



Policy Number	Effective Date	January 2026
AKFA-POL_003	Next Review Date	September 2027
	Sponsor(s)	Global Safeguarding Lead Country Director
	Approval/Authorisation	Board

1. AKF Australia’s Safeguarding Commitment

AKF Australia is committed to respectful relations with and between all staff, associates, beneficiaries and wider communities with whom it works, and takes all reasonable measures to prevent harm, including all forms of exploitation, abuse, bullying, harassment and abuse of power that may arise from contact with its staff, programmes or operations.

AKF Australia defines safeguarding as the responsibility of organisations to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children and adults at-risk nor expose them to abuse or exploitation to ensure that all individuals who come into contact with AKF Australia staff, operations and programmes, including those who work in or with AKF Australia are protected from harm. This term covers physical, emotional and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment¹

Children face risks due to their physical, societal and developmental status. These risks can be compounded by other intersecting identity characteristics, such as living with disability, SOGIE (sexual orientation and gender identity expression) or being a member of a marginalised community, or by circumstance such as living away from home, for example in institutions.

Even when they reach adulthood, young people face particular challenges in society globally. They are at a stage of personal transition, which can be impacted by issues such as access to secondary and tertiary schooling, unemployment and conflict. Young people also have skills and capacities which should be recognised and celebrated.

AKF Australia further recognises that safeguarding extends beyond protection from harm to include the promotion of children’s safe and meaningful participation in decisions that affect their lives. Child participation is understood as an important element of children’s dignity, development, and wellbeing, and is supported in ways that are age-appropriate, inclusive, voluntary, and consistent with the best interests of the child.

This policy lays out the commitments made by AKF Australia in relation to safeguarding children and young people.

¹ AKF does not make judgement against individuals who participate in selling sex ("transactional sex"), however, AKF has banned buying sex in order to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse from occurring.

2. Purpose

The Board of Directors and senior leadership of AKF Australia and the AKF Global Safeguarding Lead, take ultimate responsibility for ensuring effective leadership, oversight, and resourcing of child safeguarding. Leadership will model safe behaviours and hold all levels of the organisation accountable for implementing this policy.

The purpose of this policy is to protect children and young people from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with AKF Australia staff, associated personnel or programmes and activities, and to detect and respond appropriately to safeguarding cases.

This policy also affirms AKF Australia's commitment to enabling children to participate safely and meaningfully in programmes, activities, consultations, research, and communications that affect them, in ways that respect their evolving capacities and prioritise their safety and wellbeing.

This policy should be used in conjunction with AKF overarching Safeguarding Policy.

Specific additional policies are in place to apply to:

I. **Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy**

This policy protects people who come into contact with AKF Australia, including staff, from sexual exploitation abuse and harassment by AKF Australia staff and associated personnel.

II. **Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy**

This policy protects adults who come into contact with AKF Australia and may be at risk of harm (including programme beneficiaries and adults in the wider communities where AKF Australia works) from harm caused by AKF Australia staff, associated personnel, and programme design and delivery.

III. **Communications and Content Gathering Ethics Policy**

This policy ensures that AKF Australia's content gathering, and communications are ethical and safe for all involved.

All people must be treated with dignity and respect. There is zero tolerance for sexual abuse, exploitation, harassment (SEAH), neglect or other misconduct by AKF staff, representatives or partners.

AKF's work is based on the principles of international conventions and instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. AKF's safeguarding policy is in line with international standards and recommendations such as the CHS Alliance Core Humanitarian Standard and OECD DAC Recommendations on PSEAH.



AKF Australia will respond to safeguarding reports from any time period – there is no statute of limitations for safeguarding cases. AKF Australia will accept anonymous safeguarding reports. Where this policy is more stringent than local legislation, this policy will apply.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all AKF Australia personnel and stakeholders, including permanent and temporary staff, Board Directors, external service providers, contractors and consultants, interns, researchers, volunteers, and visitors—such as journalists, photographers, donors, staff from other AKF units or AKDN agencies, and representatives of other organisations. It also applies to implementing or other partners unless they maintain their own safeguarding policy of a similar or higher standard.

