

Australian Government





AusAID Management Response

Independent Child Protection Policy Review 2011

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In 2008, reflecting the government's commitment to protect children from all kinds of abuse in the delivery of Australian aid, AusAID implemented a child protection policy. AusAID is the first bilateral donor and Commonwealth agency to implement such a policy.

The Policy requires a review every three years to assess its relevance and effectiveness of its implementation; and provide practical recommendations for improvement. The first independent child protection policy review was conducted by Global Child Protection Services (GCPS), between November 2011 and March 2012. GCPS is an independent consultancy group dedicated to increasing the safety and well-being of children globally.

The review team was impressed with AusAID's commitment to child protection and the work to develop, implement, support and resource the Policy. The review noted AusAID's domestic and international leadership among other Commonwealth departments, other donors and multilateral organisations.

The review also noted a number of opportunities to further strengthen our work, including the child protection complaints process and partner compliance. The review strongly encourages AusAID to consider developing a separate child protection strategy that acknowledges the broader risks to children associated with aid program investments, outlining how the aid program promotes and protects children's rights.

As the recognised leader in child protection in international development, AusAID welcomes the review findings. AusAID agrees or agrees in-principle to all of the recommendations and has already implemented many of the recommendations.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS NOTED BY REVIEW

- The training of 2000 staff and partners to apply AusAID's child protection standards
- The successful integration of the Policy into AusAID's business systems and processes
- 95% of NGOs surveyed had a child protection policy which extended to their delivery partners
- Innovative child protection knowledge sharing project, bringing together more than 100 AusAID partners through online and face-to-face forums
- Ongoing commitment to resource a dedicated Child Protection Specialist and supporting staff member

Many of the achievements of the Policy are due to the valuable contribution of non-government organisations and contractors, including their commitment to creating child safe environments in the delivery of Australian aid. AusAID will continue to work collaboratively with its partners to share knowledge and promote mutual accountability.



What we have done since the review

AusAID has:

- Initiated the first ever multi-donor meeting on aligning donor child protection requirements in April 2012. We continue to support other donors to develop their own child protection policies. For example, USAID.
- Committed to the inclusion of child protection clauses in all future partnerships and agreements with multilateral organisations and bilateral donors.
- Established an Australian Volunteer for International Development (AVID) Child Protection Team to strengthen the effectiveness of Policy implementation in the volunteer program. The AVID Child Protection Team has developed an AVID risk mitigation plan; and a pilot project to test the plan's effectiveness, will be rolled out by the end of 2012. The pilot project will implement a child protection education package including training and self-assessment tools for volunteer host organisations. AusAID also agreed to fund the placement of new child protection officers in each core partner organisation.
- Developed a child protection eLearning package to be rolled out in late 2012. This package will make high quality child protection training available to all staff regardless of their location.

Next steps

AusAID will:

- Update the Policy to reflect review recommendations including legislation changes and changes to AusAID business procedures. The revised Policy will be released by the end of 2012, supported by a comprehensive process of dissemination and communication.
- Develop, in consultation with key AusAID partners, a separate child protection thematic strategy that acknowledges the broader risks to children associated with aid program investments and outline how the aid program promotes and protects children's rights. The thematic strategy is expected to be released in 2013.
- Strengthen systems for handling serious child protection allegations. We will work with the Australian Federal Police to improve interagency responses, and we will also work with the NSW Community and Disability Commissioner and Deputy Ombudsman, to develop a stronger system for responding to child-protection related allegations tailored to suit the Australian Aid program.
- Develop a system of child protection focal points, a group of AusAID staff who are actively involved in supporting Policy implementation, to improve Policy communication and implementation across the agency.
- Work with delivery partners to develop ongoing training and management to strengthen child safeguarding measures at field level.

