

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is threefold: to uphold, promote and value children and childhood; to ensure children who participate in and benefit from TEAR's programs and activities are protected, and to assist in identifying, and dealing fully with any suspicion or allegation of child abuse.

2. Scope

This policy is intended to apply to any work implemented or funded by TEAR, all TEAR people, and TEAR's partners.

3. Policy

3.1 TEAR's Approach to Safeguarding Children

While compliance with applicable law is required, the philosophical basis of TEAR's policy to safeguard children is informed by three main sources: a reading of Christian scriptures, TEAR values, and an understanding of international development practice:

- Christian scriptures teach that children are to be cared for and protected; children can participate in the community; children are to be taught; children can serve as an example to adults.
- TEAR's Values include a commitment to the whole person, which encompasses not just physical, social, spiritual and emotional needs, but also understands needs and opportunities of a range of life stages.
- As an organisation involved in community and international development, we understand that good development for a community must work for the most vulnerable groups in a community. In other words, what is good for children is good for communities.

The expression of this philosophy is found in international law. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an agreement of which 193 countries are a party. It commits signatory countries to ensure that children's rights are upheld in the domains of safety, survival, development and participation.

The final responsibility for Safeguarding Children at TEAR rests with the Leadership Team.

3.2 TEAR Standards for Safeguarding Children

3.2.1 Safe Ideas

TEAR's Safeguarding Children Policy outlines the essential ideas, principles and standards that TEAR people and TEAR's partner organisations will be expected to work within. Safeguarding Guidelines describe the implementation of this policy.

3.2.2 Safe Behaviour

TEAR's Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct details acceptable and appropriate behaviour for TEAR people who are in contact with children. All TEAR people will be expected to sign and abide by the Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct.

3.2.3 Safe People

This policy will be a feature of recruitment processes for all TEAR people. Interviews will include questions relating to the safeguarding of children. All TEAR staff and category green volunteers, prior to commencing work, will be subject to referee and a criminal record check in the relevant jurisdiction/s, or statutory declarations or local legal equivalents where criminal record checks are unavailable or unreliable. People who pose an unacceptable risk to children will not be offered paid or voluntary positions at TEAR. Staff and fieldworkers will be contractually required to adhere to the Safeguarding Children Policy.

3.2.4 Safe Plans

All programs that are run by TEAR people, or funded by TEAR, will include an assessment of activity-related risks to children in their planning.

As part of assessing and managing risks to children within our work, TEAR will ascertain the resources available in various locations and jurisdictions for notification and assistance in the event that abuse is reported or suspected.

3.2.5 Skills for Safeguarding

All TEAR people will be made aware of TEAR's Safeguarding Children Policy and Guidelines, including how to report a concern about abuse of children in TEAR run or funded programs. TEAR will communicate its Safeguarding Children Policy to relevant stakeholders, including children, in a form that is accessible for them and appropriate to their context and level of contact with TEAR.

In addition, training will be made available to staff, tailored to the frequency and intensity of their contact with children in their work with TEAR.

3.2.6 When things go wrong

TEAR people are required to make a report according to the process in the Safeguarding Children Guidelines, when they know of or have reasonable suspicion of abuse of a child or children. The Guidelines detail the procedure for confidential reporting of concerns about child safety, or allegations of abuse or non-compliance with this policy or TEAR's Code of Responsible Conduct. The reporting process will be accessible for TEAR people and for children or families of children that may experience abuse in the course of a TEAR program. The process for reporting concerns or allegations will be communicated to all TEAR people.

All concerns and allegations will be followed up according to the Safeguarding Children Guidelines and requirements of relevant local laws, including mandatory reporting where applicable. The Safeguarding Children Officer, CEO and relevant Department Coordinator will determine the best response to concerns or allegations. This may include a report to an external authority or an internal investigation. The investigation may also recommend internal disciplinary measures, including dismissal. All information from reports and investigations will be carefully documented and stored. All incidents will be handled in a way which upholds the principles of: protection of all parties involved, confidentiality, expedient reporting, truthfulness, fairness and professionalism.

3.2.7 Safe for all children

TEAR people and TEAR's partners work across a range of jurisdictions, and are subject to state, national and international laws. All children have equal and significant value, and should be safe within TEAR programs or TEAR funded programs, wherever they come from. TEAR is committed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety, culturally and/or linguistically diverse cultural safety and the safety of children with a disability.

TEAR's partners will develop their own policies and processes, adapted to their own local contexts that have as their minimum basis the standards included in this policy.

4. Definitions/Terminology Clarification

For the purpose of this policy:

Abuse – includes sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation. (See Safeguarding Children Guidelines for full definitions of each.)

Child - A child is anyone under the age of 18.

Contact with children - Any interaction with or proximity to children. This includes both intentional and incidental contact, oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact. Most roles can be considered to involve contact with children at some point.

Safeguarding Children Officer (SCO) - The SCO is responsible for the implementation of this policy across the organisation, and is an advice point for the organisation who assists the Leadership Team in the implementation of this policy. They are also a key person in reporting

and responding to suspected abuse. This role is currently incorporated into the position of People at TEAR Coordinator.

TEAR people - refers to all TEAR staff, volunteers, consultants, exposure visit participants, and fieldworkers.

5. Related References

ACFID Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct

DFAT Child Protection Policy

Discipline Policy

Recruitment Policy and Guidelines

Safeguarding Children Guidelines

Social Media Policy and Guidelines

Visual Images Policy and Guidelines

Volunteer Policy and Guidelines