



## **CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY (CSP)**

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*When relevant, this policy and associated documents should be translated into the local language to ensure access to all personnel.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF) works with local partners to improve the quality of life of the people most in need in remote areas of Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian Himalayas.

AHF has a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse or exploitation and is fully committed to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (**CROC 1989**)<sup>1</sup>. AHF recognises that some children, such as Indigenous and ethnic minority children, children with disabilities and children living in areas impacted by disasters (natural or conflict-based), are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Children in the Himalaya face a number of challenges including:

- Shortage of medical services, diarrhoea and respiratory tract infections
- Entrenched poverty causing malnourishment, migration, hardships and lack of parental care
- Child labour and child trafficking
- Domestic violence
- Natural disasters
- Marginalisation of ethnic and caste groups
- Impacts of recent conflict such as in Nepal

In addition, there is a high incidence of physical punishment of children.

AHF is committed to promoting the rights of children in its work and ensuring children are safeguarded from harm. AHF will not tolerate any form of child abuse. This Policy, in association with the Annexes and associated Child Safeguarding (CS) operational forms/documents will be used to guide, inform and educate AHF employees, volunteers and partner organisations in order to meet those commitments.

AHF adheres to local and international child protection laws in relation to all forms of child abuse and child exploitation including child sex tourism, child sex trafficking, child labour and child pornography.

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<sup>1</sup> Children's Rights are clearly articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All employees and partner organisations are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these Rights:  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

This policy is to be read in conjunction with:

AHF Volunteers Policy  
AHF Complaints Handling Policy  
AHF Safety and Security Policy  
AHF Communications Policy  
AHF HR Policy  
AHF Procedures Manual  
AHF Organisation and Program Risk Management Guidelines

## **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to protect children and young people from exploitation and abuse of all kinds in the delivery and management of AHF programs and activities and to ensure that their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

The policy also affirms AHF's commitment to preventing a person from working with children if they pose risks to children.

AHF is actively working towards achieving a child-safe organisation culture where the concerns for the safety of a child are paramount. This Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP) provides guidance on how to work respectfully and effectively with children and how to respond to concerns about child abuse in its many forms.

## **3. SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all AHF personnel including Board and Committee members, employees, volunteers, consultants and other representatives, as well as in-country partners and affiliates. It also applies to individuals or groups engaged on a short-term basis by AHF and its partners. This includes but is not limited to photographers, professionals providing training or other support, visiting donors and supporters and media personnel. These personnel are required to accept and sign the CSP *Code of Conduct* as part of their involvement with AHF (see below).

As AHF does not directly implement programs, working instead through local implementing partners, the Foundation will work closely with these partners to operationalise the principles outlined in this policy.

AHF believes that child protection is the responsibility of everyone within AHF and all partners who work with the Foundation.

## 4. PRINCIPLES

### Knowledge

- AHF will ensure that all Board and Committee members, employees, volunteers, consultants and in-country partners/affiliates and other relevant stakeholders are made aware of the nature of child abuse and the risks to children; share our commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse in its many forms; and understand the AHF CSP policy and adhere to it at all times.

### Risk management

- AHF will take proactive steps to create child-safe and child-friendly programs by assessing and managing the risks to children and taking all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe from harm.

### Reporting

- AHF will ensure that personnel and partner organisations are aware of their responsibility to report concerns regarding the safety of children and that they understand how to make a report.

### Responding

- AHF will treat all reports of suspected or actual abuse seriously and ensure action is taken prioritising the protection and safety of children and in accordance with the organisation's procedures.

In order to meet the standards, set out above, AHF will build the capacity of stakeholders including partner organisations to:

- keep the best interests of the child at the centre of the child safeguarding process
- take concerns raised about possible child abuse seriously
- listen to and take the views and wishes of children seriously
- support and ensure the protection of children who are the subject of any concerns
- act appropriately in instigating or co-operating with any investigation process
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists between personnel so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- empower children by discussing with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

## 5. GUIDELINES

### 5.1 Organisation-wide risk management

AHF has an organisation-wide risk management framework. Child safeguarding risks are included in this framework. All risks are tracked on a risk register and risks rated as medium and above have risk mitigation plans and are regularly monitored. High risks are reported to each Board meeting.

