



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDS IMPLEMENTATION HANDBOOK FOR STAFF AND PARTNERS

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INTRODUCTION

Safeguarding is important throughout the lifecycle of DFAT activities to avoid or minimise the potential negative impacts of DFAT's operations, business activities and development programs on the communities and the environments in which we work and operate.

What is the Handbook?

This *Child and Adult Safeguards Implementation Handbook* (the Handbook) is designed to provide tools to support DFAT staff and partners to meet their safeguarding obligations with respect to child protection and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH).

The Handbook is accompanied by a series of guidance notes that will be updated from time to time on the DFAT website.

How should I use the Handbook?

Staff and partners should read the *Child Protection Policy* and the *Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy* prior to reading the Handbook.

The Handbook is not a rule book. The policies set the standards, obligations and expectations that DFAT staff and partners must comply with. The Handbook provides ancillary guidance and further explanation on how organisations, including DFAT, could approach implementing the policies. The Handbook is designed around different topics and therefore does not need to be read in its entirety. Staff and partners can go straight to the chapters that are most relevant to them at the time.

Organisations implementing the policies can use this guidance to help them develop their own implementation approach, but they remain responsible for ensuring they meet their obligations under the policies.

What information is in the Handbook?

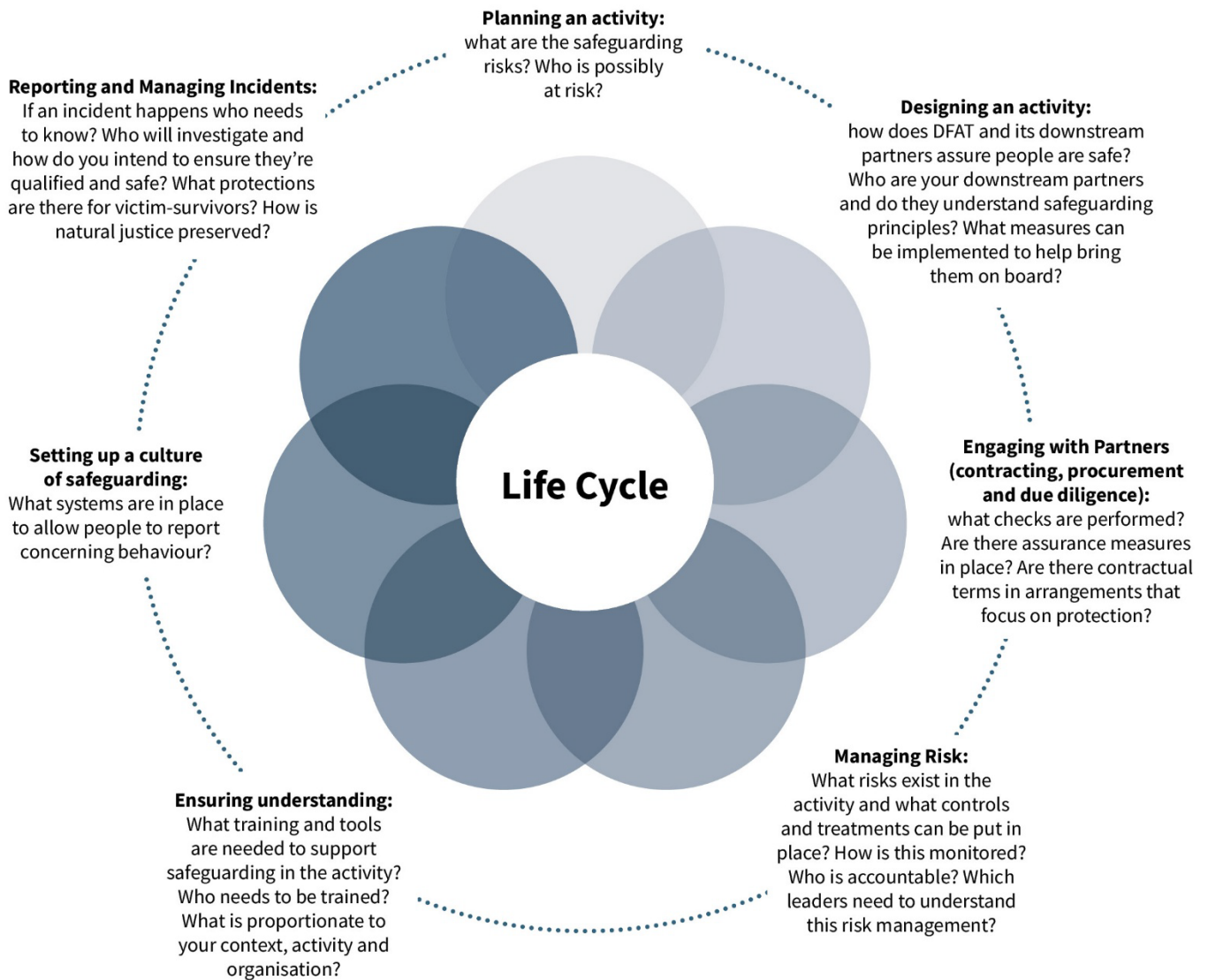
The Handbook includes information on:

- roles and responsibilities under the policies (*Chapter 1*)
- assessing safeguarding risks (*Chapter 2*)
- the Child Protection and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Standards, including how to meet standards to an essential and comprehensive degree (*Chapter 3*)
- compliance with the policies (*Chapter 4*), with more detailed guidance in Appendix E on evidentiary support
- what taking a *victim-survivor-centred* approach means (*Chapter 5*)
- guidance on reporting incidents (*Chapter 6*)
- guidance on social media and the use of images (*Chapter 7*).

The policies operate to safeguard and prevent harm to individuals and communities across all DFAT business and across the life cycle of projects, programs and initiatives undertaken by DFAT and its partners. The below diagram (Figure 1) seeks to illustrate the application of safeguarding principles across the lifecycle.

Figure 1: Safeguarding across the life cycle

Safeguarding across the Life Cycle



CHAPTER 1: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

DFAT's Child Protection and PSEAH policies apply to all DFAT staff and partners¹.

DFAT staff must:

- adhere to the principles of the policies, in addition to their obligations under the *Public Service Act 1999* and internal DFAT policies such as the *Unacceptable Workplace Behaviour Policy*
- comply with DFAT's mandatory reporting requirements and any mandatory reporting requirements to law enforcement as required by legislation
- effectively manage safeguarding risks in their activities by:
 - conducting due diligence processes for partners/suppliers.
 - including mandatory Child Protection and PSEAH clauses in all agreements, grants and contracts
 - undertaking risk assessments in relation to child protection and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) (refer to [Chapter 2](#))
 - monitoring partner compliance with the policies, including providing support to downstream partners in a manner proportionate to the activity, context and organisation
- comply with relevant Australian and/or local legislation.

DFAT partners must:

- adhere to the principles of the policies
- comply with DFAT's mandatory reporting requirements and any mandatory reporting requirements to law enforcement as required by legislation
- comply with relevant Australian and/or local legislation
- take a risk-based approach in applying the Child Protection and PSEAH Standards (refer to [Chapter 2](#))
- put controls in place to manage and monitor the risk of child exploitation, abuse and harm and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
- support downstream partners to meet all policy obligations.

The Child Protection and PSEAH Standards are primarily aimed at partner organisations. However, **individuals** contracted by DFAT or our partners, or those receiving DFAT-funded grants, scholarships or fellowships, and volunteers must:

- sign and adhere to a code(s) of conduct that aligns with the Child Protection and PSEAH policies
- comply with DFAT's mandatory reporting requirements and any mandatory reporting requirements to law enforcement as required by legislation
- comply with relevant Australian and/or local legislation
- **For child protection:** if in '[direct, sustained or significant contact](#)' with children, provide a recent police check, working with children/vulnerable people check or a locally appropriate alternative
- **For PSEAH:** if the risk of SEAH is assessed as [high](#), provide a recent police check, working with children/vulnerable people check or a locally appropriate alternative or, where this is not possible, a self-declaration.

These obligations apply regardless of the period the engagement with DFAT lasts. The risk-based approach of the policy does not imply there is less risk associated with shorter engagements. Indeed, there may be greater risks due to less oversight (in the case of one-off grants) or weaker systems.

¹ See "Scope" in Child Protection and PSEAH policies for definition of *DFAT staff*, *DFAT partners* and *Individuals*.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING SAFEGUARDING RISKS

The Child Protection and PSEAH policies apply a risk-based approach, ensuring that the application of the Standards is appropriate to the level of risk. This chapter explains how DFAT staff and partners should establish the risk level for child protection and for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment associated with the activity.

DFAT staff and partners must assess activities, including downstream activities, to identify the level of risk.

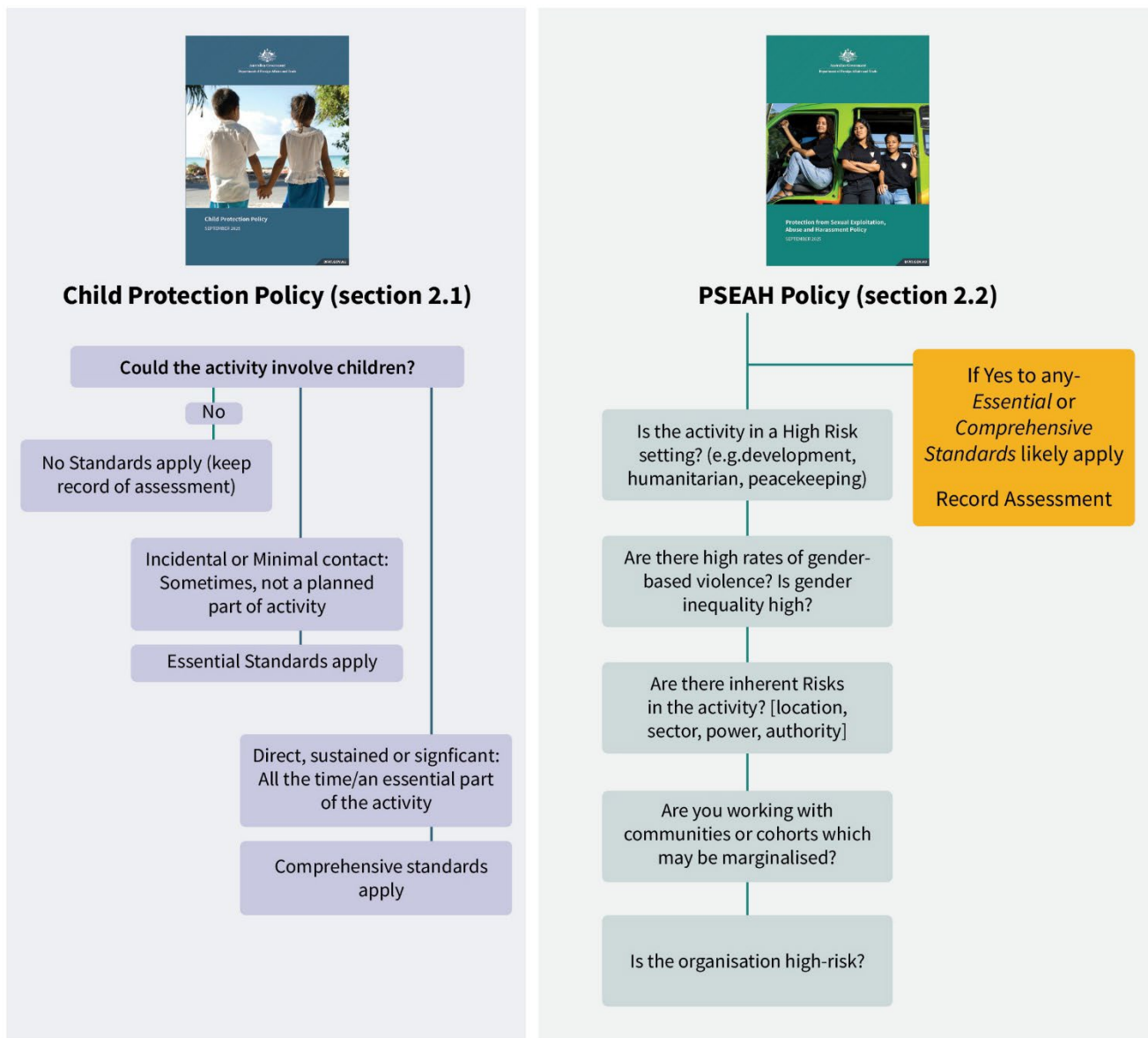
The DFAT Child Protection and PSEAH policies each include five Standards of practice, and there are two levels of the Standards – Essential and Comprehensive. The risk level of an activity will determine whether any Standards apply and, if so, whether the Standards should be applied at the Essential level or the Comprehensive level.

DFAT staff and partners must document the risk assessments and continue to monitor for any change in the risk settings. Partners may be asked from time to time to produce their risk management records.

The key considerations for establishing the level of risk in relation to child protection are set out in section 2.1 (below) and the key considerations for establishing the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment are set out in section 2.2. These considerations are summarised in the diagram in Figure 2 (below).

Figure 2: Assessing safeguard risk levels

Assessing Safeguard Risk Levels



SECTION 2.1 ESTABLISHING THE CHILD PROTECTION RISK LEVEL

There are two key questions to help DFAT staff and partners establish the child protection risk:

1. Could the activity involve **contact with children**?
2. Where there could be contact, is the interaction **incidental or minimal contact** or does the activity involve **direct, sustained or significant contact**?