AKF Australia requires all staff, board directors, volunteers and representatives to commit in writing to upholding the principles and standards in this Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and the associated Code of Conduct through a Statement of Commitment. (in Annex 1).

Partner commitments will be reflected in specific clauses in their written agreements with AKF Australia. (see Annex II for examples of these). A separate Code of Conduct for Visitors (see sample at Annex IV) will apply to all visitors.

4. Safeguarding Standards:

- Standard 1** AKF Australia will ensure a workplace culture built on respect, that delivers a safe and inclusive environment for all staff.
- Standard 2** AKF Australia's safeguarding policy commitments are integrated into existing organizational processes and systems and, where necessary, new procedures will be introduced.
- Standard 3** AKF Australia has measures and mechanisms in place for monitoring and reviewing safeguarding measures and for both upward and downward accountability in relation to safeguarding.
- Standard 4** Everyone connected with the organisation has the knowledge, attitude and skills to keep children and adults safe, including the capacity to engage with children in age-appropriate, inclusive, and respectful ways that support their safe and meaningful participation and uphold their best interests.
- Standard 5** AKF Australia staff are aware of the organisation's commitment to their safety and wellbeing in the workplace and feel able to raise concerns in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously.
- Standard 6** Children and families understand AKF Australia commitments to safeguarding and know what to do if concerns arise. AKF Australia responds appropriately to safeguarding concerns.



- Standard 7** Partners have safeguarding measures in place, which are consistent with AKF Australia's standards
- Standard 8** AKF Australia will ensure robust protection for anyone who raises a concern or makes a complaint regarding breach of safeguarding policy.

5. Policy Statement

The Safeguarding Policy details obligations, responsibilities and commitments made by AKF Australia, staff, managers and the Board Directors, along with the consequences of non-compliance.

AKF Australia will ensure that the following measures are in place to safeguard children and young people and to support their safe and meaningful participation in programmes and activities that affect them:

- Enhanced screening practices are put in place for recruitment to positions with direct or indirect contact with children and young people. AKF Australia will not knowingly employ any individual with a criminal conviction related to children or young people or other such offences related to their prospective position.
- Recruitment screening processes will include criminal record checks before engagement. Where checks are unavailable or unreliable, statutory declarations or legal equivalents will be obtained. Checks will cover all countries in which the individual has lived for 12 months or longer in the past five years, as well as their countries of citizenship. Verbal referee checks and behavioural-based interview questions will be used for all candidates applying for roles involving contact with children.
- Staff who will, or do, have contact with children or young people will have opportunities to understand how to interact with children or young people, identify concerns, receive disclosures appropriately and report within the timeframe required to ensure the child or young person is not put at further risk of harm.
- All staff and associates in contact with children will follow the guidelines on unacceptable conduct below.
- Employment contracts will include clear provisions to ensure that any staff member under investigation for breaches of this policy is suspended or transferred to duties that do not involve contact with children, pending the outcome of the investigation, and may be dismissed if a breach is substantiated.
- AKF Australia will assess and monitor child safeguarding risks across all activities, ensuring that risk assessments are conducted at the design stage and integrated into implementation including risks associated with child participation, consultation, research, and communications. All risk assessments will be regularly re-assessed to confirm that mitigation measures remain adequate and effective, and updated where necessary.



- Programmes and projects, and communications which feature children young people's information and images, will be assessed for the risk harm for children or young people involved in, or impacted by, the programme or communication². Reasonable risk mitigation measures will be incorporated into the design and delivery of the programme or communication.
- Programmes or projects involving children or young people who might be deemed particularly 'at risk' (e.g. they have particular disabilities, or are in circumstances, that might increase their risk of harm and abuse) will ensure that they, their parents (or their carers) understand what participation in the programme or project involves, consent to it and have the necessary care or support arrangements in place to be able to participate safely.

