



Prevention through education.
Empowerment through education.

HANDS ACROSS THE WORLD INCORPORATED CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all “involved personnel” which includes:

1. The Hands Across the World (HATW) Team which includes the Board, Project Team and the Management Committee.
2. HATW Associates which include: volunteers, interns, consultants and contractors, suppliers, supporters (including donors, sponsors, advocates, ambassadors). Also, the staff and representatives of partner Organisations/Government with whom HATW has a formal working relationship, and anyone who has been brought into contact with children while working for or with HATW.
3. HATW visitors – these include people such as journalists, media, researchers, celebrities etc. who may come in contact with children through HATW are also bound by this policy.

Commitment Statement

Hands Across the World (HATW) values all children and young people. The best interests of children and young people and their need for protection is of paramount importance to us. This is consistent with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The children in the communities that we work with are a particularly vulnerable group. There is a growing awareness that sex offenders are targeting and infiltrating organisations in order to access children. International non-government organisations (INGOs), in particular those working closely with children and/or based in developing countries, are particularly susceptible. This policy aims to ensure all involved personnel aware of child abuse, their role and responsibility in safeguarding children and young people.

We (HATW) are committed to providing services that protect and keep children and young people free from harm as per our mission and values. At all times children and young people are supported and encouraged to have their voices heard and to seek justice. We understand that the safety and well-being of children and young people requires an organisational culture whereby all those engaged in the mission prioritise the well-being of children and young people, and evidence a commitment to compliance with approved policies and standards. HATW will continue to implement, evaluate, and refine strategies, standards, and procedures to ensure:

- governance structures champion a child safe culture
- clear accountabilities are set by HATW leadership

- assessing and managing risks to children in our programs (and in the communities in which we work) by ensuring a child impact assessment is completed as part of the project management strategy
- involved personnel working with children hold the legislated safeguarding requirement (WWC card in Australia) and are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children and young people safe
- involved personnel are knowledgeable of their responsibilities regarding mandatory reporting requirements to statutory bodies
- involved personnel are empowered to provide support to children and young people who disclose harm or the risk of harm and report to Country lead
- physical and online environments are managed to minimise risks to the safety of children and young people
- the practices of involved personnel are supervised and reviewed so as to achieve ongoing learning and to promote the development and the application of child safe practice
- processes that facilitate child safe and child friendly environments are documented, maintained and communicated to children and young people, personnel, and the wider community through appropriate training and the HATW website
- children and young people have the opportunity to raise concerns or complaints in different ways and formats to the CEO or Country lead
- accurate records are kept of any complaints and responses by the Country lead
- protection risks for children and young people are identified and controls maintained

We take seriously our responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation in any form. We will use safeguarding strategies in the recruitment and selection of all involved personnel. Our decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of 'the best interests of the child' and the country laws relating to mandatory reporting and suspected crimes against children.

Adherence to this policy is a mandatory requirement for all HATW involved personnel. Failure to report child safety concerns or make false allegations will result in disciplinary action.

Reporting

It is mandatory for all HATW participants to report concerns or allegations of child abuse that relate to a child or participant involved with HATW. HATW considers the abuse and exploitation of children to be completely unacceptable. We will take all concerns and reports of child abuse seriously and investigate and act on these reports immediately, with the highest priority.

If a child or young person discloses abuse or they are at risk of harm the HATW involved personnel's immediate action is to listen to the child/young person, take them seriously and believe them. Thank them for telling you and let them know you will be reporting this information to the HATW Country lead or CEO and that you will get back to them with an outcome. If the child is in immediately risk of harm contact the local emergency services and report concerns.

An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue and all HATW involved personnel must verbally report their concerns /disclosure to the Country lead immediately. A written report of the disclosure must be sent to the Country lead and CEO within 24 hours of the incident. This information must be kept

confidential and the Country lead will consult with the CEO and direct the involved personnel/reporter on what actions to take. All actions will be in keeping with HATW policies, the UNCRC and local child protection laws. All information (names, date, incident, actions taken) relating to the disclosure must be recorded as part of the incident reporting process and sent by email to the Country lead and CEO.

If a child, parent or community member reports a child or young person feeling unsafe or uncomfortable or wants to make a complaint in a HATW program, the involved personnel will thank the person for their comments, ask them what they would like to see happen and make a detailed record of the conversation and forward it by email to the Country lead and CEO immediately.

Review of Policy

HATW will review this policy annually or earlier if warranted or agreed by the majority of the Management Committee.