

POLICY:	CHILD SAFE POLICY		
SECTION:	Human Resources	REFERENCE:	HR 53
EFFECTIVE:	4 December 2006	SUPERSEDES:	No Previous
APPROVED:	Mark Clisby	PAGE:	1

Introduction

Oxfam Australia is committed to protecting the rights of all children to live safely, without fear of abuse or exploitation as outlined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989). As an organisation undertaking development work nationally and internationally Oxfam Australia takes its Duty of Care responsibility seriously, particularly in regard to any contact with children. Child abuse is never acceptable and in many countries assaults on children are unlawful

The Child Safe Policy outlines child safety processes, definitions of abuse and harm to children, what to do and where to go to seek advice or report a concern of possible child abuse.

Oxfam Representatives

This policy applies to anyone who represents the agency, including staff, volunteers, board and committee members and consultants. Staff have an obligation to ensure to the extent reasonably possible that partner organisations meet minimum standards of protection for children associated with our programs.

When this Policy Applies

This policy applies to Oxfam representatives at all times, both during and outside normal working hours when they are representing the agency.

Child Safety Officer

As part of Oxfam Australia's commitment to reducing the risk of child abuse and exploitation, a Child Safety Officer will be nominated. The Child Safety officer will be responsible for ensuring the Child Safe Policy is disseminated and implemented throughout Oxfam Australia and that it is understood by all Oxfam Australia representatives. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development is responsible for reviewing the policy as necessary at least every 3 years.

The Child Safety Officer will report quarterly to the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

Definitions of Child Abuse, Harm and Exploitation

Child

Every human being below the age of eighteen years as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Child Friendly version of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – Attachment one.)

Child Rights

Children have the “right to life, survival and development” where development encompasses physical, emotional, cognitive, social and cultural development.

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Exploitation

The abuse of a position of vulnerability or differential power.

Harm

Physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse and neglect of children.

Child Abuse

All child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights. The main types of child abuse are physical abuse, sexual assault, emotional abuse and neglect.

Physical Abuse

When a person purposefully injures or threatens a child.

Sexual Abuse

When a child is used by another child, adolescent or adult, for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual abuse involves contact and non contact activities.

Emotional Abuse

A chronic attack on a child's self esteem.

Neglect

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.

Family Violence

This includes verbal, physical, sexual or emotional violence within the family, which the child witnesses, usually on a regular basis. The perpetrator is commonly the male parent/caregiver, and the victim is often his spouse/partner

Commitment to Keeping Children Safe

Oxfam Australia will make a commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by promoting the safety of children in the following ways:

- Raising awareness within the organisation about potential risks to children including the definitions of child abuse, harm and exploitation;
- Ensuring the Child Safety Policy is embedded in all Oxfam activities;
- Taking reasonable care to ensure that the Child Safe Policy is integrated into our work with partners and government counterparts; **
- Ensuring Oxfam Representatives:
 - Are vigilant to potential risks to children and take steps to minimise such risks.

** Contracts with partners should include a clause applying to Child Safe Policy that meets the minimum requirements set out in this policy or should specify a time frame for ensuring this is met.

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- Understand Oxfam Australia's Code of Conduct which outlines acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour regarding interactions with children. (See Child Safe Code of Conduct).
- Are informed about the reporting process to follow when concerns arise around the safety of children (See Child Safe Reporting Procedure).
- Respond to suspicions or allegations of abuse in a responsible and timely manner and inform relevant parties of the outcomes.

Screening of Oxfam Australia's Staff/Volunteers

Oxfam Australia will undertake Child Safe Recruiting and Screening procedures for staff/volunteers applying to work on our programs. Screening may include:

- The use of behavioural questions during an interview;
- Conducting police checks for positions in direct contact with children;
- Questioning around child safety in interviews and reference checks.

Oxfam Australia will not employ (in any capacity, paid or unpaid) any person with a known history of abuse or violence towards children.

Line managers are responsible for:

- The identification of positions and changes to positions that will come into contact with children;
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers in positions who will have contact with children will receive "child safe" training and compulsory induction training on Oxfam Australia's Child Safe Policies and Procedures, in particular the Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Reporting Procedure;
- All people who will have contact with children as an Oxfam Australia Representative are required to sign the Oxfam Australia Child Safe Code of conduct.

Photos and Images of Children

All Oxfam Representatives must comply with the Oxfam Australia Images Policy.

Oxfam Australia Child Safe Reporting Procedures

Oxfam representatives must report incidents and suspicions of abuse within 24 hours to their line manager or the Country Representative or Regional Manager in the first instance. The Organisational Development and Human Resources Director and the Child Safety Officer will be notified immediately if there are reasonable grounds to suspect physical and or sexual abuse.

Oxfam representatives should contact non abusive family members and should refer the matter, where appropriate to police and other NGOs with a mandated child protection role.

Action taken following the reporting of an incident will be in accordance with Oxfam Australia policy and procedures and may lead to disciplinary or other action.

The Oxfam Australia whistleblowers policy HR08 will apply where relevant.

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Oxfam Australia's Child Safe Supervision Procedures

Where participants of Oxfam Australia activities and events are under the age of 18, and are not accompanied by parents or teachers, Oxfam representatives are responsible for:

- Ensuring parents sign a consent form, granting permission for their child to participate in the activities.
- Obtaining emergency contact information prior to the event

Where activities require the child to stay overnight at accommodation organised by Oxfam Australia, Oxfam Australia will ensure that:

- No less than two Oxfam representatives will be supervising children at all times.
- Separate male and female sleeping facilities are provided.

Review and Monitoring of the Child Safe Policy and Procedures

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years. The Child Safety Officer(s) will be responsible for enhancing this policy as necessary. Feedback from service users and stakeholders will be sought. Final approval rests with the Organisational Development and Human Resource Director.

Refer also:

Oxfam Australia Child Safe Code of Conduct

Attachment One – Child- Friendly version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Attachment Two - HR3 Recruitment and Selection Policy

Attachment Three- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) - Principles of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse more broad code of conduct

Attachment Four – Whistleblowers

Attachment Five – Managing Disclosures of Child abuse

Attachment Six – Debriefing after critical incidents

Attachment Seven – Staff and Volunteer Support and Supervision