AHF will assess its organisational child safeguarding practices every two years. If any trends are emerging or any alleged or actual incident occurs (managed as per this policy and the AHF Procedures Manual), AHF will

conduct an urgent re-assessment. AHF will conduct an assessment of partner's child safeguarding practices every two years.

## **5.2. Human Resources**

### ***5.2.1 Safe Recruitment Practices***

AHF will ensure high standards are adhered to during recruitment, selection and screening of all personnel. This includes employees, volunteers, consultants and others who may be engaged with AHF. If the person being recruited will be working with children, an assessment of suitability to work with children and young people will be undertaken, including seeking references, police checks and, for Australian citizens, Working with Children Checks. Recruitment processes must follow AHF's Recruitment Policy, HR Policy and AHF Procedures Manual.

All personnel and representatives must sign AHF Code of Conduct and AHF Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

### ***5.2.2 Induction and training***

All employees and international volunteers will undertake child safeguarding induction training at the commencement of their employment or engagement and will be made aware of AHF Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures, including reporting procedures and obligations. The induction process is detailed in the HR Policy and the AHF Procedures Manual.

Refresher training will be organised every two years. If required, role-specific child protection training will be made available and organised through the relevant supervisors or managers. Training will make sure that employees and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm, particularly organisational child sexual abuse, and on how to ensure child friendly ways for children to communicate and raise their concerns. Relevant employees and volunteers will be supported to develop practical skills in protecting children and responding to disclosures.

### ***5.2.3 Support to employees***

Disclosure of child abuse is a difficult and emotional experience for both child victims and for employees who report or are involved in dealing with the issue. In orienting employees on this policy, AHF will seek to equip employees to receive reports of abuse or respond to disclosure in ways which affirm and support child victims and ensure the best interest of the child is the first consideration. Support for employees involved in the process will be provided through a relevant supervisor and additional external support can be provided through the organisation's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

## **5.3 Involvement and support of children and young people**

AHF is committed to child and youth participation in its programs overseas and community engagement in Australia. AHF recognises that children and young people are kept safer when they understand their rights and when mechanisms and processes are available that ensure that their voices, views and opinions are encouraged.

AHF will strive to ensure that opportunities are provided for children to understand their rights to safety and protection, have their views heard and have them inform future amendments to the Foundation's programs. They should also be asked for feedback on AHF personnel and services, invited to make comments and be informed on how to make a complaint. A child friendly reporting process will be developed. Where possible, sexual abuse prevention programs and information will be provided to children.

AHF will actively anticipate children's diverse circumstances and make every effort to respond effectively to those with additional vulnerabilities. Particular attention will be paid to the needs of children with disability, and children from culturally marginalised backgrounds.

Consultation will always be undertaken with the documented permission and in collaboration with children's parents and wider family, wherever possible.

In case of incidents, support will be offered to children and young people who have suffered or been exposed to abuse, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Support can include specialist psycho-social counselling and/or access to other specialist and appropriate support as needed. The children and young people concerned will be able to choose if and when they would like to take up the support options available to them.

#### **5.4 Involvement of families and communities**

AHF will also ensure that families and communities are informed and involved in AHF programs design, implementation monitoring and evaluation. Families should be informed of the rights of their children as required under the UN Convention on the rights of the child. AHF recognises that families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child and that they should participate in decisions affecting their child.

The organisation will strive to engage in open, two-way communication with families and communities about its child safety approach and to ensure that relevant information is accessible.

#### **5.5 Awareness raising and risk management of delivery partners and projects**

AHF recognises that there are a number of potential risks to children in the delivery of its programs. AHF assesses and manages these risks by examining personnel, projects and in-country delivery partners and their potential impact on children. Procedures for assessing and mitigating project and partner risks are included in the AHF Program Management Procedures Manual. Projects that involve direct contact with and working with children will be considered a higher risk and will therefore require more stringent child protection procedures.