Levels of contact with children

Level of contact	Definition	Child Protection Standards required
No contact with children	Activities with no anticipated interaction with children	None
Incidental or minimal contact with children	Activities where interaction with children is limited, indirect or incidental	Essential Standards
Direct, sustained or significant contact with children	Activities involving regular or ongoing interaction with children	Comprehensive Standards

Understanding levels of contact with children – Examples of activities

No Contact:

- Office-based roles, including attending meetings or training
- One-off delivery of corporate goods such as equipment or materials
- Provision of a service or a trade such as catering, IT, repair of air-conditioning or photocopier
- Remote, desk-based policy advice or writing

Incidental or minimal contact:

- The focus of the activity is solely engaged with adults but is in a setting where children may be present. This could be in any community or institutional setting, health centre/hospital, school etc. The activity may not have anything directly to do with children but, by conducting DFAT business in any of these settings, you will most likely have incidental contact with children which creates some risk.
- Attendance at – or delivery of goods or services at – public diplomacy events where children may be present under the supervision of parents/carers, such as catering or food service

Direct, sustained or significant contact:

- Activities involving children where individuals may be in a position of trust, influence, supervision, or authority over children
- Could include one-off interaction or ongoing interactions
- Teachers or volunteers delivering regular lessons
- Health care workers providing services to children
- Conduct of interviews with children or collection of stories and images of children for the media, public diplomacy, research, evaluations etc
- Sports coaches or arts facilitators

- Any activity conducted in child spaces or child residential settings

Understanding child protection risks – Guiding questions

The level of contact with children is not always obvious at the beginning of an activity. Complete the following checklist for a more detailed assessment of the risks and to determine what steps you need to take to mitigate and manage any child protection risks (refer to the [‘standards’](#)).

If the answer to any of the questions below is **Yes**, then the risk of child exploitation, abuse and harm **will be higher** because the activity could have contact with children in situations that could increase their exposure to child protection risk.

This means that unless there is zero contact with children (for example, a goods and service delivery), either the *Essential* or *Comprehensive* Child Protection Standards must be implemented for the activity to mitigate the risk (refer to [Chapter 3](#) of this Handbook).

Important note on higher risk contexts

Even if an **activity** is assessed to have no contact or minimal contact with children or people, the **context** in which it is delivered may elevate the safeguarding risk.

Any activity delivered in a development, humanitarian or peacekeeping setting is considered higher risk, regardless of the intended level of contact with children or people. This is because personnel may come into unsupervised or informal contact with children or people outside of formal work settings, and because local regulatory or accountability systems may be weak or disrupted, increasing the vulnerability of children.

Guiding Questions

Risk Factor: High Risk Setting

- Is the activity in a development, humanitarian or peacekeeping setting?
- Are there high rates of gender-based violence in the country where the activity is occurring?

Risk Factor: Inherent Risk

- Will personnel be deployed internationally, or in a remote or rural location (outside their usual residence or organisation)?

Risk Factor: Degree of isolation

- Will the activity involve being alone with or meeting one-on-one with children?

Risk Factor: Online contact or access to personal details

Will the activity:

- involve direct one-on-one or group access to children online?
- involve supervising child-to-child online contact?
- involve online access to a child’s or children’s personal and/or confidential information?
- involve educating children and supporting adults on cyber safety?

- involve access to personal or confidential information of children?

Risk factor: *Child/children less able to protect themselves or report situations of harm*

- Will the activity engage with children who are more likely to be in situations of vulnerability which would increase their protection risks?
- For example: children with disabilities, children and families impacted by disasters, children who have been subject to trafficking, and unaccompanied minors

Risk factor: *Degree of physical contact*

- Will the activity involve demonstrating a skill to children?
- Will positions involve physical contact with or touching of children?
- For example: sports coaching, medical examination, dressing, bathing, toileting

Risk factor: *Degree of monopoly*

- Will the activity involve a monopoly for the provision of goods and/or services to children or their carers that may create a power imbalance?
- For example: medical or health services, or food distribution

Risk Factor: *Degree of supervision*

- Will the activity involve engagement with children that is not observed or monitored?
- Will there be an insufficient number of trained staff to supervise engagement with children?

Risk Factor: *Degree of trust*

Will the activity:

- involve developing close, personal, long-term relationships with children?
- involve transporting children/youth?
- involve one-on-one supervision, overnight supervision, out of town activities or spending extended periods of time with children (for example, camps), provision of disability support services (for example, sign language)?
- contribute to important decisions regarding the future of children?

Risk Factor: *Child work or labour*

- Is there a possibility that the activity will lead to the employment of children?
- Is there a possibility that the activity will lead to the removal of children from school?
- Is there a possibility that the activity will lead to children being employed in hazardous work?

Risk Factor: *Parent/caregiver more likely to be in situations of vulnerability*

Will the activity:

- engage with parents who cannot meet the needs of and protect their children?
- engage with parents who experience challenges that contribute to their ability to provide care (for example, poor health, malnutrition)?
- engage with parents who experience isolation and exclusion and do not have access to support systems (for example, displaced persons, humanitarian settings)?

Risk Factor: *Organisational risk*

- Is the organisation/funding recipient a small community-based organisation with limited experience and/or low capacity to deliver the required activity?
- Does the organisation/funding recipient:
 - have poor leadership on child protection?
 - have a historic lack of diversity in the workplace?
 - lack organisational policies and procedures for child protection?

SECTION 2.2 ESTABLISHING THE RISK LEVEL OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) is perpetrated in workplaces and communities in all sectors and countries. The risk is not limited to work internationally. Given how widespread SEAH is, and the complex settings in which DFAT operates:

- very few activities would be considered low or very low risk but could, for example, include corporate goods and services delivered in a low-risk setting
- most DFAT activities should be rated as at least a low-to-medium risk of SEAH,
 - meaning that most DFAT partners will need to apply, at a minimum, the Essential Standards whether in Australia or overseas.

⚠ Important note on higher risk contexts

All DFAT partners delivering programs in high-risk settings, including but not limited to development, humanitarian and peacekeeping setting, must meet the **Comprehensive PSEAH Standards**.

The risks of SEAH are not always obvious at the beginning of an activity. There are many other factors that can increase the risk or the vulnerability of people to SEAH beyond the activity taking place in a development, humanitarian and peacekeeping setting.

Understanding SEAH risks – Examples of activities

The table below provides practical examples of activities that fall under each level of risk to help you make your assessment.

Level of risk	Examples of activities	PSEAH Standards
Very low risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-off delivery of corporate goods such as equipment or materials in a low-risk setting • Remote, desk-based policy advice or writing 	None or consider Essential Standards in development, humanitarian or peacekeeping settings
Low to medium risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at – or delivery of goods or services at – public diplomacy events, such as catering or food service • Provision of a service or a trade such as catering or IT • Provision of group training, attendance at meetings 	Essential
High risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of programs in development, humanitarian or peacekeeping settings • Activities where DFAT partners may be in a position of trust, influence, supervision or authority • Could include repeated interactions • Infrastructure or construction activities, including WASH • Scholarships, study tours, fellowships 	Comprehensive

Understanding risks of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment – Guiding questions

The below list provides some questions to consider when thinking about your activity and the role of personnel to help you make your assessment. The list of SEAH risk factors is not exhaustive but is intended to guide DFAT staff and partners to understand the risks and assess what measures need to be implemented to mitigate these risks (refer to [Chapter 3](#) of this Handbook).

If the answer to any of the questions below is **Yes**, then the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment will be higher. Either the Essential or Comprehensive PSEAH Standards must be implemented to mitigate the risks for the activity (refer to [Chapter 3](#) of this guidance).

Risk Factor: High-risk setting

- Is the activity in a development, humanitarian and peacekeeping setting?
- Are there high rates of gender-based violence in the country where the activity is occurring?

Risk Factor: High-risk activities

Will the activity:

- involve construction or infrastructure in development settings? (Note: These can have a higher risk of SEAH given the construction industry is male-dominated and construction in development often involves temporary movement of workers from other areas.)
- involve humanitarian or disaster response?
- involve the provision of security services in conflict, post-conflict or disaster settings?

Risk Factor: Inherent risk and degree of isolation

- Will the activity deploy personnel internationally, or to a remote or rural location (outside their usual residence or organisation)?

Risk Factor: Interaction with individuals, especially women, who:

Will the activity involve interaction with individuals, especially women, who:

- are young adults?
- have a disability?
- belong to an ethnic, indigenous, religious or sexual minority?
- are experiencing poverty?
- are sex workers?
- are part of families impacted by disasters?
- are displaced, refugees, migrants or asylum seekers?
- belong to a female-headed household?
- are victims/survivors of trafficking and/or other forms of sexual and gender-based violence?
- are accessing residential/shelter services?

Risk Factor: Online contact or access to personal details

Will the activity:

- involve direct one-on-one or group access to people online?
- involve supervising online contact?
- involve online access to personal or confidential information?
- involve informing adults about cyber safety?
- involve access to sensitive/confidential personal information?
- For example: health care workers, counselling services, medical personnel, humanitarian aid coordinators.

Risk Factor: Degree of physical contact

- Will the activity involve demonstrating a skill?
- Will positions involve physical contact with or touching adults?

Risk Factor: Degree of monopoly/provision of goods and/or services that may create a power imbalance

Will the activity involve a monopoly for the provision of goods and/or services that may create a power imbalance in relation to:

- vulnerable groups of women (for example, women escaping trafficking or gender-based violence)?
- food distribution?
- medical supplies?
- emergency supplies following a disaster?
- residential/shelter services?
- disability services?
- justice facilities?
- counselling and support services?
- health sector programs?

Risk Factor: Degree of trust

- a. Will the activity involve developing close personal long-term relationships?

Risk Factor: Staff or personnel who have an actual or perceived level of authority

- b. Will the activity involve positions that will have an actual or perceived level of authority?
- c. *For example: security workers, police, teachers, aid workers, humanitarian workers, medical personnel or security services.*

Risk Factor: Organisational risk

- Is the organisation/funding recipient a small community-based organisation with limited experience and/or low capacity to deliver the required activity?
- Does the organisation/funding recipient:
 - have poor leadership on PSEAH?
 - have a historic lack of diversity in the workplace?
 - fail to consider PSEAH in core organisational policies and procedures?
 - have geographically isolated work spaces, with employees working in small groups and having fewer opportunities to interact with their head office?
 - have primarily young workforces?
 - normalise 'sexualised banter'?
 - tolerate/encourage alcohol consumption?
 - have a very hierarchical structure?
- *For example: are there both high-ranking (executives) and low-ranking employees in the organisational hierarchy; are there gendered power disparities (for example, most of the low-ranking employees are female)?*
- have poor reporting mechanisms and transparency for incidents of SEAH?

CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTING CHILD PROTECTION AND PSEAH STANDARDS

This chapter assists DFAT staff and partners to understand the key differences between the Essential and Comprehensive Standards and the requirements they must meet after assessing the risk of child exploitation, abuse and harm and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) as described in [Chapter 2](#).

⚠ Reminder:

For **child protection**, the policies require that:

- activities must meet the Essential Standards where interaction with children is incidental or minimal
- activities must meet the Comprehensive Standards where interaction with children is direct, sustained or significant.

For **PSEAH**, the policies require that:

- activities in development, humanitarian or peacekeeping settings must meet the Comprehensive Standards
- for activities in other settings:
 - where the risk of SEAH is low to medium, activities must meet the Essential Standards
 - where the risk of SEAH is high, activities must meet the Comprehensive Standards.

There are five standards in both the policies, to be met to either an *essential* or *comprehensive* degree. These are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: The five standards

<p>Standard 1: Policy, procedures and code of conduct</p> 	<p>Standard 2: Reporting mechanism and investigation procedures</p> 	<p>Standard 3: Risk management processes</p> 	<p>Standard 4: Training</p> 	<p>Standard 5: Recruitment and screening processes</p> 
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SECTION 3.1 THE FIVE CHILD PROTECTION AND PSEAH STANDARDS

Standard 1: Policy, procedures and code of conduct

A critical element in building and maintaining a safe organisation is to develop and implement well-understood child protection and PSEAH commitments. This may take the form of commitment statements, policies, procedures and codes of conduct.

These documents can be both external and internal, and serve to communicate to your personnel, the public and other stakeholders that your organisation takes child protection and PSEAH seriously. They also act as a deterrent to potential perpetrators.

Child protection policies focus on risks specific to children, including their developmental vulnerabilities, limited autonomy, and reliance on adults for care and protection. PSEAH policies respond to risks that arise from power imbalances in adult relationships, particularly gendered power dynamics and abuse of authority within professional, programmatic or service delivery settings.

DFAT partners may choose either:

- to **develop separate child protection and PSEAH policies**, which can improve visibility and strengthen organisational understanding and response to the specific risks, obligations, and mitigation measures required for each area; or
- to **adopt a combined safeguarding policy**, which may be more appropriate where the same internal systems (for example, recruitment, screening, reporting or investigation procedures) apply to both child protection and PSEAH.

*If a combined policy is used, it must include **specific references to both child protection and PSEAH** and provide clear guidance on the unique risks and required practices for each.*

In some cases, elements of PSEAH, such as sexual harassment in the workplace, may also be addressed in human resources or bullying and harassment policies, but DFAT still expects explicit inclusion of PSEAH and child protection (where relevant) standards in the organisation's core safeguarding policies. Care should be taken to ensure policies explicitly cover non-employees, volunteers and any person conducting activities on behalf of the organisation in higher risk contexts, including any field work.

Standard 1: Essential Standard

Standard requirements:

- The organisation has a child protection and/or PSEAH policy or statement or other documented policies and procedures which meet the expectations of DFAT's Child Protection and/or PSEAH policies.
- **For child protection:** The organisation has a code of conduct that is consistent with the DFAT Child Protection Code of Conduct. All personnel are required to acknowledge they have read and agreed to the organisation's code of conduct.
- **For PSEAH:** The organisation has a code of conduct that is consistent with DFAT's PSEAH Policy, which includes the prohibition of transactional sex in high-risk settings. All personnel are required to acknowledge they have read and agreed to the organisation's code of conduct.

Note: Downstream partners are encouraged to develop their own policies, procedures and codes specific to child protection and/or PSEAH, but may adopt the policies of their upstream partner if appropriate.

a. Policy or statement

Your policy or statement can be brief but at a minimum should include:

- An organisational commitment to zero-tolerance for child exploitation, abuse and harm and/or SEAH
- a summary of the organisation's duty of care and obligations
- an organisational commitment to prevent, report and respond to concerns.