Peter Baxter Director General



Executive Summary recommendations and AusAID response The review made 23 substantive recommendations in the Executive Summary and another

The review made 23 substantive recommendations in the Executive Summary and another 86 specific recommendations in the body of the report. AusAID agrees with the 23 substantive recommendations, with four already implemented as outlined below. The 86 specific recommendations are implemented or agreed to in-principle and will be incorporated into business work plans with relevant areas.

	Review recommendation	AusAID response
1	Given the changes to legislation since the introduction of the Policy, it is recommended	Agree. AusAID will revise the Policy and associated documents in line with
	that a revision of the current Policy be	recommendations made. The revised Policy
	undertaken in order to reflect as a minimum,	will be released by December 2012 supported
	references to the new legislation.	by a comprehensive process of dissemination and communication.
2	AusAID should, as a minimum, accept that	Agree. AusAID will develop a child protection
	children already represent a sizeable	thematic strategy that acknowledges the
	constituency in any given program and that their situation, their rights and issues need to	broader risks to children associated with aid program investments and will outline how the
	be considered and integrated in any	aid program promotes and protects children's
	development or humanitarian programme.	rights. The thematic strategy is expected to be
		released in 2013.
3	AusAID should develop a policy or position statement that describes its understandings	Agree. AusAID will develop a child protection thematic strategy that acknowledges the
	and commitments to child protection in	broader risks to children associated with aid
	general.	program investments and will outline how the
		aid program promotes and protects children's rights. The thematic strategy is expected to be
		released in 2013.
4	AusAID should consider recruiting a Children's	Agree. AusAID will be appointing a principal
	Specialist as part of the Sector Quality Team	social development adviser with responsibility
	working alongside the Governance and Social Development Branch providing technical	for child protection issues. AusAID will ensure child protection feeds into the broader social
	assistance in setting strategic directions.	development agenda and poverty reduction
		initiatives and strategies.
5	Given Australia's increased level of Aid Budget since 2008 and international moves to	Implemented. AusAID has standard child protection clauses and will seek inclusion of
	safeguard children, the exclusion of bilateral	these clauses in all future partnerships and
	and multilateral organisations from the scope	agreements with multilateral organisations and
6	of the policy should be reconsidered. If AusAID takes up earlier recommendations	other bilateral donors.
6	and moves to a broader definition of	Agree.
	"safeguarding children", the location of the	
	Child Protection Officer within a policy section	
7	of AusAID would be more appropriate. Child protection is an important function that	Implemented. AusAID has appointed a full-
	needs to be adequately resourced, and	time child protection policy officer to support
	certainly a full-time position working to the	the child protection specialist.
	child protection officer should be appointed full time.	
8	Potential child safeguarding risks identified at	Agree. AusAID will develop a child protection
	individual and program level in the design,	thematic strategy that acknowledges the
	planning, delivery and review of projects in all	broader risks to children associated with aid
	sectors so that all programs e.g. health, education, etc. contribute to the increased	program investments and will outline how the aid program promotes and protects children's
	safety and protection of children.	rights. The thematic strategy is expected to be
		released in 2013.