AHF is committed to ensuring that child safeguarding mechanisms are embedded in its programs and partnership development as follow:

- AHF 's Child Safeguarding and wider safeguarding policies will be promoted and risk management undertaken throughout its work with project partners when:

- conducting due diligence assessment conducted prior to partnering with an organisation and regularly during the partnership, which will include partner child protection risk assessment;
  - developing project design including project child protection and overall risk management framework and complaint handling processes;
  - appraising the project;
  - negotiating project agreements;
  - monitoring of project, partner and risks;
  - developing partner capacity building plan when relevant;
  - evaluating projects.
- AHF will educate partner employees and stakeholders about how to reduce risk and ensure that children are safeguarded in organisational activities.
  - AHF will strive to ensure that implementing partners have an informed understanding of child safeguarding processes and understand how to report, investigate, document and manage child abuse and exploitation incidents.
  - Feedback from children and communities on AHF and partner role and employee's behaviours, as well as complaints, should be actively sought. AHF will strive to develop transparent and accessible complaints mechanisms and reporting processes together with partners and project participants. Designated, and ideally senior, AHF representatives should present feedback to communities on what changes have been made resulting from complaints.
  - Employees working directly with project participants must receive training on how to receive complaints and disclosures.

## **5.6 Humanitarian Emergencies**

AHF is committed to reducing children's vulnerability to emergencies, ensuring their right to have humanitarian assistance in crises, and their right to survival and development during and after an emergency. Children are likely to make up half or more of the population affected by conflict and disasters. AHF will put in place processes to safeguard children during emergencies.

## **5.7 Visits to international programs**

In addition to employees conducting monitoring visits, AHF programs are occasionally visited by Board or Committee members and other representatives, as well as by participants on treks organised by AHF (or by third parties). Due diligence checks (such as Australian Federal Police Checks and when considered pertinent Working with Children Checks) will be conducted prior to visits being undertaken and visitors will also be requested to sign the AHF's Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct. AHF will explain to the visitors the importance of these documents, why they need to be agreed to and signed, as well as visitors' obligations under the Codes. Signed copies of AHF Codes of Conduct will be provided to the visitors.

AHF will ensure that only necessary visits are conducted to local communities and, in most cases, will only allow visitors to visit its partners. Prior to the trip, the AHF Child Protection Focal Person (or other designated staff) will brief the visitor on AHF policy, codes and expectations. Visitors will be accompanied by an AHF and/or local partner employee at all times when visiting the local communities.

A risk assessment will also be conducted in liaison with partners to ensure potential risks to children are mitigated. Prior to, or at the commencement of each visit, AHF will confirm with partners and the local

communities that visitors have been made aware of their obligations and that they have signed the AHF Codes of Conduct.

Where a field visit has been coordinated and is managed by a third party (e.g. Kathmandu Summit Club treks) and the trekkers are visiting an AHF supported project in community, AHF will work with the third party to ensure trekkers are briefed on child safety, have completed a Police Check or Working with Children Check depending on the nature of their visit, have signed AHF's Codes of Conduct, and are aware of communication requirements (5.8 below). AHF's Guidelines for Fundraising/ Volunteer Trekkers '*Playing our part to keep children safe in the Himalaya*' will be provided to the trekkers.

## **5.8 Communication risk management**

AHF employees and partners will at all times portray children in a respectful, appropriate and consensual way. Personnel should be guided and bound by the AHF's Communication Policy and the associated procedures at all times when taking photographs.

AHF has a system in place to ensure that any public materials are in compliance with the above policy and procedures.

Children and young people are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation when using online sites and channels, including social media sites. Risks to children online include: online grooming, sexual abuse or sexualised language or posting of inappropriate content, bullying and discrimination (threats, shaming, humiliating, teasing, discrimination). AHF personnel, including volunteers, are not to connect with or form relationships with any person under 18 who they meet through AHF-related work.

