

## **Child Protection Policy**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Mukti Australia Inc. (hereafter MA) works with international partners in India and Sri Lanka to empower disadvantaged women, children and young people through education, healthcare, vocational training and holistic care. Our mission is to create sustainable opportunities for vulnerable women and children in India and Sri Lanka. MA is motivated by God's heart for the poor and is committed to working with partners to break cycles of exploitation, economic injustice and social inequality.

MA recognises that the nature of our work and international partnership may pose a risk to children. MA is committed to ensuring that this Child Protection Policy is implemented so that children's rights are protected and that they are not harmed as a result of MA's work.

### **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

Mukti Australia Inc. (hereafter MA) is committed to the welfare and rights of children and are aware of its obligation to take reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse of children, sexual or otherwise. All children<sup>i</sup> involved in the work of MA and our partners will be treated with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, gender, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status.

MA is committed to encourage its staff ('staff' includes employees, board members, volunteers, visitors, interns, consultants and visitors, whether full-time, part-time, contractual, paid or unpaid) to familiarize themselves with this policy to protect and provide a safe environment for children and staff.

MA is committed to complying with all relevant local legislation on child rights and welfare in order to provide what is in the 'best interest of the child' including labour laws that apply to children.

### **PURPOSE**

This Child Protection Policy will provide guidance to MA staff, volunteers, visitors, partners, and stakeholders to work respectfully and effectively with children and young people. MA staff will be expected to aim to promote a child safe environment in all areas where our work is carried

out. MA will work with international partners where any concerns for the safety of children can be raised and dealt with in a safe and fair approach.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- MA believes that any form of child abuse is wrong and it will not be tolerated.
- MA is committed to informing children, decision makers, and the public through the media, that child abuse is wrong. It is also understood that keeping silent is wrong.
- Child protection policies help to provide a safe and positive environment for children and are foundational in the education, research and advocacy initiatives that MA is involved in.

MA is committed to educating staff about the importance of child protection so that children are protected from abuse by staff, volunteers, visitors or any other stakeholders.

## CONTEXT/ RATIONALE

Children can experience abuse in family and community contexts; but also when they come into contact with staff and associates from external organisations. Child sex offenders seek to target and exploit children in environments where inappropriate sexual behaviour may go unnoticed. Child sex offenders may intend on working in programs and projects where child protection policies are absent or not enforced, increasing the vulnerability of children.

## DEFINITIONS

<b>Child or young person</b>	Any persons under the age of 18 years old.
<b>Duty of care</b>	Responsibility for the organisation to take reasonable measure to protect children and young people in its care.
<b>Physical Abuse</b>	Any punishment or physical abuse to children such as striking, hitting, kicking, punching, grabbing, poisoning, shaking and smothering or forcing the child to work in an unsafe way/environment.
<b>Emotional and Psychological Abuse</b>	Any actions (gestures, words, teasing, deliberate ignoring and cold behaviour) that affects a child's mental/emotional well-being causing them to be afraid, anxious, annoyed, isolated or discouraged.
<b>Neglect</b>	Any actions that deliberately seek to affect the four essential rights of children (right to live, right to learn or right to participate and the right to speak) and behaviour which denies

	the child access to food, water, shelter, sanitation or activity that puts the child's physical and developmental needs at risk.
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	Any action with sexual intent toward children whether consensual or coerced, including grooming and/or exposure to sexually explicit or pornographic material, touching and physical contact inappropriate to the situation or uncomfortable or confusing for the receiver, inappropriate correspondence or giving of gifts or inappropriate or unnecessary discussion of, or enquiry about, personal matters of a sexual nature.
<b>Exploitation</b>	Commercial exploitation of children and young people that would be of benefit to other people and put their physical, emotional, psychological, educational and developmental needs at risk.
<b>Staff</b>	Staff includes employees, board members, volunteers, visitors, interns, consultants and visitors, whether full-time, part-time, contractual, paid or unpaid or any other stakeholders associated with MA.

## ASSESSING RISK

MA recognises that there are a number of potential risks to children in the delivery of programs through our local staff, international and local partners, volunteers, and visitors, local and other stakeholders. MA recognises these risks and aims to be proactive in managing these risks (and potential risks) to reduce harm and safeguard children.

## RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

MA is committed to child safe recruitment, selection and screening practices. This is to recruit the safest and most appropriate people to work in our programs. Key principles that guide MA's recruitment process are as follows:

- No persons with prior convictions for violent or sexual offences shall have direct or indirect contact with children or obtain any access to client profiles/ identity/ photos whether on a paid or voluntary basis.
- All applicants for employment shall be screened to ascertain whether the applicant has ever been arrested, charged or convicted of any crime involving any form of child abuse or misconduct involving children. The screening process shall include a clear current Working with Children Check with details recorded in writing, and obtaining at least two references. If the passport country of the applicant is that other than Australia, a police certificate is also required.

- References shall be checked, preferably by telephone, to give previous employers or others an opportunity to express concerns verbally, and the result is to be recorded in writing.
- Without prejudice, the organisation strongly advises that no person who has been charged or convicted of an offence against children can apply for employment with MA, whether as a full-time, part-time or contractual employee, or as a volunteer.
- This Child Protection Policy shall be given to all incoming staff and volunteers before commencing employment as well as the MA Code of Conduct and Communications policies. All policies will need to be read, signed and returned to the MA head office.
- MA will not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.

## **RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS**

MA considers abuse and exploitation of children to be completely unacceptable. MA will take all concerns and claims of child abuse seriously and will act on these reports immediately.

It is mandatory for all staff, partners, volunteers, visitors and stakeholders to report any witness, suspected or alleged incidences or breaches of this Child Protection Policy. Concerns of abuse may be regarding a child, young person or MA, PRMM India, or Wings of Hope Lanka (hereafter WoH) personnel, or a child who is supported within or outside of the organisation. If you have concerns about any form of child abuse, you must follow MA's child abuse reporting procedures.

All MA staff and personnel must be aware of the following:

All staff must comply with mandatory reporting requirements applicable to child abuse as stipulated by Australian State, Territory or Federal law. Staff must also be aware that they will be required to comply with mandatory reporting requirements of the host country.

### **Who should I report to?**

All staff must immediately report to the Australian Director or Country Director, any reasonable suspicion, concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures. All information concerning the incident and investigation shall be documented in writing. Failure to report a suspected violation shall be subject to disciplinary measures, and possible suspension or termination. If the suspicion or allegation involves a suspected criminal offence it shall be immediately reported to the Police.

## **What should be reported?**

- Any disclosure, concern, behaviour or allegation from a child, young person, community member, staff member, volunteer, visitor, stakeholder or associate regarding the safety, abuse or exploitation of a child (actual or suspected, or at risk of harm).
- Any observation or concerning behavior displayed or exhibited by MA personnel or other associate that breaches the MA Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy.

## **When should I report?**

All concerns of child abuse must be reported immediately.

## **How should it be reported?**

Reports should be given verbally and by completing a MA Incident Report.

## **All reports of child abuse should be made to:**

National Director,  
Mukti Australia  
PO Box 2230  
BAYSWATER, VIC 3153

Phone +61 3 9890 0211  
admin@mukti.org.au

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