposes of this policy a child is deemed to a person under the age of 18 years.
Child exploitation and abuse	<p>One or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child • Possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material. • Committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming.
Ill Treatment	<p>Disciplining or correcting a child in an unreasonable and seriously inappropriate manner, making excessive and/or degrading demands of a child; hostile use of force towards a child; and/or a pattern of hostile or unreasonable and seriously inappropriate degrading comments or behaviours towards a child.</p> <p>Note: the above includes a child or children being present (hearing or seeing) while a parent or sibling is subjected to any of the above.</p>
Child exploitation material	Material, irrespective of its form, which is classified as child abuse material or child pornography material.
Child of mature understanding	A child who demonstrates understanding of the proposed use of their image when it is explained in plain language, (or with printed/visual examples) and is willing to make a decision. This maturity does not match a particular age but is more likely in children over 12 years of age.
Child protection	An activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly arising from child exploitation and abuse.
Child protection policy	A statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps create a safe and positive environment for children and to show the organisation is taking its duty and responsibility of care seriously.
Child safeguarding	The broad obligation on staff and partners to ensure that the design and delivery of DFAT programs and organisational operations do not expose children to adverse impacts, including the risk of abuse and exploitation, and that any concerns about children’s safety within the communities where they work are appropriately reported.

Child abuse material	Material that depicts (expressly or implicitly) a child under 18 years of age as a victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse.
Child pornography	In accordance to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, <i>child pornography</i> means ‘ <i>any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes</i> ’. For further information about child pornography offences, refer to the <i>Criminal Code Act, 1995</i> .
Child pornography material	Material that depicts a person, or a representation of a person, who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age and is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity, or is in the presence of person who is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or activity, and does this in a way that a reasonable person would regards as being, in all circumstances, offensive.
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.
Working with children check	Australian state-based assessment of suitability to work with children. This includes a National Police Check and a review of findings as well of workplace misconduct. Holders of a Working With Children Clearance are subject ongoing monitoring for the validity period. (In Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania, the check is called Working with Vulnerable People (Children) and in South Australia it is called Child-Related Employment Screening.
Criminal record check	A check of an individual’s criminal history record. In Australia, national criminal records are available through state and territory police departments. They take around 20 working days to procure. The type of employment should be specified as ‘overseas employment’. Overseas, different checking procedures apply in each country and may take six weeks or longer. Individuals need to consent to a criminal record check and should be informed of the purpose for which the resulting police clearance will be used, including sighting by DFAT.
Grooming	Generally, refers to behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity. For example, an offender might build a relationship of trust with the child, and then seek to sexualise that relationship (for example by encouraging romantic feelings or exposing the child to sexual concepts through pornography).

Harm	Any detrimental effect on a child’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm may be caused by financial, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, and/or sexual abuse or exploitation whether intended or unintended.
Informed consent	Consent given after the proposed action is explained (in plain language and/or with the aid of printed/visual examples) and understood.
Impact	The overall long-term effect produced by an investment. This includes positive and negative changes produced by an investment (directly or indirectly, intended or unintended).
Online grooming	The act of sending an electronic message to a child, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender; or of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient who the sender believes to be a child.

2. Child Protection Policy

1. General

1. A current Working With Children clearance is required for all Australian staff, and volunteers whose activities involve contact with children
2. All staff and Executive Committee members and volunteers whose activities involve any contact with children will sign to acknowledge that they have read, understood and agreed to comply with the *Child Protection Policy (Policy)* and *Child Protection Code of Conduct (Code)*.
3. Any breach of the Policy or the Code may result in disciplinary action which could result in dismissal. Where the breach also breaks a law the police/government child protection unit will be informed.
4. Operation Blue material will always portray children in a respectful, dignified manner and only with the informed consent of the child's parent or guardian. All materials will represent the context and facts honestly.
5. Operation Blue will not involve children in any activity inappropriate to their age nor support any project that does.
6. In the event of a complaint being received, the process described in the *Complaints and Grievance Handling Process* will be followed.

2. Partner visits

1. All team members will have current Working with Children clearance. These will be reviewed before the team is recommended to an overseas partner.
2. Team leaders will ensure there is a training session covering child protection issues, which all team members attend, prior to travelling.
3. All team members will sign the *Code*.

3. Projects

1. All project designs will include a consideration of how to safeguard any children that may be involved.
2. All project designs will include an assessment of risk using DAFT's *Establishing Child Protection Risk Context* guidance notes.
3. Any projects assessed as "high risk" to children will include a risk assessment and management plan relating to child protection.
4. Any projects assessed as "moderate risk" will be monitored for changes in risk profile.

3. Volunteering

The essential principles of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) are about:

1. Information on child protection policies must be given before and on acceptance of volunteering. A form must be signed agreeing to the Child Protection Policy and stating they have not had any previous convictions for abuses against children or violent behaviour. Their future employers will be informed if dismissed for abuse.
2. References for Team Leadership roles should be checked, preferably by telephone, to give previous employers and/or volunteering organisations an opportunity to express concerns verbally.

4. Responses to Allegations

1. Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures.
2. Procedures are set out by the organisations to ensure that all employees and volunteers know what to do if an allegation is made, either by a child, parents, partners, volunteer or visitor.
3. Operation Blue encourages all volunteers to adhere to the country's Labour Code, if available.
4. All members of the team will encourage their volunteers to be open in discussing the potential of abuse in their organisation.
5. Where an allegation has been made that a volunteer or visitor to the organisation has abused a child, then Operation Blue will investigate and take appropriate action to deal with the situation.
 - 5.1 Operation Blue will have a designated person whose responsibility is to be responsible for dealing with child protection issues in the organisation, being that of the board of directors.
 - 5.2 Relationships with other organisations are encouraged for accountability.
 - 5.3 Both victim (and perpetrator) will be treated with respect and confidentiality from the start of the process to the end.
 - 5.4 Records should be made of all facts relating to the investigation and these should be carefully and confidentially filed.
 - 5.5 The relevant external agency should be informed if a foreigner is involved.
 - 5.6 There should be a person designated to deal with the media and the police. Where possible, consideration will be made beforehand by the organisation's leadership about how the police and media will be informed or involved.
 - 5.7 If the organisation is inexperienced, asking for help from other organisations with child protection policies is encouraged.

5. Using Children's Images and Personal Information

When photographing or filming a child for work for charity related purposes, Operation Blue must:

- 1 Before photographing or filming a child, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images.

- 2 Ensure all 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.
 - 3 Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
 - 4 Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.
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