



AusAID Management Response

Independent Child Protection Policy Review 2011



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.

Executive Summary recommendations and AusAID response

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



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.