It should be communicated to all personnel and partners and be able to be adapted for community engagement. Depending on the program and context, it may be best that it is translated into local language. See example statements below.

An example **Statement** that would satisfy the **Child Protection Essential Standard** requirement:

[Organisation] is committed to the protection of children. [Organisation] has zero tolerance to child exploitation, abuse and harm and zero tolerance for inaction to prevent, report or respond. Children have a right to survival, development, protection and participation as stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. [Organisation] takes its duty of care seriously, including responding to reports and complaints, and aims at all times to provide the safest possible programs and environments for children.

An example **Statement** that would satisfy the **PSEAH Essential Standard** requirement:

[Organisation] has zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in all aspects of its work and for inaction to prevent, report or respond to SEAH. [Organisation] takes its duty of care seriously, including responding to reports and complaints, and aims at all times to provide the safest possible working environment and programs.

b. Code of Conduct

Your code of conduct should:

- make clear acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in relation to children and adults
- establish a shared understanding of professional boundaries and behavioural standards
- form the basis for disciplinary action where unsafe or inappropriate behaviour occurs.

DFAT partners can adopt a sample of PSEAH and child protection codes of conduct (Appendices A–C) into their own code/s of conduct or human resources documents.

Codes of conduct for child protection and PSEAH may be combined.

Regardless of the approach, DFAT requires:

- acknowledgement by all personnel (signature or equivalent)
- regular reinforcement through training and supervision.

c. Downstream Partner Alignment

Your organisation must either:

- support downstream partners to develop their own policies and codes – provide templates, mentoring or policy guidance where needed **or**
- where capacity is limited, allow them to adopt your policy if appropriate.

Your organisation must include safeguarding clauses which outline expectations in all subcontracts, grants and memoranda of understanding.

Standard 1: Comprehensive Standard

DFAT partners operating in high-risk settings (for SEAH), or whose work involves direct, sustained, or significant contact with children, must meet the Comprehensive Standard. This means having a fully developed safeguarding framework that reflects the complexity of the work and the potential risks involved.

Standard requirements:

- The organisation has detailed child protection and/or PSEAH policies and procedures in place that meet the expectations of DFAT's Child Protection and/or PSEAH policies and are subject to regular review. The policy should demonstrate the organisation's commitment to zero tolerance for child exploitation, abuse and harm and/or sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and establish procedures in line with these standards.
- **For child protection:** The organisation has its own code of conduct that is consistent with the DFAT Child Protection Code of Conduct. All personnel are required to acknowledge they have read and agreed to the organisation's code of conduct.
- **For PSEAH:** The organisation has its own code of conduct that is consistent with DFAT's PSEAH Policy, which includes the prohibition of transactional sex in high-risk settings. All personnel are required to acknowledge they have read and agreed to the organisation's code of conduct.

Note: Downstream partners are encouraged to develop their own policies, procedures and codes specific to child protection and/or PSEAH but may adopt the policies of their upstream partner if appropriate.

a. Comprehensive child protection / PSEAH or a safeguarding policy

Your safeguarding policy (or policies) must:

- apply to all personnel and downstream partners
- address child protection (as appropriate) and PSEAH, either in separate or combined formats
- reflect your organisation's commitment to zero tolerance and duty of care
- be reviewed regularly (at least every three years)
- cover all DFAT policy standards.

Comprehensive child protection and PSEAH policies should cover the following:

- **Statement of commitment to child protection and PSEAH** – This should articulate your organisation's commitment to child protection and PSEAH, signal leadership commitment, and reinforce accountability to staff, partners and communities.
- **Scope** – Define who the policy applies to – for example, staff, board members, consultants, volunteers, contractors, visitors, suppliers. This ensures everyone involved in your operations is aware of their responsibilities.
- **Guiding principles** – Outline the beliefs and values that inform your safeguarding approach, such as child rights, do no harm, victim-survivor-centred responses, and inclusion.
- **Broader context** – Describe why safeguarding matters in your work. Include the risks associated with your setting (for example, humanitarian, development, infrastructure) and the impacts of child harm, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. This helps staff understand the relevance of the policy.

- **Definitions** – Ensure a shared understanding of key terms – for example, child abuse, SEAH, transactional sex, safeguarding, victim-survivor. Where possible, align with DFAT’s definitions.
- **Implementation of the policy** – This section should, at a minimum, describe how the five DFAT standards are applied in your organisation but may also cover additional implementation guidance depending on the nature of your work. You may include all these sections directly in the policy or refer to separate procedures documents. The key is to ensure each of the DFAT standards is covered somewhere in your documentation:
 - Policy, procedures and code of conduct
 - Reporting mechanism and investigation procedures
 - Risk management processes
 - Training
 - Recruitment and screening processes.
- **Code of conduct** – You may include this in the policy or attach it as a separate annex.
- **Collection and use of children’s images and stories** – Include guidance on informed consent, safety and dignity when collecting or publishing images or stories of children (this is only relevant to the Child Protection Policy).
- **Policy review** – State when and how the policy will be reviewed – DFAT recommends at least once every three years or when major changes occur. Include who is responsible for reviewing and approving updates.

These are the recommended minimum areas that the policy could cover. It is up to the DFAT partner to determine its own coverage which may include additional areas depending on the type of organisation and nature of business, for example: working with downstream partners, additional requirements for humanitarian or emergency contexts, conditions specific to the area of business such as construction or data management etc.

b. Documented procedures

In addition to policies, your organisation must have documented procedures that describe how child protection and PSEAH commitments are put into practice day-to-day and who in your organisation is responsible for what. Depending on your structure, these may sit in a single procedures manual or be integrated across your operations (for example, human resources, program delivery, governance).

c. Code of conduct

In addition to the requirements outlined in the table above for the Essential Standard, to meet the Comprehensive Standard, your code of conduct must be developed by your own organisation, or in certain circumstances downstream partners may adopt a code of conduct from an upstream partner.

d. Downstream partner alignment

Your organisation must either:

- support downstream partners to develop their own policies and codes – provide templates, mentoring or policy guidance where needed **or**
- where capacity is limited, allow them to adopt your policy if appropriate.

Your organisation must include safeguarding clauses which outline expectations in all subcontracts, grants and memoranda of understanding.

Standard 2: Reporting mechanism and investigation procedures

Strong reporting and investigation procedures are essential to safeguarding and accountability. DFAT requires all partners to establish systems that enable safe, confidential and accessible reporting of both child protection and SEAH concerns, and to investigate allegations appropriately.

Differences between PSEAH and child protection risks have practical implications for how reporting and response systems are designed and implemented:

- **Accessibility² and barriers to reporting:** It is acknowledged that there are many barriers to disclosure and reporting for children and adults. Mechanisms must therefore be designed to be accessible, culturally appropriate to both children and adults, and safe. This often requires different formats, messaging, and intermediaries.

For example, children may need visual tools, trusted adults to help report, or child-friendly explanations, while adults may need anonymous channels, assurances of confidentiality and different safety mechanisms. Children may disclose abuse indirectly via a story, through their play or a drawing and adults might observe indicators of abuse in the child's behaviour. Training on child disclosures/signs of abuse may improve accessibility for children. Where possible, consult with communities, including children/young people, on accessible reporting pathways.

- **Legal obligations:** Child protection often involves mandatory reporting to government child protection agencies, depending on national or local laws. Failure to report may constitute a legal offence. SEAH, on the other hand, may involve different legal thresholds for reporting to law enforcement or authorities, especially in contexts where SEAH is not well-defined in law or is under-reported due to stigma or weak protections. This makes a clear understanding of local legislation and DFAT's mandatory reporting requirements essential. Further information on legal obligations in Australia is outlined in Appendix H, but program managers should also acquaint themselves with local legislation.
- **Investigations:** Internal investigation protocols may differ depending on whether the allegation involves a child or an adult, and whether criminal conduct is suspected.

Investigations into child protection incidents may need to pause or adapt to avoid interfering with statutory child protection processes.

Similarly, SEAH investigations may also need to pause or adapt to avoid interfering with a criminal investigation. They may also need gender-responsive interviewing techniques and protections against retaliation (see also [Chapter 5: Victim-Survivor Centred Approaches to Safeguarding](#)).

- **Best interests of the child:** While the principle of a victim-survivor-centred approach is relevant for both children and adults, children, depending on their age and developmental stage, are not always capable of making decisions in their best interest. Sometimes, adults in caretaker roles are required to make decisions on a child's behalf. All actions and decisions must prioritise a child's rights, safety and wellbeing, and be underpinned by a 'do no harm' approach that prioritises [the best interests of the child](#). Where possible, children should be consulted and engaged in decision-making about their wellbeing.

For all these reasons, DFAT partners must ensure that both child protection and PSEAH reporting is addressed explicitly within their safeguarding procedures. This can be done through integrated or separate systems, as long as the systems are robust, accessible and aligned with DFAT's expectations, victim-survivor rights and applicable laws.

² Refer Appendix G on Disability Inclusion

Standard 2: Essential Standard

Standard requirements:

- The organisation can receive and manage incident reports safely and confidentially in accordance with Australian and/or local law.
- Reporting mechanisms are accessible to all stakeholders including children.
- The organisation must report incidents and investigation outcomes to DFAT.

a. Safe management of incident reports

Your organisation must ensure reporting processes are:

- **victim-survivor centred**
- based on a **'do no harm'** approach
- aligned with trauma-informed practice
- age-appropriate and context-sensitive (for example, child-friendly for child protection, culturally safe for PSEAH).

b. Confidential management of incident reports

To ensure confidentiality:

- limit data sharing **only to what is necessary**
- **de-identify** reports or shared data
- obtain the **informed consent** of the victim-survivor prior to sharing any identifying information.

Note: In child protection cases, mandatory reporting laws may require disclosure even without consent. Partners must follow applicable legal obligations and prioritise the best interests of the child.

Measures may include:

- dedicated email address with **controlled access**
- secure protocols for physical mail
- secure data storage systems with **access controls**.

Standard 2: Comprehensive Standard

Standard requirements:

- The organisation has a well-publicised, accessible (including to children), confidential and safe mechanism for reporting child protection and/or SEAH concerns or incidents. The mechanism should include protections from retaliation.
- The organisation has documented procedures for managing child protection and/or SEAH incidents that include trauma-informed responses, procedural fairness, transparent and timely investigation processes, privacy protections and support for victim-survivors (including children if the victim-survivor is a child). It should also include appropriate disciplinary actions if the incident involves their personnel.
- The organisation ensures children, families and communities are informed – in accessible and culturally appropriate ways – about expected behaviours, reporting mechanisms and investigation processes. Reporting mechanisms are accessible to all stakeholders, including children.
- The organisation must report incidents and investigation outcomes to DFAT.

a. Principles for reporting and investigation mechanisms

Reporting and investigation mechanisms should be guided by the following principles:

- well-publicised
- accessible
- confidential
- safe
- protection from retaliation
- victim-survivor centred and trauma-informed
- procedural fairness
- transparent
- timely and responsive
- privacy protections
- support for victim-survivors
- appropriate disciplinary actions.

Refer to the table below: *Principles for reporting and investigation mechanisms – quick reference guide.*

b. Awareness of reporting and investigation procedures

Your organisation must ensure children and people, communities and all personnel are consulted on, and kept informed about, expected behaviours, reporting mechanisms and investigation processes.

Information about expected behaviours, reporting mechanisms and investigations processes can be shared in the following ways:

- Communicate expected behaviours by sharing your code of conduct and expectations for professional conduct or behaviour including “do’s and don’ts”.
- Communication should be accessible to people with disabilities.
- Use plain language.
- Translate into local languages.
- Display in public places such as program sites, offices, schools, health centres, etc.
- Communicate information visually (posters, illustrated guides, infographics).
- Explain verbally, including through community meetings, school visits, and one-on-one conversations.
- Include in all training and inductions.
- Staff and partners should receive training during induction on DFAT and organisational safeguarding standards.

Volunteers, contractors and short-term workers should also receive a short safeguarding briefing before engaging.