AHF will strive to ensure that risks in the online and physical environment are identified and mitigated without compromising a child's right to privacy and healthy child development. The online environment should be used in accordance with the AHF's Code of Conduct, Communications Policy and Social Media Policy.

## **5.9 Australian education and fundraising activities risk management**

AHF conducts education and fundraising activities. Employees and representatives working on those activities on behalf of the organisation will be required to comply with all AHF due diligence processes in order to safeguard children. Compliance will be conducted, recorded and audited.

## **5.10 Breach of this Policy or of AHF Codes of Conduct**

AHF personnel must immediately report:

- Any breach of the Codes of Conduct or behaviour that they suspect may be child exploitation and abuse, including possession of child exploitation material, or policy non-compliance by;
  - AHF personnel, including employees, volunteers, consultants, contractors, donors or members of the Board or Committees;

- personnel of an AHF partner or civil society organisation.
- Any report made by anyone relating to child exploitation and abuse or policy non-compliance by AHF personnel or personnel of an AHF partner organisation.

It is the responsibility of personnel to report the incident, not investigate it.

### **5.11 Incident reporting and handling**

Process for reporting a breach is included as Annex C and procedures included in the AHF Procedures Manual outline what will be involved in the assessment that will follow receipt of a report, the steps that may be taken, as well as considerations for child safety. The rights of the child and his/her family and those of the alleged perpetrator are also discussed. An Incident Report Form is available.

AHF will treat all concerns raised seriously and ensure that all parties are treated fairly, and the principles of natural justice will be taken into account. All reports will be handled professionally, confidentially and efficiently.

For projects benefitting from DFAT funding, AHF will immediately report child exploitation and abuse suspicions or allegations to DFAT.

The procedures regarding reporting incidents included as Annex C and in the AHF Procedures Manual also outline sanctions that would be applied in the event of breaches. Should a person pose an unacceptable risk to children, AHF is committed to preventing that person from working or having contact with children.

AHF will also develop a child-friendly reporting process.

## **6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Creating a safe working environment at AHF and within partner organisations is everyone's responsibility and failure to act on concerns or disclosures relating to child abuse or exploitation is not an option.

### **6.1 Board and CEO**

The Board and CEO will publicly commit to child safety, champion a child safe culture and ensure that supervision and people management have a child safety focus.

It is the responsibility of the Board and CEO to ensure effective child safeguarding mechanisms across all AHF areas of operations. This includes partner organisations.

Any actual or suspected incidents of child exploitation or abuse must be reported to the CEO or to the AHF Chair if the complaint concerns the CEO. Contact details of the CEO and AHF's Chair are published on the organisation's website and AHF's implementing partners are provided with explanations on the reporting procedures with contact details, together with the incident report template.

Incident reports will be provided to the Board as a standing item on the Board agenda.

## 6.2 Managers

Managers and senior employees are responsible for ensuring that AHF Child Safeguarding policy and procedures, in particular reporting procedures, are understood and implemented by the employees, other personnel and volunteers under their supervision and responsibility, and the partner organisations with whom they work. They are also responsible for the creation and maintenance of an environment which safeguards children and promotes the implementation of AHF codes of conduct.

Each manager can act as a resource person for questions about what constitutes child safeguarding or policy non-compliance. Managers also act as the first point of contact to receive formal incident reports and will report to the CEO as mentioned above.

## 6.3 Employee

All employees have the responsibility to ensure compliance with AHF's Child Safeguarding Policy. Employees in charge of a particular project will ensure partners are aware of AHF's incident reporting process including the CEO contact details. They may assist the partner in this process when necessary.

**All AHF employees are obliged to report any suspicions of child abuse or exploitation.** This can be done without sharing details of cases where information has been shared in confidence. Failure to report to a relevant person suspicion of abuse relating to someone else is a breach of AHF's policy and could lead to disciplinary action being taken.

