

## 1. Purpose

Edge Effect take a zero tolerance approach to child exploitation and abuse. This policy and associated procedures seek to ensure that:

- No child experiences exploitation or abuse in association with Edge Effect activities.
- Any suspected or alleged child exploitation and abuse is reported quickly and through the correct channels to avoid further exploitation or abuse.
- Perpetrators of child exploitation and abuse are referred for external criminal or civil redress.
- Policy breaches are identified, and disciplinary action taken to address those breaches.
- Limitations of this policy and Edge Effect procedures are identified and addressed.

## 2. Compliance and Responsibility

All Edge Effect office-bearers, staff, consultants, and volunteers, and Edge Effect partners have shared responsibility for ensuring that this policy is followed, and to ensure that suspected or alleged instances of child exploitation or abuse, and suspected or alleged breaches of this policy are reported at the earliest opportunity.

Prior to participation in Edge Effect activities, office-bearers, staff, consultants, and volunteers must read and sign a copy of this policy to agree that a) they understand all aspects of the policy and b) they will be bound by this child protection policy. Partners implementing activities on behalf of Edge Effect must also agree to be bound by this policy, and to provide their organisational child protection policy and compliance procedures to Edge Effect.

This policy applies to all activities, not only those directly involving children. Child abusers may seek to use aid projects to gain access to children, including through roles that do not directly involve working with children.

## 3. Recruitment and Criminal Background Check

All office-bearers, staff, consultants, and volunteers must undergo the AFP Criminal Background Check prior to their engagement with Edge Effect, and after every 2 years after engagement. If the office-bearer, staff, consultant, or volunteer resided overseas for more than 12 months in any one country, a criminal background check from local authorities should also be provided. Australian state-based working with children certifications are not sufficient.

For instances where a criminal background check cannot be obtained, a statutory declaration may be provided. However provision of a statutory declaration should not become a default standard, and will only be accepted if: a) genuine effort is made to obtain the check, b) compelling reasons are provided why a check cannot be sought, or c) the engagement requires immediate deployment, a criminal background check is in process, and is provided within 28 days. For DFAT-funded projects Edge Effect will seek guidance from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Unit before accepting

a statutory declaration in lieu of a criminal background check.

Reference checks will explicitly seek information on past compliance with child protection policies.

## 4. Child Protection Risk Assessment

All Edge Effect activities funded by DFAT must be reviewed for compliance with the DFAT Child Protection Guidance Note Establishing Child Protection Risk Context.

Edge Effect is not a child-focused agency, however certain projects may involve contact with children or working with children, and therefore require a full assessment of the child protection risks. The compliance review and assessment should also take into account that Edge Effect works with sexual and gender minorities who are often marginalised and vulnerable, and that specific consideration should be given to vulnerabilities that may be faced by SGM children. For example, steps such as seeking informed consent from a parent/guardian/carer may cause harm if the child's diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics are not accepted by family members or not known to family members.

All Edge Effect activities funded by donors other than DFAT should be consistent with the child protection risk assessment procedures of the relevant donor, however in the absence of other specific guidance DFAT's guidelines should be applied.

## 5. Child Protection in Humanitarian Settings

Children may be particularly vulnerable due to life disruptions in humanitarian emergencies. Edge Effect activities in humanitarian settings should also be designed and implemented consistent with the DFAT Child Protection Guidance Note Child Protection in Emergencies and to meet UNICEF Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. As for non-emergency settings, specific attention should be paid to vulnerabilities of SGM children, as they may face additional and different challenges than other children, and sector best practices may need to adapt to these circumstances.

## 6. Child Protection Training

All Edge Effect office-bearers, staff, consultants, and volunteers will undertake training on this policy and in child protection.

Training on this policy will be provided for new office-bearers, staff, consultants, and volunteers, and refresher training will be provided if a) this policy changes or b) after two years has elapsed from the previous training.

Child protection training will be available to all office-bearers, staff, consultants at least once per calendar year. For projects where a full assessment of child protection risks is required, all office-bearers, staff, consultants, and volunteers working on that project will be required to a) undertake specific child protection training or b) provide evidence of equivalent training in the previous 2 years. A register of all office-bearers, staff, consultants, and volunteers working on that project will be kept, along with records of child protection

training.

## 7. Internal Reporting

All suspected or alleged instances of child exploitation or abuse by Edge Effect office-bearers, staff, consultants, volunteers or partners, or within any project connected with Edge Effect, must be reported to the Managing Director at the earliest possible opportunity. Delaying reporting may result in children being exposed to further exploitation or abuse. Even if you are unsure, report. Confidential reports may be made using the form available on the about section of the Edge Effect website; reports through this form will be sent directly to the Managing Director.

For instances where reporting to the Managing Director is inappropriate, the report should be made directly to the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Unit at [childwelfare@dfat.gov.au](mailto:childwelfare@dfat.gov.au) using the Child Incident Notification Form, and/or similar procedures of other donor or contracting organisations.

Suspected or alleged instances of child exploitation or abuse that you learn of through your Edge Effect role but that do not involve Edge Effect should also be reported to relevant managers or authorities. Contact the Managing Director for advice on these instances as soon as possible.

## 8. External Reporting

Suspected or alleged instances of child exploitation or abuse, or other significant breaches of this policy will also be reported to the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Unit, to child protection units of any other relevant donor, and to relevant upstream organisations to which Edge Effect has reporting responsibilities. Following consultation with those entities, instances that may constitute criminal activity will be referred to police in Australia and/or the relevant country. If there is reason to believe that referral will put the child/children at further risk of harm, Edge Effect will seek advice from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Child Protection Unit and child protection experts on appropriate steps.

## 9. Investigation of Policy Breach and Disciplinary Action

The Managing Director will investigate all reported breaches, except where the report involves the Managing Director, in which case an external investigator will be appointed. Disciplinary action will be taken against any office-bearer, staff, consultant, or volunteer found to be in breach of this policy, including potential dismissal or termination of contract. A register of all reports, investigations and actions will be maintained.

## 10. Other Relevant Policy

Office-bearers, staff, consultants, and volunteers must also follow the provisions of the Australian Government DFAT Protection Policy and the Australian Government DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy for the Aid Program, especially the second key safeguard on Children, vulnerable and disadvantage groups. Where Edge Effect is implementing projects funded by other donors, their child

protection policies should also be followed, along with all relevant local laws and regulations.

### 10. Relevant Links

DFAT Child Protection Policy

<http://dfat.gov.au/international-relations/themes/child-protection/Documents/child-protection-policy.pdf>

DFAT Child Protection Incident Notification Form

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/child-incident-notification-form.pdf>

DFAT Child Protection Guidance Note: Reporting And Notifications

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/child-protection-notification-guidance-note.pdf>

DFAT Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy for the Aid Program

<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/environmental-social-safeguard-policy.pdf>

### 11. Policy Approval and Review

This policy is approved by Emily Dwyer, Director.

This policy will be reviewed by 30 September 2022.



## Child Protection Policy

### Child Protection Policy Declaration

I have read, understood, and agree to abide by the Edge Effect Child Protection Policy.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Please Print Name: .....