Principles for reporting and investigation mechanisms – quick reference guide

Principles	Guidance
Well-publicised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting options should be clearly communicated to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ personnel ○ community members (including children) ○ downstream partners. • Ensure stakeholders know what, how and to whom to report.
Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide multiple reporting methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ hotlines, SMS, suggestion boxes ○ trained safeguarding focal points ○ in-person, phone, online, email, post ○ trained staff who understand child disclosures and indicators of child exploitation, abuse and harm. • Ensure accessibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ in local languages ○ for people of different ages, abilities, identities, and contexts (for example, children, people with disability, Indigenous people, LGBTIQ+) ○ using mechanisms that are physically accessible, culturally safe, and age appropriate.
Confidential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit data access and disclosure. • Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ controlled-access email ○ secure handling of physical mail ○ secure, access-controlled data storage. • Obtain informed consent for sharing identifiable information. • Protect the identity of victim-survivors and alleged perpetrators. • Investigations must follow strict confidentiality protocols. • Information is shared on a strict 'need-to-know' basis.
Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre the process on victim-survivor needs and safety. • Ensure all elements (confidentiality, retaliation protection, trauma-informed response) are in place.
Protection from retaliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a whistleblower policy. • Ensure people feel safe to report. • DFAT partners must not tolerate retaliation against: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ victim-survivors or complainants ○ people cooperating in investigations.
Trauma-informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and respond to trauma by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ minimising re-traumatisation ○ recognising signs of trauma or distress ○ supporting staff with managing vicarious trauma. • Provide appropriate support for victim-survivors.
Procedural fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure objectivity and impartiality by ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ all parties are treated fairly ○ there are no conflicts of interest ○ a facts-based approach. • Ensure independence and non-interference, for example by ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ independent (preferably external to the organisation) investigators ○ no management or board interference. • Investigation procedures should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ decisions based on factual evidence

Principles	Guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ written notification to the individual under investigation, including the general nature of the allegations ○ an opportunity for the individual to respond to allegations and present relevant information or supporting evidence ○ confidential handling of all information related to the investigation, noting that anonymity may not be possible if the allegation is substantiated ○ access to interview transcripts for review and correction ○ the option for the alleged perpetrator to have a support person or interpreter present during interviews.
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● After reporting to DFAT (Human and Environmental Safeguards Section (HMS)), share investigation information with relevant parties, while: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ respecting confidentiality and data protection. ● Investigators must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ inform the subject they are under investigation ○ update the victim-survivor and/or complainant on progress ○ document methodology, evidence, and conclusions.
Timely and responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Investigations should occur within a reasonable timeframe. ● Acknowledge all complaints with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ confirmation of receipt of the complaint ○ expected investigation timeframe. ● Follow up with the victim-survivor on outcomes.
Privacy protections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure privacy through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ confidentiality measures (see above) ○ secure data management ○ informed consent procedures.
Support for victim-survivors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offer support regardless of whether the victim-survivor consents to the investigation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ medical care ○ psychological support ○ legal assistance ○ socioeconomic support ○ referrals to reputable service providers.
Appropriate disciplinary actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If an incident is substantiated take proportionate disciplinary action, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ dismissal ○ suspension (with or without pay) ○ demotion ○ mandatory training ○ loss of benefits ○ ineligibility for promotion. ● If the offence is criminal, consider a report to local authorities or Australian authorities, depending on jurisdiction, and if it is safe for the victim-survivor (and in some cases an alleged perpetrator) and with the victim-survivor's consent to do so. ● Disciplinary action demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ justice for the victim-survivor ○ accountability for the perpetrator ○ organisational commitment to zero tolerance ○ risk management and prevention of re-offending.

Standard 3: Risk management processes

Effective risk management is a cornerstone of safeguarding and must address both child protection and PSEAH.

Child protection risks often relate to direct or indirect contact with children, lack of supervision, and environments where children are particularly vulnerable due to age, power imbalances or dependency. Risks of SEAH, by contrast, frequently stem from systemic power imbalances, inadequate complaint mechanisms and contextual or cultural norms that can enable abuse and discourage reporting. Because of these differences, DFAT requires its partners to conduct risk assessments that explicitly consider both child protection and SEAH. This includes assessing who may be at risk, where those risks are most likely to arise, and how to mitigate them effectively.

An intersectional approach must be applied to risk assessment and subsequent safeguarding, recognising that factors such as context, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and systemic marginalisation can increase vulnerability to harm and shape safeguarding needs. Refer to DFAT's [Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion analysis - Good practice note](#).

Risk assessments may be integrated or separate, providing both child protection and PSEAH are clearly and adequately addressed. The approach should be proportionate to the context and activity.

Standard 3: Essential Standard

Standard requirements:

- The organisation undertakes a risk assessment in relation to child protection and/or SEAH including mitigation actions tailored to the activities and the context. The risk assessment is reviewed at least annually and revised as needed.

The risk assessment:

- can be a simple process
- should be completed before the deployment of personnel and/or before the activity commences
- identifies key risks and mitigation actions
- may be a one-off risk assessment or may be reviewed and updated as needed (at least annually) depending on the duration of the activity
- should be documented.

For an overview of how to undertake a risk assessment, refer to the table below: *Good practice guidance for undertaking a risk assessment*.

Standard 3: Comprehensive Standard

Standard requirements:

- The organisation undertakes a risk assessment in relation to child protection and/or SEAH including mitigation actions tailored to the activities and the context. The risk assessment is reviewed at least annually and revised as needed.
- The organisation must provide documented evidence that senior management and executive boards have visibility of risk management in relation to child protection and SEAH.
- The organisation has documented evidence of its expectations for downstream partners and how those partners will manage risks in relation to child protection and SEAH.

a. Risk assessment

The risk assessment should:

- be detailed and clearly outline factors that heighten risks for children and/or adults in either the activity, the context, the communities most affected etc.
- be completed before the activity commences as part of the design or planning process
- identify key risks, the likelihood and consequence or impact of each risk, risk ratings, the mitigation actions, responsible persons and timeframes for implementation of mitigations
- be regularly reviewed and updated (at least annually) and the implementation of mitigation actions should be monitored
- be documented.

For an overview of how to undertake a risk assessment, refer to the table below: *Good practice guidance for undertaking a risk assessment*.

b. Reporting to senior management and executive boards

DFAT partners can ensure senior management and executive boards are well informed of child protection and PSEAH risks through the following:

- Board meetings: Include safeguarding and risk management as a standing agenda item on all senior management and executive boards and provide briefing papers.
- Risk registers: Provide copies of organisational or project-level risk registers showing identified safeguarding risks, mitigation measures, and evidence that these have been reviewed or endorsed by senior management.
- Safeguarding reporting in annual reports: Include sections in annual or organisational reports demonstrating executive oversight of safeguarding initiatives, incidents and risk trends.
- Safeguarding performance dashboards or reports: Share internal safeguarding performance reports or dashboards that are regularly submitted to and reviewed by senior leadership.

c. Assist compliance by downstream partners

- Encourage and support downstream partners to develop their own risk assessment processes.
- Where capacity is limited, they may adopt your processes and templates.
- Include risk management expectations in all memoranda of understanding, subcontracts and grants.
- Provide templates, mentoring or support where needed.

Good practice guidance for undertaking a risk assessment

Step 1. Assess the activities and context, including by considering:

- the nature of the activity (for example, health services, education, infrastructure, provision of a service or goods)
- the locations of implementation (for example, remote, insecure, disaster-affected areas)
- target populations (for example, children, women, people with disabilities, refugees, LGBTIQ+ people or others at heightened risk)
- the level of access and contact with communities, particularly with children and vulnerable adults.

Step 2. Identify safeguarding risks, including by considering the following questions:

- Does the activity involve direct or indirect contact with children?
- Are personnel working in unsupervised settings or with limited oversight?
- Are there power imbalances, such as provision of aid, shelter, education or money?
- Are there cultural, legal or social norms that may increase risks of SEAH?
- Are there known safeguarding gaps in local institutions or partners?
- Is there an analysis of gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) to identify potential areas of harm?

Examples of risks include:

- inappropriate relationships or behaviour by staff or partners
- child labour or exploitation in program supply chains
- abuse of children or adults occurring in facilities, outreach activities, or during transport
- lack of complaint mechanisms accessible to children or other groups.

Step 3. Assess the likelihood and impact

For each risk, assess:

- Likelihood: How probable is it that the risk could occur (for example, rare, possible, likely)?
- Impact: What would be the consequence if the harm occurred (for example, minor, moderate, severe)?

Plot this using your organisation's preferred risk matrix to rate and prioritise the most significant risks.

Step 4. Develop mitigation strategies

For each identified risk, determine practical measures or mitigations to reduce the likelihood or impact. Here are some examples:

Risk identified	Example mitigation action
Staff working alone with children	Ensure supervision, use buddy systems, enforce two-adult rule, avoid one-on-one situations
Unverified local partners with access to communities	Conduct due diligence, include safeguarding clauses in memoranda of understanding
No complaint mechanisms for children or women or low awareness of mechanisms	Establish child-friendly and confidential reporting channels, conduct awareness-raising activities, advertise mechanisms with visible posters

Risk identified	Example mitigation action
Aid distributed in exchange for favours or access	Train staff on power dynamics and policies in relation to SEAH; monitor distributions, ensure supervision, use buddy systems, enforce two-adult rule and consider women for food distribution roles, avoid one-on-one situations
Staff recruited without screening	Require police checks, reference checks, and safeguarding declarations
Weak legal protections in local context	Apply DFAT Child Protection/PSEAH Standards regardless of local law
Partner lacks safeguarding policy	Require partner to adopt child protection and PSEAH policies as a condition of funding
No screening of contractors	Require criminal record checks and referee checks before engagement
Children involved in research	Use child-friendly consent forms; have a guardian present during interviews
Activity held in remote areas	Establish mobile reporting mechanism; conduct spot-checks by supervisors

Mitigation actions should be specific, realistic, and integrated into program design, budgeting and training.

Step 5. Assign responsibilities

Clearly document:

- who is responsible for implementing each mitigation action
- timeframes for implementation
- monitoring and reporting arrangements.

For example:

- human resources team ensures all staff complete PSEAH training
- field team leader monitors adherence to child-safe practices
- program manager reviews safeguarding risks quarterly.

Step 6. Monitor and review

Safeguarding risks can change over time. Risk assessments should be:

- reviewed at least annually, or more frequently if activities or contexts change
- updated when new risks emerge (for example, during emergencies or scale-ups)
- used to inform program evaluations, incident reports and lessons learned.

Standard 4: Training

Training in child protection and PSEAH is important to ensure all personnel, suppliers, contractors and volunteers have a general or basic understanding of child protection and PSEAH risks, their responsibilities and DFAT's expectations.

DFAT's victim-survivor-centred approach centres the experiences of victim-survivors. As such, training needs to be responsive to the differing needs of victim-survivors, equipping staff and volunteers with the capacity to understand the differing needs and vulnerabilities of child and adult victim-survivors. Furthermore, legal frameworks, reporting pathways and sensitivities may vary.

Training should also promote awareness of how intersectional risks, including disability, gender, age and dependency, may heighten vulnerability to abuse or exploitation. This is essential to ensuring everyone, particularly those who may face additional barriers to safety or reporting, are adequately protected.

Training should explicitly and adequately cover risks in relation to both child protection and SEAH to equip personnel to understand and respond to each type of harm appropriately.

Standard 4: Essential Standard

Standard requirements:

- **For child protection:** The organisation provides basic child protection training to all relevant personnel. Personnel are required to complete the training annually.
- **For PSEAH:** The organisation provides basic PSEAH training to all relevant personnel, advising personnel of rights, obligations and responsibilities. Personnel are required to complete the training annually.

Basic training

Basic training could be approximately 1–2 hours in duration.

- Training could be delivered online, through self-paced e-learning, in person or in a facilitated group session.
- Records of attendance must be maintained.
- The training should be undertaken during induction and repeated annually.

The content of the training should include:

- explanations of child exploitation, abuse and harm and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
- definitions, including zero tolerance approach and victim-survivor centred principles
- the risks and impacts of both child protection and SEAH – using specific examples relevant to the DFAT partner's work and contexts
- An overview of DFAT's Child Protection and PSEAH policies
- responsibilities and obligations of personnel for both child protection and PSEAH, including the importance of safe workplaces for an organisation's own personnel
- code of conduct – behavioural expectations and prohibited conduct relating to both children and adults
- reporting obligations, including mandatory reporting requirements for both child protection incidents and SEAH incidents

- what to do if you see or suspect child exploitation, abuse or harm or sexual abuse, exploitation or harassment of adults
- consequences of a policy breach
- disciplinary and legal implications.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Standard

Comprehensive training

Comprehensive training could be a minimum of 4-8 hours.

- Training could be delivered online, through self-paced e-learning, in person or in a facilitated group session.
- Records of attendance must be maintained.
- The training should be undertaken during induction and repeated annually.

The content of the training should include all the basic training content listed above under Essential Standard, as well as:

- risk assessment and management of risks in relation to both child protection and SEAH
- safe recruitment and screening procedures (for example, criminal record checks, reference checks, declarations)
- safe interviewing techniques including how to engage appropriately with children and with adults disclosing SEAH
- reporting mechanisms – designing accessible reporting channels for children and adults
- confidentiality and victim-survivor-centred responses, recognising the different needs of children and adult victim-survivors
- how to respond appropriately to allegations or disclosures of both child harm and SEAH, including handling distress, safety planning and referrals
- incident reporting protocols and escalation pathways, including distinctions between legal/reporting obligations in relation to child protection and SEAH
- organisational responsibilities, including leadership accountability, cross-department coordination and partner engagement
- case studies that cover both child protection and PSEAH scenarios relevant to the organisation's work
- role plays that practise responding to a range of safeguarding situations, such as inappropriate conduct, disclosure handling and referral decisions.

Standard 5: Recruitment and screening processes

Recruitment and integrity screening processes are a key component in ensuring that organisations do not employ or engage a person who has previously exploited or abused a child or who is otherwise not safe or suitable to work with – or be in contact with – children. They also play a critical role in preventing the recruitment of individuals who pose a risk of SEAH, including those who may misuse positions of power, authority or trust in adult or community settings.

Standard 5: Essential Standard

Standard requirements:

- The organisation conducts recruitment and integrity screening for all personnel (including child safe checks if applicable). Screening should include reference checks, recent police checks, Working with Children or Vulnerable people checks, or locally appropriate alternatives or, where these are not feasible, a self-declaration.

Integrity screening

Recruitment and integrity screening of personnel should include:

- reference checks
- criminal record (police) checks
- working with children or vulnerable people checks
- or, where these are not feasible, a self-declaration.

For detailed considerations for each of these forms of screening, refer to the table below: *Good practice guidance on recruitment and screening*.

Standard 5: Comprehensive Standard

Standard requirements:

- The organisation conducts recruitment and integrity screening for all personnel (including child safe checks if applicable). Screening should include reference checks, recent police checks, Working with Children or Vulnerable People checks, or locally appropriate alternatives or, where these are not feasible, a self-declaration.
- Additional integrity measures required include targeted messaging and questioning about child and adult safeguarding at all stages of recruitment and onboarding and ongoing monitoring of staff behaviour and adherence to child protection and PSEAH policies and procedures.

a. Integrity screening

Recruitment and integrity screening of personnel should include:

- reference checks
- criminal record (police) checks
- working with children or vulnerable people checks
- or where these are not feasible, a self-declaration.

For detailed considerations for each of these forms of screening, refer to the table below: *Good practice guidance on recruitment and screening*.

b. Job role analysis

Before recruitment, analyse the position to assess its level of contact with children.

