



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**



# **DFAT CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE NOTE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS**

**January 2017**

# DFAT CHILD PROTECTION GUIDANCE NOTE

## CHILD PROTECTION IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS

### PURPOSE

---

### BACKGROUND

Investing in women's economic empowerment enhances household food and livelihood security and the wellbeing of children. Economically empowered women can improve their lives and the lives of their families and communities. Women are likely to invest approximately 90% of their income into their families (for example, in health, education and nutrition), while men put only 30–40% of earnings into their families.<sup>1</sup>

Without the economic empowerment of women, young women (aged 15–25 years) and girls are economically dependent on men, often resulting in their protection rights being violated. For example, these young women and girls are more likely to experience early enforced marriage, sexual abuse, or exploitation, and denied opportunities to seek education.

While economic empowerment of women is crucial to gender equity and improvement in the lives of women and children, child protection concerns may arise. These concerns differ for each of the groups of women targeted in WEE programs.

Young women participating in vocational training or accessing the labour force can be more vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse. Women who are mothers face barriers such as the availability of support services like quality child caring. Unborn children may have their health and development compromised due to harmful workplace environments and conditions.

We need to make sure that when designing WEE programs, we consider and address the protection and wellbeing needs of the children whose mothers are participating in the program, as well as that of participating young women. We need to analyse the existing child protection factors and risks to make sure that programming is effective and sustainable and does not contribute to children being harmed. These risks need to be monitored throughout the project cycle.

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 – Violence against Women Programs.

<sup>1</sup> "Executive Summary: Because I am a Girl: Girls in the Global Economy2009." Plan International. Web. 16 November 2009.

<<http://planinternational.org/about-plan/resources/publications/campaigns/because-i-am-a-girl-girls-in-the-global-economy-2009>> Page 9.

## RISK IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS

This table outlines some common child protection risks within WEE programming and provides some ways to include child protection into WEE programming. You'll find practical measures that you can implement as part of service provision and program design. You'll also find suggested activities that can influence change in attitudes and beliefs, by working with communities as well as local and national governments.

### RISK

1. Program design does not adequately address the impact of WEE programming on children and adolescents, leading to undesired outcome

## 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 include the physical and psychological safety of children).
- Include women and young women in program design, to ensure their views on the possible impacts of WEE programs are heard, as well as including their views on their own safety and protection needs.

## RISK

### 2. Service provision does not adequately take into account the impacts of WEE programming on children

- Program does not consider women's care and home-based work that could impact on women's ability to engage in the program, or increase potential harm to children
  - Children are left home alone (increasing risks of unintended neglect, accidents or child abuse).
  - Older siblings are taken out of school due to increased childcare and household responsibilities, disrupting their education.
  - Children are taken to worksites, exposing them to potential harm.
- Child labour is used in the business or supply chain, or women engage their own children in their work, potentially exposing them to harm or interfering with their mandatory education.
- WEE program does not mitigate against potential harm to unborn children due to mother's exposure to pesticides, heavy lifting, etc.
- Young women are sexually, verbally, or physically assaulted and harassed at their workplace, on their way to work or training, or while living at residential vocational training centres.
- M&E frameworks do not include consultation with children, and do not monitor the effects of the WEE program on children.

## MITIGATION STRATEGIES

### Programs and service provision take into account the impacts of WEE programs on children

- Consult women about their availability for participation, to find times that have minimal impact on the care of children, including older children having to take on parental responsibilities.  
Conduct a child protection risk assessment to identify and mitigate against any harm to children, including unborn children, and young women, as a result of the program activities.  
Women and children should be consulted as part of this process as they have unique insights into the issues that pose a barrier or risk to participating.
- If possible, provide safe childcare facilities operated by screened and trained staff/volunteers.
- Identify and link with existing community-based early childhood care and education centres or support community-based care arrangements. Ensure they have been security and child-safe assessed.
- Include training sessions for both men and women on positive discipline, child development, and parenting skills as part of WEE program activities.
- Offer decentralised training and program activities to reach women in locations close to where they live.
- Consider providing women with mobile phones for their business operations, to reduce time spent travelling to suppliers, banks, credit institutions, etc.  
Ensure education about safe mobile use is provided.
- Work with training and industry/business partners to ensure a safe work environment for young women. It needs to include:

