



**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**



# **DFAT CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE NOTE EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**January 2017**

# DFAT CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE NOTE

## CHILD PROTECTION IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### PURPOSE

This Guidance Note provides **DFAT staff and partner organisations** with guidance on how to address the protection and wellbeing needs of children and young people in education programming.

### BACKGROUND

It is every child's right to access a quality education. Educational facilities (schools, early childhood centres, research and learning centres) should be places of discovery, learning, nurture, respect and acceptance. Most of all, they should be safe. Unfortunately for too many girls and boys throughout Asia and the Pacific, this is not the case.

Too often, educational facilities are a place of violence, discrimination, exploitation and fear from peers and the adults (teachers, administration and support staff) who have the duty of care to protect students. For example, in Indonesia a study found that 84 percent of children (90 percent of boys and 79 percent of girls) report experiencing some form of violence in school. As well, because educational facilities can reflect traditional and cultural attitudes and practices, it can be more difficult to challenge abusive behaviour. Being in an unsafe environment affects children's ability to learn, their health, development and emotional wellbeing.

When implementing an education program, most development organisations need to work within an existing community and government education system. While some education facilities have robust child protection mechanisms in place, for those without, there is an opportunity to influence for positive change through child-centred development programming. Teachers can (and often already do) play a key role in keeping children safe by being positive role models, interacting safely with children, and providing them with a safe environment. A focus on child rights and protection in teacher training can have a significant impact on children's safety and welfare at school.

Remember that while child protection risks exist in all educational settings, the risk is often heightened when: schools are residential settings that provide overnight accommodation; education processes and environments operate outside the government system; there is reduced transparency and supervision of staff and other adults; and there is reduced supervision of students. Remember too that children who are inadequately supervised can abuse other children.

Please read this guidance note in conjunction with:

- DFAT's Child Protection Policy (<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/child-protection-policy.aspx>)
- DFAT's Establishing Child Protection Risk Context Guidance Note (<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/child-protection-risk-assessment-guidance.pdf>)
- DFAT's Aid Programming Guide (<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/aid-programming-guide.aspx>).

## RISK IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This table outlines some common child protection risks within education programs and provides some practical ways to incorporate child protection standards into education programming. You can implement these practical measures with and within schools. You'll also find other activities that can influence change in policy, systems and processes, by working with communities as well as local and national government.

### RISK

#### 1. The education facility is not child safe, causing harm to a child or reduced attendance at school

- Children are not included in program and policy design.
- Child protection risks are not considered in the design of the facility, resulting in physical spaces that can easily hide abuse.
- Buildings and grounds are unsafe.
- No access to safe drinking water or hygienic sanitation facilities is provided.
- Child protection policies and procedures, including child-safe recruitment practices are inadequate or non-existent.

## MITIGATION STRATEGIES

### Consider child protection during the design of an education program

- Undertake a child protection analysis and risk assessment during design phase that includes: stakeholder analysis; types of abuse faced or perpetrated by children (remembering that boys and girls behave differently); cultural attitudes and influences; gender stereotypes; attitudes to disability and inclusion; other forms of discrimination and vulnerable groups; existing child protection structures and systems (national, local, school based).
- Investigate local attitudes and cultural norms about gender (including gender-based violence), inclusion and discrimination.
- Include strategies to address these in education programming.
- Develop a transition to school program that bridges Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres and schools, and include a specific focus on child protection.

### Ensure child-safe building design to prevent injury and abuse

- Have open spaces where activities can be easily and clearly viewed by others.
- Provide safe, hygienic and inclusive child-only water and sanitation facilities, located close to classrooms, and separated by gender.
- Ensure store rooms and teacher toilets are located across from administration so they can be clearly seen.
- Ensure: adequate lighting in buildings; no hidden spaces; the playground can be seen from school buildings; adequate and safe boundaries (fencing); entry to school only through administration/reception; adequate shelter outdoors; designs that cater for those with a disability.

- Ensure play equipment and furniture are safe, to prevent injury.

#### **Ensure adequate child protection policies and procedures are developed and implemented**

- Comply with, and build on, the minimum standards in DFAT's Child Protection Policy.
- Undertake a mapping and analysis of local support services and authorities. Be aware of national and local legislation and government department guidelines to do with child protection.
- Work with school communities to identify a counsellor or child protection focal point, who is then adequately trained.
- Work with school communities to develop and raise awareness of a school-based child protection code of conduct and safe reporting mechanism. It should:
  - be based on zero tolerance to violence and child abuse
  - have a dedicated child protection focal point to report to
  - ensure a quick and professional response to disclosures or suspicions of harm to a child
  - have clear and specific sanctions for breaches (based on the best interest of the child)
  - have a referral and support process; and
  - include clauses prohibiting:
    - » tutorial/extra help outside formal school processes
    - » child care/babysitting; and
    - » getting students to undertake obligatory chores in their homes.
- Ensure that there are systems in place that monitor the implementation of the code of conduct and other child protection standards. Ensure staff sign onto these.
- Work with school communities to identify strengths in child protection and existing protective factors, and build on those.

#### **Consult and communicate with children, parents and communities**

- Work with children and adults to map safe and unsafe spaces.
- Work with the school to establish a student council who are encouraged and supported to safely promote and talk freely about child rights and protection, and who can be a voice for their peers.
- Consult with students and the school community to help identify what makes a school child friendly.
- Work with the school and parents to establish open communication between teachers and parents. Establish a parent teacher association, a school based parent volunteer program or other mechanisms that provide spaces for parents' involvement in the education setting, including decision making and monitoring of child protection.
- Link education programs and partners with community-based service providers community, authorities, government education departments, and teacher associations. Ensure these entities have robust community-based child protection mechanisms (CBCPM).



