

## Child Protection Policy, Abundant Water

### Purpose of this Child Protection Policy

The Abundant Water (AW) is commitment to protect children from abuse and exploitation. AW considers any form of child abuse and exploitation unacceptable. AW believes it is important to have policies and procedures implemented which promote the safety and well-being of all children involved in our programs and activities. Most of AW programs involve interaction with children and all of our programs impact children either directly or indirectly. This Child protection policy provides a framework for protecting children from exploitation and abuse in the delivery of AW's programs.

AW staff and partner organisations must consider risks posed to children in the delivery of our programs. AW recognise risks to children are particularly high when:

- Activities involve one-to-one contact;
- Children are very young, disabled, have been abandoned, displaced, are homeless and/or orphaned;
- The areas in which children live are particularly isolated; and
- Staff are not screened or supervised adequately.

Child exploitation and abuse traumatises children and adversely affects their development and well-being. Children who are exploited and abused experience a greater likelihood of long-term consequences, including mental health issues, reduced educational outcomes, drug and alcohol abuse and increased likelihood of coming into contact with the law. At its core, child exploitation and abuse undermines a child's right to grow up safely.

### Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to AW staff (Lao and Australia-based), AW Board of Directors, volunteers and consultants retained by AW (collectively refer to from here on as 'AW associates').

### Child protection implementation

To protect children AW will undertake the following actions:

1. **All AW associates will receive training and sign AW's Child Protection Code of Conduct and Child Abuse and Exploitation Response Protocol.** These are found in annex 1 and 2. AW's employment/volunteer contracts contain provisions for dismissal, suspension or transfer to other duties for any employee who breaches the child protection code of conduct.
2. **AW will at all times portray children in a respectful and dignified way.** A child, and where possible the child's family, must always be asked for consent when using their images, and provide details on how and where their image

will be used. See code of conduct for more details (Annex 1).

3. **AW recruitment processes will include stringent screening measures to ensure AW does not employ inappropriate people.** These include criminal record checks, referee checks, interviews with behavioural-based interview questions and background checks on all successful candidates before they begin work. Additional screening measures will be incorporated into the selection processes for positions that involve working with children.
  
4. **If child abuse and exploitation is observed or reported the AW Child Abuse and Exploitation Response Protocol will be followed** (Annex 2).

#### Education in child protection

All AW associates will receive training in, and be provided with a copy of, the AW Child Protection Policy on commencing their association with AW. Training will include defining child protections, abuse and exploitation, child protection risks, code of conduct and response protocol.

The AW Child Protection Policy will be made available on the AW website.

#### Approval, compliance and review

AW's Board of Directors is to approve and assess the Policies effectiveness and appropriateness on an annual basis.

Child protection targets and indicators will be integrated into AW's annual Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement Framework.

## Annex 1: AW Code of Conduct for working with children

I, \_\_\_\_\_ [insert name], acknowledge that I have read and understand AW's Child Protection Policy and response protocol and agree in the course of my association with AW, I must:

- **treat children with respect** regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- not use **language or behaviour** towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of **sexual intercourse** or sexual activity including paying for sexual services or acts.
- wherever possible, ensure that **another adult is present** when working in the proximity of children.
- **not invite unaccompanied children into my home**, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- **not sleep close to unsupervised children** unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible.
- use any **computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media** appropriately, and never to **exploit or harass children** or access child exploitation material through any medium.
- not use **physical punishment** on children.
- not **hire children for domestic or other labour** which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- comply with all relevant **Australian and local legislation**, including labour laws in relation to child labour.
- immediately report to the in **country manager or CEO, any member of the Board concerns** or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures.
- immediately **disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence**, which occurred before or occurs during my association with AW that relate to child exploitation and abuse.

When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work-related purposes, I must:

- assess and endeavour to **comply with local traditions or restrictions** for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child.
- obtain **informed consent from the child and parent or guardian** of the child before photographing or filming a child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used.
- ensure 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.
- ensure images are **honest representations** of the context and the facts.
- ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions **do not reveal identifying information about a child** when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.
- I understand that the **onus is on me**, as a person associated with AW, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse.

Signed:

Date:

## Annex 2: Child Abuse and Exploitation Response Principles

AW will ensure that action is taken to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse. Note that these actions may not be taken in consecutively.

- 1. Distance the alleged perpetrator:** The best interests of the child may warrant the standing down of a staff member or volunteer while an investigation commences. Staff members stood down receive full pay and are entitled to a just process that does not pre-suppose guilt or innocence. The allegations should not be discussed or communicated to other people until such have been considered and a decision made by management. The decision made should be documented and filed.
- 2. Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is crucial to a fair and effective reporting procedure. It is unacceptable and potentially defamatory for concerns of child abuse (and abusers) to be spread throughout the organisation rather than being directed through a formal complaints process. All participants must understand the importance of following the set reporting lines when concerns arise. Confidentiality protects the child, the notifier, the respondent and the organisation, and ensures a fair and proper process.
- 3. Reprisal:** AW will not tolerate any form of coercion, intimidation, reprisal or retaliation against any employee who reports any form of abuse or exploitation, provides any information or other assistance in an investigation.
- 4. Counselling support:** Professional counselling support will be made available to all parties involved.
- 5. Investigation of complaints:** Physical and/or sexual abuse of a child is a crime. The Board, CEO or country manager may be required to notify authorities when there are reasonable grounds for reporting abuse. Allegations made overseas will need to consider national legislation or internal procedures to investigate and address the allegations.
- 6. Information collection and privacy:** the Board, CEO or In-country manager must record and store securely relevant information including:
  - date(s) of incident(s)
  - name of organisation(s) involved, including any AVID program partner
  - alleged offender's details, including name, nationality and occupation
  - details of alleged incident(s)
  - whether local law enforcement authorities or Australian Federal Police have been informed
  - if it is a DFAT-funded activity, the name of the activity (if known)
  - details of what the organisation(s) proposes to do
  - any other relevant information.

AW must notify DFAT of any reports associated with DFAT-funded activities.