



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



DFAT CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE NOTE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROGRAMS

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DFAT CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE NOTE

CHILD PROTECTION IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROGRAMS

PURPOSE

This Guidance Note offers guidance for **DFAT staff and partner organisations** on how to address the protection and wellbeing needs of the children and young people (including young women) accessing Violence against Women (VAW) programs and services, often with their mothers and as individuals in need of support. As well, it gives guidance about violence prevention programming for young women.

BACKGROUND

Development organisations are implementing effective programs that address violence against women (VAW). Such programs offer vital services, support and rehabilitation to women in many countries. As defined by the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women¹ the term "violence against women (VAW)" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Globally, on average, at least one in three women is beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused by an intimate partner during her lifetime. Among women aged 15–44 years, violence against women accounts for more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic injuries and war put together.² Children and young people (aged 15–25) may also be the victims of VAW, as: a witness to the violence against their mother; a victim of violence and intimidation; and/or experiencing their mother's reduced capacity to parent because of violence.

A distinct link exists between VAW and profound negative impacts on children. This includes impacts on children's: health; physical, psychological, emotional and social wellbeing; development (brain, physical growth and social development); behaviour; and academic performance. Witnessing and experiencing violence as a child can have long-term effects such as depression, anti-social and violent behaviour, and conflict with the law.

Discriminatory cultural and traditional practices and attitudes towards women and children allow for and perpetuate violence against women and children, and act as a significant barrier to their seeking and receiving counselling, medical attention and legal justice.

Please read this guidance note in conjunction with:

- DFAT's Child Protection Policy (<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/child-protection-policy.aspx>)
- DFAT's Establishing Child Protection Risk Context Guidance Note (<http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/child-protection-risk-assessment-guidance.pdf>)
- DFAT's Guidance Note – Women's Economic Empowerment Programs.

¹ December 1993

² Women's Right to Safety and Security, Thematic Framework 20120-2015, International Women's Development Agency. Page 3.

RISK IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROGRAMS

This table outlines some common child protection risks within VAW Programs, and provides some ways to include child protection into VAW programming. You can implement these practical measures as part of service provision and program design to reduce these risks. You'll also find other activities that can influence change in attitudes and beliefs about the impacts on children who experience VAW, by working with communities as well as local and national governments.

RISK

1. **Program design does not adequately address specific protection and safety needs of children and adolescents, leading to undesired outcome**
 - Program does not address the impact of VAW on children and Violence against Children (VAC) on children and adolescents.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Ensure that impacts on children are considered at the concept and design stage

- Undertake a child protection risk assessment of all programs and services (remembering to also include the physical and psychological safety of children).
- Undertake a mapping of safe and unsafe spaces for children (for example, although a school can be presumed to be a safe place for children, many young women and girls are subjected to both physical and sexual violence in schools).
- Invest in understanding how VAW programming can be more effective when informed by the impacts of VAW on children, and how VAW programming can also directly protect children from the negative impacts of experiencing and witnessing violence.
- Include children and young people in program design to ensure the voice of children and their understanding, experiences and impacts of VAW are heard. Include their views on their own safety and protection needs.

RISK

2. Service provision does not meet specific protection, safety, psycho-social and medical needs of children and adolescents, resulting in harm or undesired outcomes

- Program does not consider that a mother's ability to provide care and protection to children may be compromised.
- Young girls are treated the same as women.
- Service provider does not have suitably qualified staff.
- Children are not involved in decisions that affect them.
- Staff are not trained in child-focussed service delivery.
- Coordination between service providers is lacking.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Program and service provision take into account the impacts of VAW on children

- Undertake a review of service delivery and include measures that have a specific child focus, ensuring children's safety, wellbeing and best interests are incorporated.
- Provide training to staff and volunteers on:
 - VAW; women's rights; the impact of VAW on children; children's development and developmental needs; child rights; children's participation; and child-friendly psychological support methods (such as art therapy, games, storytelling, drama and dance).
- Work with or build the capacity of service providers to enable children to access quality and appropriate psycho-social, health, education and development support.
- Build on and strengthen children's resilience, coping strategies and self-protection strategies to reduce their vulnerability.
- Provide services that focus on supporting adolescent women experiencing violence, and make these services youth friendly and accessible to young women.
- Target programs to work with young women who are at risk of VAW or who are experiencing violence. Provide counselling and support services and information about how they can make safer relationship choices.
- Provide programs that work with boys and young men to help them understand the impacts of VAW, and how they can become advocates or champions in their schools and communities to stop VAW.
- Provide opportunities for children to be consulted about decisions that will affect them, for example, relocation, living arrangements, access to school, being able to meet with friends safely.
- Develop individual safety and support plans where children and mothers play an active role in decision making.
- Provide information to children and young people using child-friendly and youth-friendly language.
- Work to safely maintain positive interactions and connections with community, family, friends, sporting and social groups for children and young people to prevent them becoming isolated.