- Determine whether the candidate will:
 - work directly with children
 - have indirect contact (for example, via phone, email, social media).
- Assess the frequency and nature of contact with children.
- Consider whether the role involves working with:
 - vulnerable children
 - children with particular needs.
- Apply stricter screening measures for roles involving more frequent or intensive contact with children.

c. **Advertising positions**

When advertising the position, DFAT partners must:

- clearly state whether the role involves working with children
- describe the child-safe screening practices that will apply
- include child-safe messaging in the job ad, such as:
 - “[Organisation] is a child-safe organisation”
 - “The safety and wellbeing of children is a priority of our organisation”.

d. **Interview process**

Include child protection-focused questions during interviews to assess the candidate’s suitability. Examples include:

- What is your understanding of child protection?
- Have you worked or volunteered with children in a similar position? What did you enjoy? What was difficult?
- What strengths in working with children do you bring from your community, family or cultural background?
- Please provide three examples of how to work safely with children.
- What do you think makes a good community leader or role model for children and young people?
- How would you involve children in their own protection as part of our programs?

Tailor interview questions to match the organisational context and specific job description and maintain an accurate record of the interview process.

e. **Employment contract and safeguarding commitments**

Employment/engagement contracts of DFAT partners must include disciplinary provisions for child protection breaches, such as:

- dismissal
- suspension (with or without pay)
- transfer to other duties.

Good practice guidance on recruitment and screening

Reference checks:

All personnel should undergo at least **two referee checks**. Referees may include former employers, volunteer supervisors and community leaders.

Verbal reference checks are preferred as they may elicit more candid information than written references. This must be documented and dated and include who conducted the check.

Whether verbal or written, use targeted questions such as:

- Have you observed the candidate working with children or vulnerable people?
- Do you have any concerns about the candidate's behaviour with children or vulnerable people?
- Would you be comfortable placing a child in the care of this person?

Criminal record (police) checks:

- All personnel must provide **recent police checks** covering all countries of citizenship and each country where they have lived for **12 months or more** in the past five years.
- For **Australian residents or those working in Australia**, obtain a **National Police Check** through the Australian Federal Police.
 - Use **Code 35** for overseas employment.
 - Use **Code 37** where the role involves care or supervision of children or vulnerable persons (includes spent convictions).
- Police checks must be **verified** using original or certified documents and must be **less than 12 months old** to be considered valid.

Working with children or vulnerable people checks:

- These are **State- and Territory-based** in Australia, with different laws and processes:
 - **ACT and Tasmania:** Working With Vulnerable People Check
 - **Queensland:** Blue Card
 - Other states: Working With Children Check (WWCC)
- These checks are designed to **exclude individuals who pose a risk** to children or vulnerable people.
- Where local equivalents are not available, acceptable alternatives may include documentation from a **government or legal authority** and **endorsement from a community or religious leader**.

Self-declarations (only to be used where other checks are not practicable or feasible):

- If formal checks equivalent to police checks or WWCC **cannot be obtained**, then obtain a **signed self-declaration** from the candidate.
- The declaration must disclose any charges, convictions or disciplinary actions related to:
 - child exploitation, abuse or harm
 - sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
 - other serious misconduct.

CHAPTER 4: COMPLIANCE WITH THE STANDARDS

SECTION 4.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS: COMPLIANCE

DFAT partners, including their downstream partners, have obligations under DFAT's PSEAH and Child Protection policies to assure themselves that their programs, projects or initiatives meet the relevant safeguarding standards over the life cycle of DFAT engagement. The principle of proportionality applies across the policies to ensure that the application of standards is appropriate for the activity and risk context. DFAT activity managers have obligations as risk owners under DFAT policy settings and will on occasion seek evidence to support assurance and compliance activities from their partners.

Appendix E provides guidance on the evidence that may demonstrate compliance with the policies. This guidance is not designed to be exhaustive or prescriptive. Partners should seek to respond to the risks arising from the activity and context and apply standards in a proportionate and context-driven manner. As such, records of decision-making and underlying rationale may usefully be maintained to justify an organisation's process and practice.

Compliance with the policies should be considered through the life cycle of initiatives, projects and agreements. This is likely to look different across the diversity of DFAT's business (foreign policy, trade, development, humanitarian, consular and corporate) and overseas network. DFAT activity managers will take into account the activity context in considering the application of both Essential and Comprehensive Standards.

Australia's [International Development Policy](#) includes a commitment to locally led development and to supporting local leadership across different aspects of society (government, business, academia, civil society). Approaches to locally led development need to be implemented in a way that continues to meet obligations to safeguard against child exploitation, abuse and harm and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of adults.

DFAT is committed to working with a diverse range of partners. This includes suppliers less familiar with policy obligations and small, local, or community-based organisations, many of whom bring deep contextual knowledge, trusted relationships and strong delivery capacity. Shifting more ownership, decision-making authority and implementation responsibilities to local partners may expose DFAT to different implementation risks than experienced with other partners (for example, larger organisations, international NGOs). It is important to allocate resources to manage these risks effectively including, where necessary, working with local partners to strengthen their capability to implement and meet policy requirements.

For further guidance on locally led development, please refer to the [DFAT Guidance Note: Locally Led Development](#), in particular Annex D: Managing Risks and Safeguards.

DFAT delivers much of its programming through a range of partners, from small community organisations using one-off community grants at post, to long-term investments with regional or multilateral partners. Assurance and compliance activities will take into account the size, sophistication and reach of partners.

SECTION 4.2 SAFEGUARDING AND PROPORTIONALITY

As outlined in the policies, DFAT applies a proportionate approach to safeguards risk management. This means that, in implementing the standards, the approach should be proportionate to the risk, having regard to factors such as:

- the size and duration of the activity (for example, a one-off small grant may need to focus on ensuring the safety of individuals through practical measures such as a brief code of conduct, and prioritising the screening and training of employees and volunteers)
- the nature of the activity (for example, an activity with little engagement with community)
- the choices of partners available, that is, where it is desirable to work with small organisations that have a better understanding of a context or are able to respond more rapidly. In such cases, partners should be supported to achieve compliance, and activity managers should record the measures taken.

SECTION 4.3 A GRADUATED APPROACH TO COMPLIANCE

DFAT recognises that some organisations may need time and support to achieve full implementation of the Comprehensive Standards. In these cases, a graduated and supportive approach is encouraged. Accordingly, DFAT agrees that partners will:

- fully implement the Essential Standards to address immediate safeguarding risks
- document an action plan outlining specific steps and clear timeframes to achieve compliance with Comprehensive Standards (the table below – *Compliance action plan template* – provides an example of an action plan)
- seek technical support and mentoring as needed
- implement and monitor progress against the action plan to ensure full implementation of the Comprehensive Standards within a ‘reasonable’ timeframe.

The ‘reasonable’ timeframe should be determined by the DFAT officer and DFAT partner based on an assessment by the DFAT partner of its own capacity and the capacity of its downstream partners, and of their risk and context. ‘Reasonable’ could be anywhere between 6 and 18 months.

Where organisations are downstream partners of DFAT partners, the DFAT partner is responsible for ensuring action plans are realistic, risk-sensitive and implemented within a reasonable timeframe. DFAT partners are also responsible for monitoring progress and providing technical assistance and capacity-building where needed.

Compliance action plan template

DFAT Child Protection and PSEAH Standards	Describe the Essential Standard practices already in place	Describe the planned Comprehensive Standard practices to be developed or implemented	Planned date of completion of Comprehensive Standard
1. Policy, Procedures, and Code of Conduct	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>
2. Reporting Mechanism and Investigation Procedures	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>
3. Risk Management Processes	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>
4. Training	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>
5. Recruitment and Screening Processes	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>	<i>Enter text</i>

Strengthening actions or support required:

CHAPTER 5: VICTIM-SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACHES TO SAFEGUARDING

Why we use the term ‘victim-survivor’ – The term recognises both the harm and trauma experienced (victim) and the strength and resilience of those who continue to live with and recover from abuse (survivor). It also acknowledges that not everyone survives abuse.

What does DFAT’s victim-survivor-centred approach mean?

A victim-survivor-centred approach puts the **safety, rights, wishes, dignity and wellbeing of the victim-survivor first** – above organisational reputation or convenience³. The goal is to **do no harm**, prevent re-traumatisation, and avoid stigma, blame, retaliation or discrimination.

Victim-survivors are **never responsible** for the abuse. Responsibility always lies with the perpetrator and the organisation’s duty to prevent harm and respond safely.

A trauma-informed approach recognises how trauma affects people’s behaviour and decision-making and responds with care, flexibility, and respect. This does not require specialist training – **it is about how you listen, speak, and act**.

Understanding children as victim-survivors

Decisions must prioritise children’s rights, safety and wellbeing.

Where children cannot make decisions, adults may need to act on their behalf, guided by principle of the ‘best interests of the child’.

Children should be consulted and included in decisions in ways they can understand.

Why does this approach matter?

An effective victim-survivor-centred, trauma-informed response is **safe, respectful, transparent and guided by the victim-survivor**. How you respond can either support healing – or cause further harm.

Victim-survivor-centred approaches are the most effective way to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Many victim-survivors report being further harmed by poor responses, such as being blamed, disbelieved or asked to repeat their story multiple times.

Abuse removes a person’s control and choice. Responses that ignore this can cause further harm, undermine recovery, reduce trust in support systems, and discourage future reporting. Historically, victim-survivors have faced stigma, discrimination and unsafe pressure when seeking help, often making the process itself traumatic.

³ Appendix D provides guidance on the distinction between victim-survivor centred and organisation-led approaches to managing incidents.

Trauma-informed, victim-survivor-centred approaches increase trust in reporting systems. When reporting feels safe, perpetrators are more likely to be held accountable, helping prevent further harm. Trauma-informed, victim-survivor-centred approaches **reduce harm and improve outcomes**.

DFAT Mandatory Reporting Requirements

DFAT requires all suspected, alleged or known incidents to be reported within 24 hours. Best practice is to discuss this with the victim-survivor beforehand and seek informed consent before sharing identifying details. If consent cannot be obtained, the incident must still be reported, but identifying information should be omitted wherever possible.

What is trauma?

Trauma occurs when a person experiences or feels threatened by harm and their ability to cope is overwhelmed, causing significant impact on their wellbeing.

The impacts of trauma may surface at any time, particularly when victim-survivors tell or repeat their experiences, or when they encounter similar experiences shared by others.

Incidents and discussion thereof may cause trauma to victim-survivors. Personnel who assist victim-survivors may also experience vicarious trauma.

For further information on trauma and trauma-informed approaches, DFAT staff can review the [Safe Space Support and Selfcare Guide](#). Partners outside DFAT may wish to consult CHS Alliance materials: [Putting Victims and Survivors First | CHS Alliance](#).

What might trauma look like?

When someone experiences abuse or threat, their body may go into 'survival mode', responding automatically through fight, flight, freeze or fawn including:

- Fight – preparing to physically fight
- Flight – Preparing to flee or hide
- Freeze – silence, stillness, tense, unable to move (very common trauma response for victim-survivors of sexual violence)
- Fawn – difficulty saying no, agreeing to avoid harm.

These are normal trauma responses that victim-survivors may experience during a traumatic event to help them survive and can impact victim-survivors long after the traumatic event. Without sensitive, trauma-informed care and support, victim-survivors may be triggered to automatically go into 'survival mode' or be re-traumatised.

Impacts of trauma on victim-survivors

SEAH and child exploitation, abuse and harm can cause profound and ongoing harm to victim-survivors, impacting their physical, emotional, sexual, financial, social and mental wellbeing. Many victim-survivors experience shame, self-blame and stigma. A trauma-informed approach means that sensitive care is provided to support and empower victim-survivors and avoid reinforcing these negative impacts.

People who have experienced abuse may react in many ways, and not always in the way that is expected. Some may be angry, some may be quiet, others may appear calm/unaffected. Behaviour is not evidence of truthfulness. Never judge credibility based on how someone presents.

Trauma-informed support

Being trauma-informed means being aware of the impacts of trauma on victim-survivors and responding in ways that are sensitive and better support them. Research has extensively documented the key features that victim-survivors have identified as critical to responding to disclosures. Broadly these are:

- being heard and believed
- control over support, service options, reporting processes and ultimately the recovery/healing journey (choice and empowerment)
- accessing supportive counselling and therapy
- having the right support to help the recovery/healing process
- having their needs responded to in a timely manner
- sensitivity to survivors' particular needs, preferences, safety, vulnerabilities and wellbeing as well as recognising the lived experience and ability of survivors to participate in decision-making.

The table below – *Victim-survivor safety in practice* – provides a quick reference guide to trauma-informed support.

Disclosures of SEAH and child exploitation, abuse and harm are generally not linear, as timelines and recollections may not be precise. This can make some disclosures not seem credible, but it is critical to recognise that any lack of clarity can be caused by fear and anxiety. Trauma impacts the brain and how memories get stored and recalled

Victim-survivor safety in practice – quick reference guide

1. Prioritise physical and psychological safety

- Ask what helps them feel safe and comfortable.
- Offer a support person.
- Check in before, during and after conversations.
- Look for signs of distress, allow breaks and go at their pace.
- Minimise repeated retelling of the abuse.
- Always protect privacy and confidentiality. Victim-survivors often face serious safety risks, including retaliation and stigmatisation. The more information is shared, the greater the risk of harm.

2. Build trust and be transparent

- Explain what will happen next and why.
- Be clear about how information will be used, stored or shared.
- Communicate gently, respectfully, and without judgment.
- Seek **informed consent** before collecting or sharing information.

3. Choice and flexibility

- Let the victim-survivor decide how to proceed and be flexible to adapt.
- Support their choices, even if they change their mind.
- Respect that it might take time for victim-survivors to decide on a course of action.
- Keep them informed throughout the process.