## 6.4 Child Safeguarding Officer and Incident Reporting Focal Person

The Head of Programs will be the delegated employee responsible for the safeguarding of children for the Australian Himalayan Foundation. The Child Safeguarding Officer advises the Board, CEO and staff about child safeguarding matters. The CEO is the incident reporting focal person. **For contact details, see Annex D.**

## 7. REVIEW OF POLICY

AHF's Child Safeguarding Policy will be formally reviewed every two years to assess its relevance and effectiveness and ensure it meets current standards and legislation including applicable criminal codes. The CPO will manage the review which will be reported to the Board and relevant employees and other stakeholders will be consulted in the process.

## 8. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- ACFID Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Policy, DFAT, 2017
- Child Protection Guidance Note, Establishing Child Protection Risk Context, DFAT, January 2018
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations, 1989
- Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, United Nations, 2002
- Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, United Nations, 2002
- Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, United Nations, 1924
- International Labour Organization Convention 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, ILO, 1999
- Criminal Code Act 1995 (Divisions 272, 273, 474)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW) – and other state and territory child protection legislation

## ANNEX A DEFINITION OF KEY TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

- *Duty of care*: responsibility to provide children with an adequate level of protection against harm.
- *Child and young person*: any person under the age of 18 years (unless otherwise under national laws).
- *Child Safeguarding*: denotes measures to protect the health, well-being and human rights of individuals, which allow children, young people and vulnerable to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.
- *Child protection*: specific activities (at times underpinned by legislation) undertaken to prevent and respond to children who are being abused or maltreated.
- *Child abuse*: physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, bullying, child labour and family violence.
- *Physical abuse*: when a person purposefully injures or threatens a child or young person.
- *Emotional abuse*: Emotional abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can seriously damage a child's emotional health and development.
- *Neglect*: persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide a child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation, supervision or care.
- *Exploitation*: the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others.
- *Sexual abuse*: when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent or adult for his/her sexual stimulation/gratification.
- *Child sex tourism*: the commercial sexual exploitation of children by men or women who travel from one place to another.
- *Bullying*: the inappropriate use of power by an individual or group with an intent to injure either physically or emotionally.
- *Exposure to family violence*: when children and young people witness or experience the chronic domination, coercion, intimidation or victimisation of one person by another by physical, sexual or emotional means.
- *Vulnerable children*: all children are vulnerable by definition of their age. Those especially vulnerable are those in institutions, at work, in war or in emergencies.
- *Children in emergencies*: especially vulnerable to abuse exploitation as part of a traumatised and displaced population.

## ANNEX B AHF CHILD SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree that while involved in AHF-funded aid activities,

### I will:

- Comply with AHF Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour.
- Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
- Encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, employees and volunteers and have children and young people participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Use any computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium (see also 'Use of children's images for work related purposes').
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with the procedures outlined in this document.
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with AHF that relate to child exploitation and abuse.
- Take responsibility for ensuring that I am accountable and do not place myself in positions where there is a risk of allegations being made; and avoid behaviours that could be perceived by others as child exploitation and abuse.
- Self-assess my behaviours, actions, language and relationships with children.
- Consult with the Child Safeguarding Officer or other relevant employees if I have any questions regarding child protection and how it relates to my work/relationship with AHF.
- Be a positive role model for children.

### I will not

- Engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, degrade or exploit children.
- Use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- Engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child can do for him/herself, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes.
- Develop relationships with children that may be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Seek to make contact and spend time with any child or young person outside the program times.
- Connect with or form relationships with children and young people online met through AHF work, such as on social media platforms.
- Not show favoritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.
- Invite unaccompanied children into my home/hotel or other private location, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- Condone or participate in, behaviour of children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible.
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way.
- Use physical punishment on or violence against children.
- Not give or provide children with alcohol, tobacco, legal drugs that are prescribed for the child or any illegal drugs.
- Hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.

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

**When photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, I must:**

- Before photographing or filming a child, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images.
- Before photographing or filming a child, obtain consent from the child **and** a parent or guardian of the child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used.
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the fact.
- Ensure electronic file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form

I understand that the onus is on me to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child abuse when implementing AHF-funded activities.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ANNEX C      INCIDENT REPORTING PROCEDURES**

It is mandatory for all AHF employees, associates, volunteers and partner organisations to report incidents, concerns or allegations of child abuse.