9	Child protection concerns need to be highlighted in key documents relating to emergency response so that the particular vulnerability of children is recognised and priority given to child protection issues in a disaster response.	Agree. AusAID's Humanitarian Action Policy defines protection as one of the central elements of effective and appropriate humanitarian action. It also includes a commitment to develop a protection framework to provide further guidance on protection in humanitarian crises. In line with international standards, Australia's protection priorities are based on an assessment of need. AusAID's Humanitarian Preparedness and Response Branch incorporates child protection compliance requirements into all of its partnerships, stand-by arrangements and programs for emergency response.
10	Ensure a closer relationship between the child protection function and the Audit Branch, with a view to increasing cooperation, learning and developing consistency of approach.	Agree.
11	One single child protection code of conduct should be devised that applies to all AusAID staff and others that are in a contractual relationship to AusAID, regardless of their status, location or any other variable.	Agree. AusAID will require all overseas-based staff, Canberra based and individual contractors travelling internationally to commit to the AusAID child protection code of conduct.
12	Once revised, the safeguarding children policy should be re-launched, accompanied by a vigorous process of dissemination and communication.	Agree. AusAID will develop a communication plan to release the Policy and thematic strategy.
13	All staff, both in head office and in Posts receive robust and meaningful training on both the child protection and appropriate risk assessments for child protection that is tailored to the different areas and levels of the Agency.	Agree. AusAID is developing a child protection eLearning package to be rolled out in late 2012. This package will make high quality child protection training available to all staff regardless of their location.
14	Set clear targets and accompanying indicators by which to judge effective implementation within AusAID.	Agree. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed, consistent with risk, fraud and audit approaches to ensure a more integrated systematic approach.
15	It is recommended that AusAID grant applications include an option to seek funding for strengthening of child safeguarding measures.	Agree. AusAID will work with delivery partners to develop ongoing training and management to strengthen child safeguarding measures at field level.
16	AusAID to work with ACFID on strengthening the requirement of local implementing organisations of partners to develop adequate child safeguarding measures within a clear timeframe.	Agree.
17	Strengthen existing monitoring mechanisms and develop additional means of tracking progress and auditing implementation for partners.	Agree. A monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed, consistent with risk, fraud and audit approaches to ensure a more integrated systematic approach.



18	AusAID-funded volunteers should not be placed in organisations that are working in direct opposition to children's rights, international standards and best practice initiatives in country and do not demonstrate the potential, willingness and capacity to change.	Implemented. The AVID Child Protection Team has developed an AVID risk mitigation plan; and a pilot project to test the plan's effectiveness, will be rolled out by the end of 2012. The pilot project will implement a child protection education package including training and self-assessment tools for volunteer host organisations. AusAID also agreed to fund the placement of new child protection officers in each core partner organisation.
19	Assessment of volunteer host organisations needs to be much more rigorous in relation to child protection but also more generally in terms of their basic rationale, ethos, philosophy and approach as these represent indicators of child safe environments.	Agree. The AVID Child Protection Team has developed an AVID risk mitigation plan; and a pilot project to test the plan's effectiveness, will be rolled out by the end of 2012. The pilot project will implement a child protection education package including training and self- assessment tools for volunteer host organisations. AusAID also agreed to fund the placement of new child protection officers in each core partner organisation.
20	The requirement on volunteer host organisations to have a child protection policy is not sufficient. More stringent monitoring of compliance levels should apply to all volunteer host organisations that have contact with children, directly or indirectly.	Agree. The AVID Child Protection Team has developed an AVID risk mitigation plan; and a pilot project to test the plan's effectiveness, will be rolled out by the end of 2012. The pilot project will implement a child protection education package including training and self- assessment tools for volunteer host organisations. AusAID also agreed to fund the placement of new child protection officers in each core partner organisation.
21	AusAID develop a child protection program policy and strategy, along the lines of AusAID's strategy on disability.	Agree. AusAID will develop a child protection thematic strategy that acknowledges the broader risks to children associated with aid program investments and will outline how the aid program promotes and protects children's rights. The thematic strategy is expected to be released in 2013.
22	AusAID to lead work with bi-lateral donors, such as DFID and Irish Aid (and possibly other funders) in developing a broader constituency of donors focused on ensuring agencies working with children meet basic protection standards.	Implemented. In April 2012, AusAID initiated the first ever multi-donor meeting on harmonised child protection standards. We will continue to support other donors to develop their own child protection policies.
23	AusAID should consider funding research, reviews and evaluations to identify best practice or to support collaboration amongst agencies (donors, UN, NGOs) to develop joint safeguarding initiatives of various kinds.	Agree. For example actions will include: as part of the thematic strategy AusAID will work with ACFID to identify effective mechanisms to extend the child protection requirements to locally based delivery partners.