4. Collaboration and empowerment

- Respond *with* the victim-survivor, not on their behalf (don't take over).
- Use clear, accessible language (interpreters if needed).
- Acknowledge their strengths and resilience.
- Explain risks, options, processes and possible outcomes early.

5. Confidentiality

- Share information only with those who need to know.
- Store information securely.
- Avoid public or insecure discussions.
- Be careful of email chains that could expose sensitive details.
- Avoid copying multiple people into emails.
- Only inform the alleged perpetrator with consent and safety planning in place.

6. Offer support regardless of investigation

Support should be offered whether or not the victim-survivor chooses to take part in an investigation. This may include:

- specialist gender-based violence services
- medical or psychological care
- legal assistance
- practical or socioeconomic support.

Every situation and context is different. The priority is to let the victim-survivor know you want them to feel supported, ask what support would be most helpful to them and respond to their wishes and context. In contexts with limited services, organisations should use available local resources or provide support directly where possible. Being victim-survivor-centred is not only about services – it means prioritising safety and choice, avoiding blame, maintaining confidentiality, and responding with dignity, flexibility, and trauma-informed care. These principles can be upheld in any setting.

CHAPTER 6: REPORTING INCIDENTS

DFAT partners must report all incident and investigation outcomes to DFAT's Human and Environmental safeguards team. The following outlines their DFAT Reporting and Notification Obligations:

Mandatory immediate reporting (within 24 hours) requirements apply to all DFAT partners. Mandatory reporting includes any suspected, alleged or known incidents of child exploitation, abuse or harm and sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment. Failure to report in accordance with the policies may result in disciplinary, contractual or legal consequences.

HOW TO REPORT

- Suspected, alleged or known incidents of **child exploitation, abuse or harm** must be submitted via childprotection@dfat.gov.au preferably using the [DFAT Incident Notification Form](#).
- Suspected, alleged or known incidents of **sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment** of adults must be submitted via seah.reports@dfat.gov.au preferably using the [Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment \(SEAH\) Incident Notification Form](#).
- Anyone can report an incident or concern to DFAT. Anonymous reports are permitted. The more details that are provided, the greater likelihood that DFAT can take action.
- Where there are fears for the safety of a victim-survivor, or where a victim-survivor has not consented to a report being made, please contact childprotection@dfat.gov.au (for children) or seah.reports@dfat.gov.au (for adults) for advice.

Victim-survivors and their families may report directly to DFAT at any time if they choose. Reporting is not mandatory for victim-survivors. However, we encourage reporting to enable support and care to be provided.

Additional obligations under Australian and overseas law may require incidents of child harm to be reported to law enforcement authorities. Australians should be aware of their obligations to report under appropriate Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation, including its extraterritorial application. Seek independent legal advice.

DFAT STAFF OBLIGATIONS TO REPORT SERIOUS EXTRATERRITORIAL OFFENCES

DFAT staff, in Australia and overseas, must report any information relating to the commission or attempted commission of a serious extraterritorial offence under Australian law to the Transnational Crime Section (transnationalcrime@dfat.gov.au). For further guidance, see the Administrative Circular, *Australian extraterritorial offences and the responsibility to report*.

Reports in relation to DFAT staff/family members as perpetrators must be reported to conduct@dfat.gov.au.

ENSURE PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS FOR SUBJECTS OF INVESTIGATION

DFAT partners must implement investigation processes that uphold procedural fairness. This includes ensuring that the alleged perpetrators who are the subject of an investigation are treated with professionalism, impartiality and confidentiality. Investigation procedures should include:

- decisions based on factual evidence
- written notification to the individual under investigation, including the general nature of the allegations
- an opportunity for the individual to respond to allegations and present relevant information or supporting evidence
- confidential handling of all information related to the investigation, noting that anonymity may not be possible if the allegation is substantiated
- access to interview transcripts for review and correction
- the option for the alleged perpetrator to have a support person or interpreter present during interviews.

These safeguards are essential to ensuring fair and credible investigations that respect the rights of all parties and support transparent, just outcomes. DFAT partners are responsible for incorporating these principles into their documented investigation procedures.

Additional guidance is available in the [DFAT Guidance Note on Child Protection: Reporting and Notifications](#) which includes case studies and frequently asked questions.

CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE USE OF IMAGES

DFAT considers the safe and ethical use of images and social media essential to safeguarding children, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

DFAT staff and partners must:

- obtain informed consent before taking or using images, video or stories of any individual, with special care taken when involving children or people in marginalised, crisis-affected or dependent situations
- ensure all media is respectful, dignified and non-identifying, unless explicit, informed consent is provided
- train staff, volunteers and contractors on safe and ethical digital media practices, including the risks of misuse or exploitation
- implement systems to reduce online safeguarding risks, including grooming, stalking, re-identification of individuals, and the inappropriate or exploitative use of personal stories or imagery.

Digital media policies and project design must consider:

- cultural and gender sensitivities
- power dynamics involved in requesting or publishing stories or images
- access to and use of social media by children, and associated risks
- how media and stories are collected, consented to, used, stored and shared.

Further guidance, including mitigation strategies, consent procedures, and sample templates, is available in **Guidance on the Use of Images and Social Media**.

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE CHILD PROTECTION – PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOURS (CODE OF CONDUCT)

I, _____ [insert full name], acknowledge that I have read and that I understand DFAT's Child Protection Policy, and agree that during my association with DFAT, I must adhere to the **DFAT Child Protection Policy – Professional Behaviours (Code of Conduct)**. Accordingly, I will:

- treat all children with respect
- 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 18⁴ in any form of sexual intercourse⁵ or sexual activity⁶, including paying for sexual services
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working near children
- not invite unaccompanied children into private residences, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case the supervisor's permission must be obtained, and ensuring that another adult is present if possible (noting that this does not apply to an individual's own children)
- never use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media 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: that is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage; that interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities; or that 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 concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy noncompliance in accordance with appropriate procedures
- immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occurs during association with DFAT
- be aware of behaviour and avoid actions or behaviours that could be perceived by others as child exploitation and abuse.

These requirements are not intended to interfere with normal family interactions.

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

- take care to ensure local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to 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, including by providing an explanation of 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, including by ensuring any children presented are 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, metadata or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

DFAT partners must use the Child Protection – Professional Behaviours as a Child Protection Code of Conduct or embed these behaviours into their existing policies and processes.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

⁴ Within the confines of applicable law, where the child is 16 years old or older and the other party is not more than 2 years older, and it can be established that the child consented to the relationship, an exception can be recorded promptly on personnel files.

⁵ As defined under the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

⁶ As defined under the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE PSEAH CODE OF CONDUCT

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment (SEAH) of any kind. This applies to our own organisation and extends to those we work with. We all have a responsibility to act in an ethical and transparent way to build a respectful working culture that rejects inappropriate behaviour, and where staff and communities feel supported and valued. Preventing and responding to SEAH is a shared responsibility.

DFAT's [Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment \(PSEAH\) Policy](#) (released September 2025 and updated from time to time), sets out the expectations and requirements for individual DFAT partners to manage the risks of SEAH and SEAH incidents should they occur in the delivery of DFAT business. This Policy reflects DFAT's commitment to international best practice, and aligns with new legislation, including the [Respect at Work](#) legislation, and reflects recent international commitments, including the 2024 [Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment \(CAPSEAH\)](#).

The PSEAH Policy, the Child and Adult Safeguards Handbook and Guidance Notes published from time to time provide further information of these expectations and requirements and can assist with determining SEAH risk. These documents are accessible on the internet at www.dfat.gov.au/pseah.

In signing this form, I confirm I have read and understood DFAT's PSEAH Policy and acknowledge that I must comply with the policy and ensure compliance by any downstream partners engaged by me in the delivery of DFAT business.

I understand that I am obligated to conduct myself in a professional, ethical and transparent manner consistent with the requirements of the PSEAH policy, including by:

- treating people with respect
- refraining from behaviour that others may find inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate
- not engaging children under the age of 18⁷ in any form of sexual intercourse⁸ or sexual activity⁹, including paying for sexual services
- immediately disclosing all charges, convictions, current or ongoing investigations and other outcomes of an offence that relates to sexual exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occurs during association with DFAT
- being aware of behaviour and avoiding actions or behaviours that could be perceived by others as sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment
- refraining from using online networks to download or share inappropriate material of a sexually abusive or exploitative nature
- adhering to mandatory reporting requirements as set out in the PSEAH Policy.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

¹ Within the confines of applicable law, where the child is 16 years old or older and the other party is not more than 2 years older, and it can be established that the child consented to the relationship, an exception can be recorded promptly on personnel files.

² As defined under the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

³ As defined under the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.



APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT

General Safeguarding Conduct

When undertaking business on behalf of DFAT, I understand that I am obligated to conduct myself in a professional, ethical and transparent manner, including:

- treating all people, including children, with respect and dignity
- refraining from behaviour that is unsafe, harmful, harassing, abusive, sexually abusive, demeaning or culturally inappropriate
- avoiding actions that could be perceived as exploitative, abusive or harassing in any form
- adhering to mandatory reporting requirements as outlined in the DFAT PSEAH and Child Protection policies
- immediately disclosing all charges, convictions, current or ongoing investigations, and other legal outcomes related to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, including offenses under traditional law, before or during my association with DFAT-funded activities
- following risk mitigation strategies as outlined in DFAT's safeguarding policies.

[Insert PSEAH and (where appropriate) child protection conditions]

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: UNDERSTANDING VICTIM-SURVIVOR-CENTRED VERSUS ORGANISATION-CENTRED APPROACHES

Victim-survivor-centred

- Talk to the victim-survivor in a supportive way and explain things clearly
- Ask open questions and listen without interrupting or rushing
- Check in about safety, comfort and what feels manageable
- Ask what the victim-survivor wants and support informed choices
- Adjust responses based on the person's unique situation and risks
- Take cultural, gender, language, disability, access and other needs into account
- Treat the victim-survivor as equal and be mindful of power

Organisation-centred

- Talk about the victim-survivor without involving them
- Tell the person what will happen or what they must do
- Push ahead to meet procedures or timelines
- Decide what is best without their input
- Apply the same response to everyone
- Expect the person to fit into the system
- Use authority, hierarchy or role to drive decisions

APPENDIX E: UNDERSTANDING COMPLIANCE IN PRACTICE

STANDARD 1: POLICY, PROCEDURES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Essential	Comprehensive	Compliance in Practice
<p>The organisation has a child protection and/or PSEAH policy or statement or other documented policies and procedures which meet the expectations of DFAT's Child Protection and/or PSEAH Policy.</p>	<p>The organisation has a detailed child protection and/or PSEAH policy and procedures in place which meet the expectations of DFAT's Child Protection and/or PSEAH Policy and are subject to regular review. The policy should demonstrate the organisation's commitment to zero tolerance for child exploitation, abuse and harm and/or sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and establish procedures in line with these standards.</p>	<p>Essential Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of a <u>current and approved</u> child protection and/or PSEAH policy that meets the obligations under DFAT's Child Protection and/or PSEAH policies <i>or</i> a documented policy or procedure that meets these obligations. This can include a combined safeguarding policy. - Evidence that the policy(ies) are shared with staff, contractors and downstream partners. - Where partners may work with organisations for sex workers, a carve out for transactional sex to a PSEAH code of conduct may be appropriate, with an emphasis on protecting participants and program staff from exploitative, unwanted and non-consensual SEAH incidents. This decision should be recorded, and strong safeguarding processes should be institutionalised through the risk mitigation standard. - For child protection: evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a code of conduct consistent with DFAT's Child Protection Code of Conduct o a register of personnel having read and agreed organisations code of conduct. - For PSEAH: evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a code of conduct consistent with DFAT's PSEAH Policy, including prohibition of transactional sex in high-risk settings o a register of personnel having read and agreed to the organisation's code of conduct. - For downstream partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Upstream partner: record where the downstream partner adopts the upstream partner's policies <i>or</i> adopts their own policies o Upstream partner: maintain a record of actions taken to support downstream partners to adopt their own – or the upstream partner's – policies. o Downstream partner: adoption of a child protection or PSEAH policy o Downstream partner/Upstream partner: inclusion of safeguarding clauses in agreements.



Essential	Comprehensive	Compliance in Practice
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review documented procedures that describes how child protection and PSEAH obligations are put into practice, including responsible persons for each element. <p>Comprehensive Standards:</p> <p><i>In addition to Essential Standards:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of regular review of relevant policies or documentation, including meetings where safeguarding is a feature. - Child protection and/or PSEAH policy includes commitment to zero tolerance and establishes procedures in line with standards.