Children and community members with whom AHF works will be provided with information about how to report any child protection concerns.

The Foundation will take all concerns and reports of child abuse seriously and act on reports immediately, in line with the following procedures:

### **WHAT SHOULD BE REPORTED?**

- Any disclosure or allegation from a child/community member or employees regarding the safety, abuse or exploitation of a child.
- Any observation or concerning behaviour exhibited by an AHF Board member, employees, volunteer, consultant, representative or partner employee that breaches AHF's Code of Conduct and AHF's Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct for working with children.
- Inappropriate use of the Foundation's photographic equipment or computers, including evidence of child pornography.
- Engagement in behaviour that could be associated with sexual grooming, exploitation or trafficking.
- All concerns related to the safety of children and young people.

### **HOW TO REPORT**

Anyone can raise a concern, make a complaint or report an incident to AHF about something they have experienced or witnessed. This can be done verbally or in writing. In case of incidents, concerns or allegations of child abuse the following process should be followed:

- a. As soon as it's reasonably possible, verbally advise the most senior staff member on site. If no senior staff member is on site - advise this person by telephone. Follow this phone report with a dated diary note outlining the details of the conversation, as well as the person's name to whom you made the report.
  
- b. Immediately and confidentially the senior staff member is to advise the AHF CEO. If the incident concerns the CEO, contact the Board Chairperson.
  
- c. Ask the person affected by the incident whether they would like a support person present whilst the incident is documented. This should be undertaken by the most senior staff member on site. It is important to ensure support is provided to the person affected. (The importance of confidentiality should be explained to the support person clearly and in local language).

- d. Complete AHF incident report form detailing the incident in as much detail as possible and treat it as a highly confidential document. If an incident involved alleged sexual abuse or physical assault only record minimal information and refer to the police.
- e. Contact AHF CEO or the Chairperson if the incident concerns the CEO. Email the form and report the incident by phone.
- f. If an allegation is made against you, then you must inform your line manager immediately. You should also promptly complete an incident report form, sign and date it, record the details as you recall them and send a copy of this to AHF.
- g. All those involved, including the accused, will be treated with respect and all allegations will be treated confidentially.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?**

AHF is committed to responding and taking appropriate action in response to all incidents and concerns of abuse. AHF will treat all concerns raised seriously and ensure that all parties are treated fairly and justly. All reports will be handled professionally, confidentially and expediently.

When an incident or concern has been reported, it must be referred promptly within two working days as per the process detailed above. This can be done on behalf of somebody else and may only involve referring a suspicion.

In remote communities with limited communication options this process may take longer but should always be done as soon as practicable and without delay.

The person alleged to have breached the policy will be given the opportunity to present their view of the events in question. AHF will withhold its findings and determination until the investigation is fully completed.

The identity of the victim, the person reporting the incident and the person alleged to have violated the policy must be kept confidential throughout the reporting and investigation processes.

A person making a report will not be considered to have breached any code of professional conduct or ethics.

AHF will not tolerate any form of coercion, intimidation, reprisal or retaliation against any person or organisation who reports any form of child abuse or exploitation, provides any information or other assistance in an investigation. AHF will ensure that the interests of the person or organisation reporting child abuse in good faith will be protected. Employee or organisation making false or malicious allegations will face disciplinary action.

In liaison with the relevant employee and/or partner representatives, and in consultation with a representative from the Board, the CEO will investigate the situation, discuss the allegations and decide upon the next step. This may involve any or all of the following:

- Reporting to local police and/or child protection authorities;
- Reporting to the Australian Federal Police;
- Reporting to DFAT within 24 hours if the project is supported by DFAT.

During the investigation, the following actions may be undertaken:

- Conduct additional interviews with the person/persons (including child and/or parents as appropriate) who made the allegations or other witnesses to gather more information with which to make a decision;
- Conduct interview/s with the alleged offender;
- Gather other relevant evidence when possible;
- If deemed appropriate, suspend the person whom the allegations have been made against, from duties with pay during the course of the investigation.