Participation will be voluntary, age-appropriate, and inclusive of children facing marginalisation (including due to gender, disability, poverty, displacement, or other factors). It will be designed to avoid physical, emotional, social, or reputational harm, and must never be exploitative, coercive, or tokenistic. Children will be supported to understand their right to be safe, to be heard, and to raise concerns, and all participation activities will be facilitated by appropriately trained staff or partners.

- Each programme or project will conduct community awareness raising sessions with communities on AKF Australia commitments to safeguarding and safe child participation and protecting them from harm. This will be done using language and content appropriate messaging and include explicit reference to acceptable and unacceptable behaviours by AKF Australia staff and associates.
- Agreements with partners, suppliers etc. will include how they and AKF Australia will work together to safeguard children or young people in the programmes or services being delivered.
- All personnel will receive safeguarding induction training upon engagement and refresher training at regular intervals, with additional training for staff working in higher-risk roles or contexts.
- Safeguarding concerns, breaches or incidents will be reported to donors where required under funding agreements.
- This policy will be reviewed at least every five years, or earlier if required by legislation, donor requirements or organisational needs.

Guidelines on unacceptable conduct with children for AKF Australia staff, volunteers and representatives.

Staff, partners and other representatives must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.

² See AKF Australia. Communications and Content Gathering Ethics Policy



- Engage in sexual activity or have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 years regardless of the age of majority/consent or custom locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Act in ways that may be abusive in any way or may place a child at risk of abuse
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from their line manager
- Sleep in the same bed as a child with whom they are working
- Sleep in the same room as a child with whom they are working unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from their line manager
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Discriminate against, show unfair differential treatment or favour to particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others in a manner which could be interpreted as inappropriate
- Use alcohol or drugs in any situation that may compromise the safety of children or provide alcohol or drugs to children.
- Give personal gifts to children, exchange money, or show favouritism through material means, outside of organisationally approved activities.
- Engage children in labour or tasks that are exploitative, inappropriate, or interfere with their rights to education, health, and development.
- Take or use photos, videos, or other images of children without prior informed consent from the child and their parent/guardian, and without adhering to AKF Australia's communications and safeguarding guidelines.
- Expose a child to inappropriate images, films and websites including pornography and extreme violence
- Possess, send, make or distribute indecent images of children
- Interact with children with whom they are working through digital media such as SMS or social media. Any offensive material or unsolicited messages should be reported to the staff members' line manager



- Place themselves in a position where they are made vulnerable to allegations of misconduct

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. Staff, partners and other representatives should at all times avoid actions or behaviour which may allow behaviour to be misrepresented, constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

All staff, partners, and representatives have a duty to immediately report any concerns, suspicions, or allegations of child abuse, exploitation, or policy non-compliance through the designated reporting channels.

6. Related documents

- AKFA Australia Code of conduct
- AKFA Safeguarding Policy_2025
- AKFA Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy_2025
- AKFA Anti-Discrimination Bullying and Harassment Policy
- AKFA PSEAH policy

7. References

- OECD DAC Recommendations on PSEAH
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principles and Standards for PSEA
- The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ILO Convention 190 (2019) on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- ACFID Code of Conduct

8. Revision History

AKF Australia will review and update this policy every three years, unless changes are required earlier, to ensure relevance and applicability.

Date	Revision Number	Change(s)	Reference Section(s)
25 th September 2025	1	New Policy	



Annexe 1: Statement of Commitment

This Statement of Commitment to Aga Khan Foundation Australia’s Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy must be signed by all AKF Australia staff and representatives, as defined in this policy.

I _____, have received, read and understood the contents of the AKF Australia Safeguarding Children and Young People

By signing below, I acknowledge my commitment to uphold the principles outlined in this Policy. I understand that breaching this policy is considered a serious offence and carries with it disciplinary action, including possible termination, and if criminal activity is suspected, reporting to the relevant authorities.