STANDARD 2: REPORTING MECHANISM AND INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

Essential	Comprehensive	Compliance in Practice
<p>The organisation can receive and manage incident reports safely and confidentially.</p> <p>Reporting mechanisms are accessible to all stakeholders.</p> <p>The organisation must report incidents and investigation outcomes to DFAT.</p>	<p>The organisation has a well-publicised, accessible, confidential and safe mechanism for reporting SEAH concerns or incidents which includes protections from retaliation.</p> <p>The organisation has documented procedures for managing SEAH incidents that include trauma informed responses, procedural fairness, transparent and timely investigation processes, privacy protections and support for victim-survivors, and appropriate disciplinary actions if the incident involves their personnel.</p> <p>The organisation ensures communities are informed about expected behaviours, reporting mechanisms and investigation processes in accessible and culturally appropriate ways.</p> <p>The organisation must report incidents and investigation outcomes to DFAT.</p>	<p>Essential Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of process to manage incident reports safely and confidentially. This could include standard operating procedures, information in employee and staff handbooks/orientations. - Evidence that attempts are made to communicate to affected persons that the PSEAH and child protection policies exist. This could include posters, emails, community engagement notices and sessions. - Evidence that there are accessible reporting mechanisms. This may need to respond to local conditions and have multiple pathways. This may include messaging on partner and/or DFAT pathways by email or online form, in addition to local in-person options. - Evidence of engagement with DFAT on incident notifications (where appropriate). <p>Comprehensive Standards:</p> <p><i>In addition to Essential Standards:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to size of organisation, risk profile and delivery: specialised mechanisms, including focal points or teams responsible for safeguarding, specialist forms or emails, community-based systems, which may include but is not limited to engagement with local gender-based violence organisations, children’s rights organisations and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPD), information sheets about local pathways. - Evidence of policies and practices that place primacy on confidentiality and prevent retaliation. - Evidence of policies and practices that support the management of SEAH incidents in line with the principles of the policies. - Providing regular updates to staff, volunteers and affected communities on the incident reporting process and keeping records of these updates. -

STANDARD 3. RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Essential	Comprehensive	Compliance in Practice
<p>The organisation undertakes a SEAH and child protection risk assessment, including mitigation actions tailored to the activities and context, that is reviewed at least annually and revised as needed.</p>	<p>The organisation undertakes a SEAH and child protection risk assessment including mitigation actions tailored to the activities and context, that is reviewed at least annually and revised as needed.</p> <p>The organisation must provide documented evidence that senior management and executive boards have visibility of SEAH and child protection risk management.</p> <p>The organisation has documented evidence of its expectations for downstream partners and how those partners will manage SEAH and child protection risks.</p>	<p>Essential Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Record of safeguarding risk assessment at least once per year. Organisations may draw from DFAT guidance on assessing SEAH and child protection risk. - A risk assessment should be proportionate to the nature of the activity and can be simple. - The risk assessment should consider key risks and mitigations and occurs prior to the commencement of the activity or deployment of personnel. <p>Comprehensive Standards:</p> <p><u><i>In addition to Essential Standards:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk assessment should be more detailed, responding to the factors that pose risks for children and/or adults in the activity, as well as to the context and communities. - The assessment should assess the likelihood and consequence of the risk, the level of risk, mitigations and responsible persons. - Evidence should be provided that the responsible persons have ensured that the risk mitigation measures identified have been conducted within the timeframe identified. - Evidence that senior management and executive boards have received a report of risk assessment – this could take the form of risk registers, board papers or minutes of boards meetings, dashboards or reports, annual reports, or emails. - Upstream partners: documentary evidence could include: checks that risk management is being undertaken by downstream partners, requests for downstream partners to provide input to risk registers, records of meetings with downstream partners where risks are assessed, emails to downstream partners on changes to risk environment or measures taken to manage risks relating to downstream partners, including fact sheets, posters, records of briefings. - Upstream partners: where downstream partners need assistance to work towards standard, records are kept of briefings or discussions where capacity building is undertaken to assess and monitor risks.

STANDARD 4. TRAINING

Essential	Comprehensive	Compliance in Practice
<p>The organisation provides basic PSEAH and child protection training to all relevant personnel advising personnel of rights, obligations and responsibilities. Personnel are required to complete the training annually.</p>	<p>The organisation provides comprehensive PSEAH and child protection training – regularly reviewed – to all relevant personnel advising personnel of rights, obligations and responsibilities. Personnel are required to complete the training annually.</p>	<p>Essential Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For child protection: Consistent with the standards outlined in DFAT’s Child Protection Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o evidence of assessment of level of contact with children and the risk rating, that guides who is ‘relevant’ staff o provision of basic training, proportionate to the risk and the activity (for example, for downstream partners with one-off activity, consider whether a briefing is proportionate to the risk) o records of attendance and completion o records of induction and/or annual completion. - For PSEAH: all staff to receive basic training, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o provision of basic training proportionate to the risk, having regard to power imbalances, factors for exploitation and levels of gender inequality and gender-based violence o records of attendance and completion o records of induction and/or annual completion. <p>Comprehensive Standards:</p> <p><u>In addition to Essential Standards</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence to support that additional materials outlined in guidance are included in training. - Evidence of training session to a length and degree of complexity that responds to the risks associated with the activity and its context. May wish to maintain records of decision-making on what is appropriate for this activity. - May wish to collect information on additional training or support provided to individuals who are particularly likely to manage child or adult safeguarding issues owing to their function or role.

STANDARD 5. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING PROCESSES

Essential	Comprehensive	Compliance in Practice
<p>The organisation conducts recruitment and integrity screening for all personnel. Screening should include reference checks, recent police checks, Working with Children or Working with Vulnerable People checks, locally appropriate alternatives or, where these are not feasible, a self-declaration.</p>	<p>The organisation conducts recruitment and integrity screening for all personnel. Screening should include reference checks, recent police checks, working with children or working with vulnerable people checks, locally appropriate alternatives or, where these are not feasible, a self-declaration.</p> <p>Additional integrity measures required include targeted messaging and questioning about safeguarding at all stages of recruitment and onboarding, and ongoing monitoring of staff behaviour and adherence to PSEAH and safeguarding policies and processes.</p>	<p>Essential Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Records of recruitment screening of potential personnel, including volunteers, that includes a combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o reference checks which address behavioural and conduct issues o criminal or police checks o Working with children or vulnerable people checks o Where these are not feasible, a self-declaration. Evidence supporting this decision should be collected, including why a reference check was not possible. <p>Comprehensive Standards:</p> <p><i><u>In addition to Essential Standards</u></i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence to demonstrate that a job role analysis has taken place with reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o the nature and extent of the role's contact with children, including consideration of other intersectional vulnerabilities o in high-risk settings, the nature and extent of the role's capacity to exploit an adult through unequal power dynamics. - Evidence to demonstrate that in advertising positions, that there is a clear and unambiguous commitment to child protection. - Evidence, including records of interviews or interview questions that demonstrate child-safe screening, that is appropriate for the role and context. - Evidence of contract provisions that include disciplinary action for breaches of safeguarding.



APPENDIX F: UNDERSTANDING INCLUSION IN SAFEGUARDING: DISABILITY

People with disabilities are at heightened risk of abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence in all settings, including development and humanitarian programs. This risk is not due to impairment itself, but rather to systemic, structural, environmental, attitudinal, institutional and communication barriers that increase exposure to risk and reduce access to prevention, protection and justice mechanisms.

In line with *Australia's International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy (IDEARS)* and its commitment to *Leave No One Behind*, this annex supports DFAT partners to ensure that safeguarding systems are inclusive, accessible and responsive to the rights and needs of people with disabilities. DFAT's PSEAH and Child Protection Policies principles on victim-survivor centricity, the promotion of inclusion and equity, and empowering and participatory approach are complementary to the rights-based approach outlined in the IDEARS.

This guidance recognises that:

- people with disabilities, including children, adults, and older persons, may experience higher rates of abuse and exploitation than their peers without disabilities
- barriers to participation, including physical, social, institutional and legal barriers, may limit the ability of people with disabilities to recognise abuse, disclose it safely, or access response services and justice.
- safeguarding mechanisms, unless actively designed to be inclusive, often exclude or fail people with disabilities in practice¹⁰.

The purpose of this annex is to:

- highlight the risks and safeguarding needs of people with disabilities
- provide practical, context-appropriate guidance to ensure implementation of the policies are inclusive of people with disabilities
- strengthen the capacity of DFAT partners to meet the safeguarding expectations set out in this Handbook in a way that is rights-based, inclusive and effective for all.

This guidance is grounded in the social model of disability and the principles of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

Understanding risk

People with disabilities are up to three times more likely to experience physical, emotional and sexual abuse than people without disabilities. These risks are compounded by intersecting factors such as age, gender, poverty, ethnicity and displacement.

¹⁰ See [Preconditions for inclusion overview](#)

DRIVERS OF RISK AND BARRIERS TO JUSTICE

Drivers of enhanced risk

Drivers	Comments
Stigma, discrimination and ableism	Negative social attitudes, including stigma, pity or the belief that people with disabilities are less valuable or credible, can normalise abuse and reduce public concern. In some cases, perpetrators exploit these attitudes to target individuals they believe are less likely to report, be believed, or be protected.
Segregation and institutionalisation	Social exclusion, institutionalisation, and segregation from mainstream education, employment or community life increase exposure to harm and undermine protective mechanisms. In institutional settings, abuse may be normalised, hidden, or treated as disciplinary practice. In emergency contexts, people with disabilities are often left behind or housed in facilities that lack safeguarding oversight.
Power imbalances in care and service relationships	Many people with disabilities rely on others for support with daily activities, communication, mobility or access to services. This dependency can lead to imbalanced relationships where abusers exert control, restrict freedom or manipulate trust. Some people may not recognise abuse when it occurs or may feel unable to challenge or report it due to coercion or fear of further abuse, or fear of losing essential care or support.
Lack of accessible reporting and support services	Safeguarding systems frequently fail to accommodate people with disabilities. Reporting channels may be inaccessible, staff may lack training in inclusive communication, and investigations or survivor services may not consider the physical, psychosocial or cultural needs of people with disabilities.

Barriers to justice, reporting and disclosure

Barriers	Comments
Physical and environmental	Reporting locations (for example, offices, police stations, service centres) may be physically inaccessible. Complaint mechanisms (for example, suggestion boxes, phones, interviews) may not be usable by people with mobility, hearing, visual or communication disabilities. Lack of accessible transport can prevent survivors from accessing help, especially in remote areas.
Attitudinal	Harmful stereotypes may cause staff or authorities to disbelieve or minimise the experiences of people with disabilities. People with disabilities may be perceived as unreliable witnesses or incapable of giving informed accounts of abuse. Some may be infantilised or overprotected, preventing them from being listened to or allowed to report on their own terms.
Fear of retaliation or loss of support	Survivors who depend on caregivers, family members or service providers may fear losing essential care, shelter or access to basic needs if they report abuse.



Barriers	Comments
	People may also fear retribution from perpetrators or community members, especially in contexts where disability is stigmatised or misunderstood.
Systemic and institutional gaps	Many organisations lack protocols or training on how to receive and respond to complaints from people with disabilities. Investigative processes may not allow for support persons, independent advocates or communication aids. Legal and justice systems may not accommodate the participation of people with disabilities or may fail to uphold their rights.

APPENDIX G: DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE – QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Policy and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise inclusion: Commit to inclusion in safeguarding in safeguarding documentation, in organisational and program-level risk assessments, and reporting to board and senior management
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible: Available in multiple formats and usable by people with different types of disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>In practice consider: location of physical complaint boxes, access to alternatives to phone hotlines for people with hearing or speech disabilities</i> • Provide multiple ways to report abuse • Safe: Free from risk of retaliation, further harm, or loss of care or support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>In practice consider: use of support persons, multiple pathways and trusted intermediaries</i> • Trusted: Culturally appropriate, user-friendly, and endorsed by community and disability stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>In practice consider, for example: working with OPDs, building up outreach and awareness so people understand their rights and pathways before an incident occurs</i> • Confidential: Designed to protect identity and sensitive information, with appropriate privacy safeguards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>In practice consider: private spaces, anonymous channels</i> • Responsive: Staffed by individuals trained in disability inclusion, respectful communication, and survivor-centred responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>In practice consider: offering training on disability inclusion</i>
Inclusive investigations and responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility: Venues (including online forums) are physically accessible • Understanding: Avoid the use of complex language or legal jargon, adopting plain language for key forms and processes • Testimony: Provide alternative and appropriate communications supports • Disability-inclusive: Investigators are trained on disability rights, communication and unconscious bias • Victim-survivor centred and disability aware: Trusted person, advocate or translator available, safety plans are disability-sensitive, understanding disability-specific trauma experiences
Support and adjustments	<p>Inclusive safeguarding responses should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survivors with disabilities are involved in decision-making about their care and justice pathway • adjustments are made to accommodate diverse needs, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>providing interpretation (for example, Auslan, local sign languages)</i> ◦ <i>adjusting the pace of the investigation</i> ◦ <i>providing psychosocial support tailored to individual support needs</i> ◦ <i>ensuring continuity of care or support services throughout the process</i> • referral pathways include disability-competent service providers • investigations are documented with accessibility and consent in mind – for example, recording in multiple formats or involving alternative forms of consent.
Maintaining rights and dignity	<p>All safeguarding responses involving people with disabilities must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be conducted with respect, confidentiality and procedural fairness • uphold the presumption of capacity and right to informed decision-making • avoid substituting a person’s voice with that of caregivers, unless explicitly requested or legally authorised • ensure people with disabilities – especially underrepresented groups (for example, people with psychosocial, cognitive and/or communication disabilities) – are never excluded from the process on the grounds of disability.
Training and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide staff and partners with disability-inclusive safeguarding training • Include examples of risks to people with disabilities in training materials and case studies • Build staff confidence in communicating with and supporting survivors with diverse disabilities

APPENDIX H: LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

CHILD PROTECTION COMMITMENTS AND LEGISLATION

A range of laws and international child protection instruments are relevant to this policy. This includes Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory laws, and local laws.

Local legislation

Most countries in which DFAT works have legislation that may relate to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of adults or to child exploitation, abuse and harm.

When working in a particular country, DFAT staff or the personnel of contractors and organisations undertaking activities funded by DFAT are required to abide by local legislation.

Commonwealth child protection legislation

Under Commonwealth law, an Australian citizen or resident can be prosecuted for an offence committed against a child in another country under laws that have an extra-territorial application.