- Provide a safe, calm, nurturing environment that supports children's and young people's recovery from stress and trauma.
- Provide places for children and young people to enjoy their right to play and recreation within refuge/safe house environments.
- Create a child/youth friendly physical space/environment within the refuge that allows children and young people to feel a sense of belonging and help to normalise their lives.
- Support and strengthen a mother's coping strategies and resources to increase her capacity to make decisions in the best interest of her children's safety.
For example, provide mothers with positive parenting information sessions that can be accessed during her stay in the refuge.
- Provide support services for parents, particularly programs that support fathers, to strengthen their coping strategies for addressing issues about VAW.
- Ensure that case files and personal information are kept confidential and securely stored.

Consider children and young people in M&E

- Include children and young people in consultations to inform M&E frameworks. Ensure that data is grouped to identify and reflect the differences in experience between girls, adolescent girls and women.
- Provide specialised skills and training in specific areas of research on violence against children.
See DFAT Child Protection Guidance Note – Monitoring and Evaluation.

Services are well coordinated

- Women's agencies collaborate with child-focussed agencies to build capacity and share knowledge in order to better meet the needs of children and families.
- Facilitate or participate in inter-agency and community-based group collaboration so that: resources can be leveraged; referrals to appropriate services can be made; and relevant information can be shared with women and children.
These aim to ensure adequate care and rehabilitation can take place.
- Undertake a mapping and analysis of local support services, local child protection authorities, and referral options for children and young people.
Be aware of national and local legislation and government department guidelines to do with child protection and child rights.
Seek to work with the most child- and youth-friendly services that have appropriate staff skills-set to provide the services.

RISK

3. Child suffers exploitation and abuse by program or partner staff, volunteers or consultants

- Child-safe recruitment and screening is not used.
- Service provider does not have adequate child protection policies and procedures.
- Staff are not trained in organisation's child protection policies and procedures or child-focussed service delivery.
- Women, children and adolescents do not report unsafe behaviours or actions of staff member or volunteer.
- Staff do not respond appropriately to child protection concerns, and children are left in unsafe situations.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Ensure adequate policies and procedures are implemented

- Comply with, or build on, the compliance standards within DFAT's Child Protection Policy.
- Develop standards for working with children and young people.

Safe recruitment measures are undertaken

- Undertake child-safe recruitment of all organisational staff and volunteers. See also *DFAT Child Protection Guidance Note – Recruitment and Screening*.
- Ensure consultants and researchers undergo child-safe recruitment processes and are supervised by staff when in contact with children.

Ensure staff are well trained

- Train staff, volunteers and partners in:
 - child safeguarding; child rights; child protection; identifying signs and indicators of child abuse; and responding to allegations of exploitation and abuse.
- Provide training to women and children on the organisation's child protection policies and code of conduct, so they are aware of what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Implement robust and child-friendly complaint handling mechanisms

- Provide clear complaints mechanisms for women, children and the general community.
- Develop a child-friendly complaints mechanism (for example, provide a suggestion box for children to write down complaints or provide feedback).

RISK

4. Women, children and adolescents do not access the service

- Due to cultural and traditional practices and discriminatory attitudes
- Lack of confidentiality
- Distance and lack of transport.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Work with communities and local and national governments to influence change

- Inform mothers, young women and children of their legal rights. This will help them make better and more informed choices either for themselves or their children.
- Understand the local VAW context, including local laws and government frameworks.
- Work with communities to identify strengths in child protection and existing protective factors, and build on those to protect children and young women from VAW.
- Work with formal and informal (including village-based) law enforcement to build awareness of:
 - the impacts of VAW on children
 - how to respond sensitively (for example, interviewing children as witnesses of VAW or child abuse in a child-friendly manner)
 - how to engage with children positively.
- Ensure that community and national awareness campaigns on VAW include the impacts on children.
- Consider using youth-friendly and relevant forms of communication for awareness campaigns, such as mobile phone apps and social media.
- Work with sector peers and specialists to train groups (such as police, health care providers, women's groups, community-based child protection groups, community leaders, legal aid groups, and schools) in:
 - child rights; child protection; children's developmental stages; identifying signs and indicators of child abuse; and working with children and young people.
- Work with local and national governments to increase awareness of the impact of VAW on children and young people, and how this can be incorporated in national legislation and policy.
- Advocate for the employment of women in the policing and the law enforcement sector, and as healthcare workers. Establish child and family protection units at accessible police stations and hospitals.
- Consider distance in the design and implementation of the project, and consider bus services or outreach in those rural areas.
Train staff and volunteers on the rights of young people, confidentiality and the specific needs of adolescent.

RISK

5. Program run by partner organisations may cause harm to children or personnel may exploit and abuse children

- Lack of screening for:
 - adequate child protection policies and training
 - child-safe recruitment.
- Organisations do not undertake capacity building of their partners in child safeguarding and protection, sexual harassment and local labour laws.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Assess partner capacity

- Conduct a child protection/safeguarding due diligence on all partners in their supply chain to:
 - ensure adequate child protection policies, procedures and practices are in place prior to engaging.
- Ensure partner organisations are complying with, or building on, the minimum standards within DFAT's Child Protection Policy.
- Undertake capacity building of downstream partners in child safeguarding and protection, sexual harassment, local labour laws, and DFAT's requirements under its Child Protection Policy.