Pending the results of the investigation, the CEO (or the Chairperson if the incident concerns the CEO), will decide on the following:

- Taking no further action.
- Further education on the CSP and AHF Codes of Conduct;
- Formal warning and monitoring;
- Transfer to alternative duties;
- Dismissal/end of contract/end of volunteer engagement.

#### **COMPLAINTS ABOUT AHF PARTNERS**

If AHF receives a complaint about a partner organisation, AHF will expect the partner to respond quickly and appropriately. AHF should assist where possible, the partner organisation to ascertain its obligations under local law, including referral of the matter to the police or other statutory authorities for criminal investigation where appropriate.

Where initial enquiries indicate that further investigation is necessary and where appropriate, AHF should work with the partner to address the issue through an appropriate independent investigation.

If the investigation concludes that an abuse has occurred, specific actions will be agreed with the partners and the partner AHF will ensure they are implemented and provide AHF with the necessary confirmation and assurances.

Ongoing inquiries and investigation of the concern or allegation work with the partner cannot involve the individual(s) who are the subject of the allegation. This also must specifically exclude involvement in the inquiries of any individuals who may have a personal relationship with or conflict of interest, relating with the person who is the subject of the concern or allegation.

The following outcomes may be decided:

- Taking no further action;
- Further education on the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct;
- Formal warning and monitoring to employee/volunteer;
- Transfer to alternative duties of employee/volunteer;

- Dismissal/end of contract/end of volunteer engagement.
- Suspension of agreement with partner pending implementation of specific actions;
- End of agreement with partner.

#### **REPORTING AND DISCLOSURE BY A CHILD**

- If a child discloses abuse, he/she must be taken seriously and treated with respect, care and concern.
- If the child requests that no-one be told of the matter, employees must seek advice from the most senior staff member on site who should consult with the CEO on how the child can be supported and the disclosure process managed, ensuring the best interests of the child are carefully considered at all stages of the process.
- Every effort will be made to ensure and protect the identity, rights and safety of the child throughout any investigations.

#### **OTHER ACTIONS TO TAKE**

- *Protect the child* – Immediate response should be to protect the child from further harm or abuse.
- *Distance the alleged perpetrator* – The best interest of the child may warrant standing down a employees member or volunteer with full pay to recognise entitlement to just processes.
- *Maintain confidentiality* – All reports will remain confidential within the Foundation recognising that they must be released to in-country or Australian authorities on request or where initial internal investigation confirms the likely veracity of the claims.

## **ANNEX D CHILD SAFEGUARDING CONTACT PEOPLE**

### **AHF Incident Reporting Focal Person**

#### **AHF CEO**

**phone: (02) 94381822**  
**email: [info@ahf.org.au](mailto:info@ahf.org.au)**  
**post: PO BOX 553, CROWS NEST NSW 1585, AUSTRALIA**  
**For current CEO contact details see AHF website**

### **AHF Child Safeguarding Focal Person**

**AHF Head of Programs**  
**phone: (02) 94381822**  
**email: [info@ahf.org.au](mailto:info@ahf.org.au)**  
**post: PO BOX 553, CROWS NEST NSW 1585, AUSTRALIA**  
**For current Head of Programs contact details see AHF website**

### **OTHER Key Child Safeguarding contacts:**

**AHF CHAIR**  
**phone: (02) 94381822**  
**email: [info@ahf.org.au](mailto:info@ahf.org.au)**  
**post: PO BOX 553, CROWS NEST NSW 1585, AUSTRALIA**  
**For current Chair contact details see AHF website**

**AHF Head of Communications and Fundraising**  
**phone: (02) 94381822**  
**email: [info@ahf.org.au](mailto:info@ahf.org.au)**  
**post: PO BOX 553, CROWS NEST NSW 1585, AUSTRALIA**  
**For current Head of Communications and Fundraising contact details see AHF website**