I understand that my actions reflect AKF Australia’s values and contribute to a safe, ethical, and respectful workplace for all. I understand that this policy applies 24 hours a day.

I understand that in the event of any changes or updates to this Statement, I will be required to re-sign it.

Name (printed)

Date

Designation/Role

Signature



Annexure 2: Reporting

What to do if you have a safeguarding concern

If the concern relates to a child under 18, you should report the concern in confidence immediately to the relevant authorities or through one of the routes

Options for reporting

You can remain anonymous if you wish.

1. LINE MANAGER/ SAFEGUARDING FOCAL POINT

Speak to your **line manager, Safeguarding Manager/Focal Point or other designated person** (for more details on all available Speak Up channels please refer to Annex 2) as soon as possible. You do not need to have all the facts or details. This will ensure that the matter is addressed promptly before it becomes a more serious problem.

The Safeguarding Focal Point for AKF Australia is Afshin Ghassmi

Contact details: Email: afshin.ghassmi@akdn.org

Mob: +61 (0) 432 178 039

2. SENIOR MANAGER

If you are uncomfortable speaking to one of these individuals, or if you believe that the person is implicated in the concern, or you have reported the concern previously and it was not taken seriously, you have the right to raise it to any other staff member, such as a senior manager or the Global Safeguarding Lead, or a member of the HR Team.

If you wish, you may contact **AKF's Global Safeguarding Lead, AKF's Global Director of Operations, and/or AKDN's HR Director & AKF Human Resources Committee Board member** (see Annex 4 for details)

3. SAFECALL SPEAK UP SERVICE

You can also use the Safecall 'speaking up' hotline or web platform, which is an external, independent service provider available for AKFA staff. This service is available 24 hours a day and you can talk to someone in your own language. The call handlers will take details of your concern and then pass this on to AKF Geneva (Head Office). You can remain completely anonymous if you wish.

See more details here: <https://www.safecall.co.uk/>

24/7 Hotline number (Australia): 1 800 312 928

Web portal: <https://www.safecall.co.uk/file-a-report/>



4. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

If your concern relates to a potential breach of the law, you can also refer directly to the relevant local authorities. If the report alleges criminal activity, you may also refer the report to the relevant local authorities, if it is safe to do so. Referral must be safe for all concerned, particularly the survivor, and therefore AKF Australia may wish to undertake a risk assessment before referring to local authorities. The survivor's consent must be sought for a referral to take place, unless they are a child under the age of 18, in which case the best interests of the child takes precedence.

Refer to the AKF Australia Whistleblower policy for further details.

AKF Australia will also accept complaints/ safeguarding reports about incidents caused by the organisation or its representative from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

What will happen?

1. AKF Australia will take all complaints that are raised seriously and will handle them in a consistent, timely and fair manner
2. AKF Australia will take appropriate steps to ensure there is no retaliation against an employee who raises a complaint/speaks up.
3. AKF Australia will deal with all complaints confidentially and all those involved will be expected to keep their involvement and all details relating to the complaint confidential.
4. Employees who wish to report cases of sexual harassment will have their case considered by male or female staff representatives at all points in the process.

Staff and volunteers in all countries have a right to access AKF's Employees Assistance Programme. Please refer to the AKF Australia Staff Handbook for details for such assistance.



Annex 3: Speak Up Contact details

AKF Global Safeguarding Lead

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Global Director of Operations

Mr. Tom Austin

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Mob. +41 792011484

AKDN HR Director & AKF Human Resources Committee member

Ms. Shams Jaffer

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Tel. +33 344584012

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SAFECALL

<https://www.safecall.co.uk/file-a-report/>

Tel (Australia): 1800 312928

For other numbers: <https://www.safecall.co.uk/file-a-report/telephone-numbers/>