## RISK

### 2. Child is abused, exploited or bullied by staff, consultants, volunteers or peers

- Staff discipline children according to cultural norms and discriminations.
- Teachers, parents or caregivers are not trained in alternative or positive discipline, disability inclusion, child rights, child protection, children's development.
- Teachers are not trained in child-centred teaching methods.
- Teachers, children, parents and the community do not know how to or are too scared to report abuse or unsafe behaviours.
- Children are not trained in child protection and child rights.
- Children are not taught self-protection or personal safety skills.
- School is not aware of online bullying and risks to children accessing online platforms.
- No policies about bullying are in place.
- WASH facilities are not separated by gender or students and teachers.
- Low pay for teachers can be linked with sexual compensation.
- Child-safe recruitment measures are not undertaken.
- Access to school for poor and vulnerable students is limited, resulting in them engaging in transactional sex.
- Child protection risk to children accessing or using social media is not considered.
- Child is harassed, abused or exploited on way to school.
- Safety to and from school is not considered.

## MITIGATION STRATEGIES

### Undertake child-safe recruitment

- Undertake child-safe recruitment (including child protection training) of all organisational staff and volunteers working on education programs, including security guards, drivers, cleaners, maintenance officers and building contractors. See also *DFAT Child Protection Guidance Note – Recruitment and Screening*.
- Ensure visitors and donors are supervised, and can be identified as a visitor at all times during school visits.
- Work with school leadership, administration and governments to ensure adequate remuneration, to minimise the likelihood of sexual exploitation as compensation.

### Ensure staff and volunteers are well trained

- Train staff and volunteers in the organisation's child protection policies and procedures.
- Work with teacher associations and departments of education to include the following in teacher training and training for school leadership, administrators and support staff:
  - child rights, child protection and abuse (including online), bullying, safety, gender, inclusion, positive discipline, understanding children's developmental stages, identifying signs and indicators of child abuse, handling complaints and reporting abuse, child-centred teaching methods, and risk assessment.

### **Implement robust and child-friendly complaint handling mechanisms**

- Provide clear complaints mechanisms for staff, children, families and the general community.
  - Make sure that children, parents, carers and the community are able to access the mechanisms.
  - Complaint handling procedures need to include reports of child abuse and exploitation, as well as breaches of the education facility's child protection policy and code of conduct. They should include clear escalation, investigation and disciplinary processes for staff and stakeholders.
  - Provide a suggestion box for children to write down complaints and provide feedback or suggestions.

### **Educate the school community – children and parents/carers**

- Work with children to develop a code of conduct for them that includes peer-to-peer behaviour, as well as adult-to-child and child-to-adult behaviour. Have children sign onto these.
- Work with school communities to ensure safeguards are in place if children are accessing social media via the school curriculum.
- Educate children and young people on the risks of using social media and using social media safely. See also *DFAT Child Protection Guidance Note – Use of Images and Social Media*.
- Educate children on the school's code of conduct, especially regarding bullying.
- Train children and young people in strategies to cope with conflict and bullying.
- Provide training or information sessions to children and parents on the organisation's child protection policies, procedures and codes of conduct, so they understand what behaviours are expected.
- Partner with parents and communities to raise awareness about child rights, protection, inclusion, gender and discrimination.

### **Ensure safe travel to and from school**

- Identify safe ways for children to travel to and from school:
  - establish and promote safe walking paths
  - establish walking buses (children escorted by trusted parents)
  - children walk in groups
  - parents volunteer as helpers or lookouts along the journey to school
  - ensure 'two adult rule' on buses by having bus drivers pick up parent or teacher before the first child
  - train bus drivers in child protection
  - train and employ a male and female guard to supervise the school gate together.
- Organise pick up and drop off points. Encourage staff to recognise who children's families are.
- Be mindful that buddy systems can help keep children safe, but could also expose them to physical, sexual and emotional abuse by peers. These systems need to be closely monitored.

## RISK

### 3. Child is discriminated against causing harm or exclusion

- Staff and peers treat disabled children, ethnic minorities, children affected by HIV/AIDs, LGBT and girl children according to cultural norms and discriminations.
- Children are punished for speaking native language.
- Child protection, child rights, disability awareness, gender or inclusion are not included in teacher training or reflected in curriculum.

## MITIGATION STRATEGIES

### Work with communities and local and national governments to influence change

- Work with local and national governments for legislation change focused on safe schools and effective monitoring of child protection in schools.
- Work with teacher associations and governments to revise and improve school curriculum to include: child and human rights (including protection); gender and inclusion; self-protection; non-violent conflict resolution; anti-bullying; and life skills.
- Advocate for the training and employment of more female teachers, classroom helpers and other support staff.
- Raise awareness in early childhood care and development (ECCD) parenting classes of: child rights; child protection; gender; inclusion; positive discipline; understanding children's developmental stages; and identifying signs, indicators and impacts of child abuse. Promote ECCD as a key contributor to child protection.

## References

Statistics (on page1) come from *Are Schools Safe and Gender Equal Spaces? Findings from a baseline study of school related gender based violence in five countries in Asia*. International Centre for Research on Women and Plan International (2014)

*Five Years on – A Global Update on Violence against Children*. NGO Advisory Council for Follow-up to the UN Study on Violence against Children (2011)

*Are Schools Safe and Gender Equal Spaces? Findings from a baseline study of school related gender based violence in five countries in Asia*. International Centre for Research on Women and Plan International (2014)

*Tackling Violence in Schools: A Global Perspective – Bridging the gap between standards and practice*. Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children (March 2012)

*School Violence – Evidence from Young Lives in Vietnam*. Nguyen Thi Thu Hang and Tran Ngo Thi Minh Tamg. Young Lives, Oxford Department of International Development (ODID), University of Oxford. UK (May 2013)