- a code of behaviour
- training for staff in supervision positions
- gender and child protection awareness for all staff, including men
- complaints mechanisms
- appointment of an advocate or focal point for child protection
- sexual harassment.
- Ensure there is a feedback process on work and training placements for young women. Include questions about whether they felt safe/unsafe or had any concerns about harassment, bullying, exploitation, threats and abuse.
- Conduct a risk assessment on residential placements for young women at vocational training centres. Negotiate for gender-specific dormitories and wash facilities, adequate security, and complaints mechanisms. Ensure contact with family is maintained.
- Consult with young women to identify the safest options for travelling to and from vocational training and work place. Arrange for safe transport if necessary.
- Ensure where possible that women travel in pairs or groups when having to move between towns and within their own community for work or training purposes. Coordinate with local law enforcement to offer increased security. Assess the capability of local law enforcement to provide the necessary support.
- Provide training in protective behaviours, sexual and reproductive health and rights to the young women involved in the program. Provide information on local women’s support and counselling services. Ensure local women’s support and counselling services that are referred have been security and child-safety assessed, to make sure the organisation is capable of providing the necessary services.

#### **Impacts to children and young people are considered in M&E**

- Include children and young people in consultations to inform Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks.
- Assess children’s contribution to household income and chores as part of the baseline and monitor changes or increases and negative impacts as part of M&E.
- Include an indicator in the project M&E framework that monitors increases in family or community conflict that negatively impact on young women.
- See *DFAT Child Protection Guidance Note – Monitoring and Evaluation*.

## RISK

### 3. Young women and children suffer harm and/or exploitation and abuse by program and partner staff, volunteers and consultants

- Child-safe recruitment and screening procedures are not used, including at WEE program-provided child care.
- Service provider does not have adequate child protection policies and procedures in place.
- Staff are not trained in organisation's child protection policies and procedures or appropriate and safe interactions with children and young women.
- Staff or volunteers at WEE program-provided childcare facilities are not trained to offer safe environment for children.
- Women, children and adolescents do not report unsafe behaviours or actions of staff member or volunteer.

## MITIGATION STRATEGIES

### Ensure adequate policies and procedures are implemented

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

### 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 contractors also undergo child-safe recruitment processes and are supervised by staff when in contact with children.

### Staff are well trained

- Provide information and training for all personnel and industry/business partners in child protection, child and women's rights, and safe and appropriate interactions with young women.

### Implement robust complaint handling mechanisms

- Provide clear complaints mechanisms for women, children and the general community.

## RISK

4. Program run by partner organisations may cause harm to young women and children, or personnel may exploit and abuse children
  - Organisations do not screen for:
    - adequate child protection policies and training
    - adherence to relevant local labour laws and other legislation that protects against workplace risks such as sexual harassment
    - child-safe recruitment.
  - Organisations do not undertake capacity building of their training and industry/business 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 training and industry/business partners including their supply chain, to:
  - Ensure that adequate child protection policies are in place.
  - Women’s and children’s rights are upheld.
  - Children are not negatively impacted.
- Ensure partner organisations are complying with, or building on, the minimum standards within DFAT’s Child Protection Policy.
- Include child protection clauses in partnership agreements, MoUs and contracts, covering:
  - signing onto or developing a child protection policy and code of conduct
  - agreeing to a mutual complaints process
  - employing child-safe recruitment procedures
  - providing a commitment to respecting women and children’s rights, including use of child labour.
- Clauses should include providing training in these, as well as sexual harassment and local labour laws.
- 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.

## RISK

### 5. 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

- Before starting the WEE Program, provide community awareness (ensuring community leaders and males from the community are present) and information on the benefits to the whole community of women's participation, and respond to concerns or perceived threats.
- Engage parents and other family members (particularly males) in order to secure greater project buy-in, with the aim of reducing gender-based and family violence, and impacts on children.
- Include information on legal rights as part of WEE program activities.
- Provide ongoing community awareness and information on the young women's participation, and the benefits of the program to the young women, community (including community leaders and men in the community) and parents.
- Engage both male and female members of the community to act as community mobilisers/facilitators. Engaging women can be an effective strategy to enhance the status of the young women, build their leadership skills, and help them mediate community disputes.<sup>2</sup>
- Ensure a working knowledge and understanding of local legislation and policies regarding child labour and other labour laws, sexual harassment, maternity protection, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities.

You will be able to make maximum use of this knowledge when developing and promoting your program.

<sup>2</sup> Learning Paper. IWDA and Women's Economic Empowerment. International Women's Development Agency. September 2012. Page 9.s