CRIMINAL CODE ACT 1995

Provision	Examples of offences	Maximum penalty
Division 272 (child sex offences outside Australia)	Engaging in sexual intercourse outside of Australia with a child under 16 years of age	25 years imprisonment
	Engaging in sexual activity outside of Australia with a child under 16 years of age	20 years imprisonment
	Engaging in sexual intercourse or sexual activity outside of Australia with a child under 16 years of age and the child has a mental impairment or is under the care, supervision or authority of the defendant	imprisonment for life
	Engaging in sexual intercourse outside of Australia with a young person aged 16 or 17 years and the defendant is in a position of trust or authority	10 years imprisonment
	Engaging in sexual activity outside of Australia with a young person aged 16 or 17 years and the defendant is in a position of trust or authority	10 years imprisonment
	Grooming a child under 16 years of age to engage in sexual activity outside of Australia	15 years imprisonment
Division 273 (offences involving child pornography material or child abuse material outside Australia)	Possessing, controlling, producing, distributing or obtaining child pornography or child abuse material outside Australia	15 years imprisonment

Provision	Examples of offences	Maximum penalty
Division 474 (telecommunications offences, subdivision C)	Accessing, soliciting or transmitting child pornography or child abuse material using a carriage service	15 years imprisonment
	Engaging in sexual activity with a child under 16 years of age using a carriage service	15 years imprisonment
	Online grooming of a child under 16 years of age	15 years imprisonment

Crimes Act 1914

The *Crimes Act 1914* sets out the laws that govern the way legal proceedings under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* are conducted, including the conduct of investigations and the protection of children involved in proceedings for sexual offences (under Part 1AD).

State and territory child protection legislation

State and territory laws provide legal protection to children and families that are affected by child exploitation and abuse that occurs in Australia.

State or territory	Legislation	Source
New South Wales	<i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i>	www.legislation.nsw.gov.au
Victoria	<i>Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012</i> <i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> <i>Working With Children Act 2005</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Queensland	<i>Child Protection Act 1999</i> <i>Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000</i>	www.legislation.qld.gov.au/OQPChome.htm
Western Australia	<i>Children and Community Services Act 2004</i> <i>Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004</i>	www.slp.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/default.html
South Australia	<i>Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016</i>	www.legislation.sa.gov.au
Tasmania	<i>Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997</i> <i>Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013</i>	www.thelaw.tas.gov.au
Australian Capital Territory	<i>Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011</i>	www.legislation.act.gov.au

State or territory	Legislation	Source
	<i>Children and Young Persons Act 2008</i>	
Northern Territory	<i>Care and Protection of Children Act 2007</i>	www.nt.gov.au/dcm/legislation/current.html

International commitments and instruments on child protection

Instrument	Source
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	Convention on the Rights of the Child [1991] ATS 4
Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (New York, 25 May 2000) [2007] ATS 6
Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (New York, 25 May 2000) [2006] ATS 12
United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime – Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children	Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (New York, 15 November 2000) [2005] ATS 27
Convention 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour	ILO Convention (No. 182) Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Geneva, 17 June 1999) [2007] ATS 38
Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment	Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) (Geneva, 26 June 1973) [2024] ATS 14

Commitments and legislation relevant to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH)

Commonwealth legislation relevant to SEAH

Legislation	Relevant Provisions
<i>Criminal Code Act 1995</i>	Div 268.14 – Crimes against Humanity – Rape Div 268.15 – Crimes against Humanity – Sexual Slavery Div 286.16 – Crimes against Humanity – Enforced Prostitution Div 268.19 – Crimes against Humanity – Sexual Violence Div 474.17A – Aggravated offences involving private sexual material – using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence Div 15 – Extended Geographical Jurisdiction
<i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i>	Division 3 – Harassment Outlines sexual harassment (s 28A) Circumstances where sexual harassment is unlawful (ss 28B-28L)

Legislation	Relevant Provisions
<i>Fair Work Act 2009</i>	Part 3-5A: Preventing Sexual Harassment in Connection with Work Div 3 ss 34-35: Geographic Application of the Act
<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i>	

State and territory legislation relevant to SEAH

State/Territory	Legislation
New South Wales	<i>Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)</i> <i>Work Health Safety Act 2011 (NSW)</i> <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)</i>
Victoria	<i>Crimes Act 1958 (VIC)</i> <i>Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (VIC)</i> <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (VIC)</i>
Queensland	<i>Criminal Code Act 1899 (QLD)</i> <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (QLD)</i> <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (QLD)</i>
Western Australia	<i>Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 (WA)</i> <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA)</i> <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1983 (WA)</i>
South Australia	<i>Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA)</i> <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)</i> <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)</i>
Tasmania	<i>Criminal Code Act 1924 (TAS)</i> <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (TAS)</i> <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (TAS)</i>
Australian Capital Territory	<i>Crimes Act 1900 (ACT)</i> <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT)</i> <i>Discrimination Act 1991 (ACT)</i>
Northern Territory	<i>Criminal Code Act 1983 (NT)</i> <i>WHS (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 (NT)</i> <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 1992 (NT)</i>

Commonwealth legislation – modern slavery

The *Modern Slavery Act 2018* requires large entities to take proactive steps to identify and address risks of modern slavery, including child exploitation, in their supply chains. It emphasises transparency and accountability, requiring entities with an annual revenue of over A\$100 million to report annually on risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

The *Modern Slavery in Australia* [website](#) provides authoritative information on modern slavery in Australia, including how to get help and how to support someone else. It provides information for people interested in understanding Australia's modern slavery laws and policies.

APPENDIX I: GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Best interests of the child	In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration. Actions in the best interests of the child will prioritise the rights, needs and wishes of each individual child and uphold children’s dignity, respect and privacy, while enabling meaningful participation in age-appropriate ways.
Child or children	For the purposes of this policy, DFAT considers a child to be a person under the age of 18 years.
Child exploitation	<p>Child exploitation encompasses acts that involve the use of a child for another person’s advantage, gratification or profit, often resulting in harm to the child’s physical or mental health, development or wellbeing. Under Australian law, this includes, but is not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual exploitation of children: Engaging a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration, coercing or deceiving a child into sexual activities, or using a child in child sexual abuse materials. • Child exploitation material: Possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting audio, video or textual material that depicts or describes a person who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age, in a sexual context or subjected to abuse, cruelty or torture. This definition encompasses both real and simulated representations, including AI-generated or animated depictions. • Grooming: Engaging in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time, including building a relationship of trust with the child, their family or community to facilitate abuse. This may include online grooming. • Trafficking and forced labour: Recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving a child for the purpose of exploitation, including forced labour, slavery, or practices similar to slavery. • Use of a child for illicit activities: Exploiting a child in criminal activities, such as drug trafficking or production. <p>These actions are criminal offences under various Australian laws, including the <i>Criminal Code Act 1995</i> (Cth), and are subject to severe penalties.</p>
Child abuse	Child abuse includes physical, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, ill-treatment, neglect, and online or digital abuse. It also includes witnessing such abuse against another child or adult.
Child abuse – emotional abuse	Refers to a parent, caregiver’s or present adult’s inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards 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.
Child abuse – 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.

<p>Child abuse - sexual abuse</p>	<p>Child sexual abuse involves engaging a person under the age of 18 in sexual activities. This encompasses a range of behaviours, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sexual touching of any part of the child’s body, whether clothed or unclothed • engaging in sexual acts with a child • persuading, coercing or forcing a child to participate in sexual activities • exposing a child to sexual acts or materials, including pornography • using a child to produce or appear in child sexual abuse content • grooming a child for sexual contact, including through digital platforms. <p>Such acts are criminal offences under various Australian laws and are subject to severe penalties.</p>
<p>DFAT business</p>	<p>‘DFAT business’ refers to any work, activity, service or function carried out by, on behalf of, or in association with, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities undertaken directly by DFAT staff • activities undertaken by DFAT partners and their downstream partners under any form of agreement with DFAT, including contracts, grants, aid investments, diplomatic initiatives, scholarships and volunteer programs • any engagement, interaction, or representation where DFAT resources, funding, authority or endorsement is involved.
<p>DFAT partner</p>	<p>Includes all suppliers, individuals and organisations with whom DFAT directly enters into an agreement to deliver its objectives, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bilateral partner governments • multilateral organisations and regional organisations • Australian government entities • managing contractors • non-government organisations <p>and their downstream partners or subcontracted organisations that are subcontracted by a DFAT partner to perform any DFAT business.</p> <p>Also includes individuals, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • awardees of scholarships, fellowships or grants, including Australia Awards, New Colombo Plan; Australian Volunteers Program participants and host organisations • contractors and service providers including consultants, advisers and other directly contracted individuals • suppliers of goods and services such as corporate services, event management, property management, cleaners, security. <p>The policies apply to all partners, regardless of the period of engagement with DFAT business. Length of engagement does not imply more or less risk.</p>
<p>DFAT staff</p>	<p>A person engaged as an employee under section 22 of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth) as either an ongoing or non-ongoing employee, or a person engaged under a contract of employment by the Commonwealth outside of Australia. For the purposes of this Handbook, contractors are included in the definition of DFAT staff.</p>

Direct, sustained, or significant contact	This refers to roles or activities that involve face-to-face interaction with children (direct contact), repeated or ongoing engagement over a period (sustained contact), or responsibilities that carry a high degree of influence or impact on a child's wellbeing, safety or development, even if contact is infrequent (significant contact). Examples include teaching, mentoring, caregiving or decision-making roles that affect children's lives.
Disability	Disability is when someone with an impairment cannot join activities because of barriers in the world (<u>DFAT: Australia's International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy 2025</u>). Refers to long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
Downstream partner	An entity or organisation that is subcontracted or engaged by a DFAT partner to perform activities related to DFAT business. Downstream partners are expected to adhere to the policies. Upstream partners have responsibilities to assist downstream partners comply with the policies. This can include sharing materials, training or expertise.
Child 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.
Ill-treatment	Disciplining or correcting a child in an unreasonable and seriously inappropriate or improper 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 behaviour towards a child. Note: the above includes a child or children being present (hearing or seeing) while any person, including a parent or sibling, is subjected to any of the above.
Informed consent	In relation to photographs or videos, ensures the child and the parent or legal guardian understands the implications, purpose and potential uses of the photographs or videos.
Multilateral partner	Intergovernmental institutions which include multilateral development banks, United Nations agencies and regional groupings. Multilateral partners often have their own policies, and DFAT staff should seek to engage their partner on meaningful implementation of a shared commitment to the principles of safeguarding.
Neglect	The failure by any person or organisation – that is in a position to do so – to provide a child with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing.
Personnel	Personnel are either employed by an organisation, engaged by an organisation on a subcontract basis, or engaged by an organisation on a voluntary or unpaid basis. Personnel can include paid staff, volunteers, interns, trustees and board members.
Sexual abuse	The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. This includes sexual assault, rape, molestation, and other

	forms of non-consensual sexual activity (definition as per CAPSEAH: Common approach to protection from sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment).
Sexual exploitation	Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. For example, coercing individuals into engaging in sexual activities in exchange for aid, services, employment opportunities or other benefits (definition as per CAPSEAH).
Sexual harassment	<p>A person sexually harasses another person if the person makes an unwelcome sexual advance or an unwelcome request for sexual favours, or engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated (<i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i>).</p> <p>Sexual harassment can take various forms – it can be obvious or indirect, physical or verbal, repeated or one-off and perpetrated by any person of any gender towards any person of any gender.</p> <p>Some examples of behaviour that may be sexual harassment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staring or leering • unnecessary familiarity, such as unwelcome affection or touching • suggestive comments or jokes • insults or taunts of a sexual nature • intrusive questions or statements about a person’s private life • displaying posters magazines or screensavers of a sexual nature • sending sexually explicit emails or text messages • inappropriate advances on social networking sites • accessing sexually explicit internet sites • requests for sex or repeated unwanted requests to go out on dates • behaviour that may also be an offence under criminal law such as physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking or obscene communication.
Transactional sex	<p>The exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours.</p> <p>Men and women can be sexually exploited through transactional sex (the exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex or sexual acts), even in places where sex work is legal.</p> <p>For a person purchasing sex in a humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) setting, it is often impossible to distinguish between exploitative and non-exploitative transactional sex.</p> <p>Where there are significant power imbalances (based on gender, age, ability, authority, social and economic inequality, etc), the potential for exploitative transactional sex is heightened. For these reasons, transactional sex is prohibited across all HDP settings.</p>
Trauma-informed approach	A way of understanding and responding to individuals who have experienced trauma. It involves recognising the impact of trauma on individuals and their behaviour and adjusting in policies and practices to better support them. This approach emphasises safety,

	trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment. It also includes understanding the prevalence of trauma and its effects and creating a trauma-sensitive environment (CHS Alliance Definition).
Upstream Partner	A DFAT partner that engages other entities or organisations to perform activities related to DFAT business. Upstream partners control or influence design, contracting and standards, and carries responsibility to ensure that downstream partners comply with the policies. This can include sharing materials, training or expertise, but also include the inclusion of contractual obligations and regular monitoring of compliance.
Victim-survivor	Victim-survivor is a term used to describe a person who is, or has been, sexually exploited, abused or harassed. This term can apply to both adults and children. The term 'victim-survivor' acknowledges both the harm suffered (victim) and the resilience or agency of the individual in coping with the aftermath (survivor). This term emphasises a supportive, rights-based approach to addressing their needs and upholding their dignity throughout the reporting and response process.

APPENDIX J: EXPLANATION OF FIGURE 1 - SAFEGUARDING ACROSS THE LIFE CYCLE DIAGRAM

PLANNING AN ACTIVITY

What are the safeguarding risks? Who is possibly at risk?

DESIGNING AN ACTIVITY

How does DFAT and its downstream partners assure people are safe? Who are your downstream partners and do they understand safeguarding principles? What measures can be implemented to help bring them on board?

ENGAGING WITH PARTNERS (CONTRACTING, PROCUREMENT AND DUE DILIGENCE)

What checks are performed? Are there assurance measures in place? Are there contractual terms in arrangements that focus on protection?

MANAGING RISK

What risks exist in the activity and what controls and treatments can be put in place? How is this monitored? Who is accountable? Which leaders need to understand this risk management?

ENSURING UNDERSTANDING

What training and tools are needed to support safeguarding in the activity? Who needs to be trained? What is proportionate to your context, activity and organisation?

SETTING UP A CULTURE OF SAFEGUARDING

What systems are in place to allow people to report concerning behaviour?

REPORTING AND MANAGING INCIDENTS

If an incident happens who needs to know? Who will investigate and how do you intend to ensure they're qualified and safe? What protections are there for victim-survivors? How is natural justice preserved?