

Symbiosis International Child Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

Symbiosis International upholds the right of all people to be treated appropriately and with respect. Integrity in relationships with children and vulnerable adults is vital to fulfilling this commitment. Symbiosis International takes seriously its duty of care towards children and vulnerable adults.

Symbiosis International values the different cultural traditions that impact on the approach taken to child-raising and parenting and recognises that these child-raising approaches affect the way people relate to children. Symbiosis International staff and volunteers strive to be culturally sensitive and at the same time adhere to the laws of the land in Australia and Bangladesh.

Symbiosis International is committed to protecting the rights of all children to live safely, without fear of abuse or exploitation, as outlined in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989). Article 19 of the Convention states: 'State parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.' Child abuse is never acceptable and in many countries assaults in children are unlawful.

This policy sets the standard for staff, volunteers and visitors within the whole organisation and those with whom they come into contact through any aspect of the Symbiosis International program. These behaviours empower staff and volunteers to live and serve with others in ways that maintain a child-safe environment.

In instances in this policy and associated procedures where the Child Safety Officer is mentioned as having a particular role, it may be assumed that, where appropriate or necessary, this role can be taken by another person, with relevant authority within the organisation e.g. senior executives or members of the Board

Application

This policy applies to the Symbiosis International Board, all staff of Symbiosis International and Symbiosis Bangladesh and volunteers will receive a copy of the Symbiosis International 'Child Safeguarding Policy'.

Prior to visiting projects, all visitors will be briefed on key aspects of the policy and will be required to sign self-declarations relating to the Child Safety Code of Conduct and Use of Children's images.

Staff will also seek to ensure, to the maximum extent reasonably possible, that associated organisations and visiting groups or individuals meet appropriate standards for protection for children. Symbiosis International understands the necessity to consider child safety both at organisational and project levels. This will also ensure the greatest likelihood that the policy will then be reflected in the community through the implementation of the project.

Symbiosis International requires that all staff, volunteers and visitors comply with the following policies and Code of Conduct in Bangladesh, and Australia.

Child.1	Child Safety Policy Guidelines		
Policy	To ensure the safety and protection of children and recognise their worth and value as members of the community.		
Basis for Policy	To protect children according to international standards and ethics of the organisation		
Process	<p>Symbiosis International requires that all Board Members, staff, volunteers and visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand the purpose of Child Protection Policy and be committed to protecting the rights of all children to live safely without fear of abuse or exploitation, as outlined in the United National Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) including Clause 19 of the convention which states: "State Parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation on children are unlawful". ▪ Be culturally sensitive, noting that different cultural traditions impact the approach taken to child-raising and parenting. Symbiosis values these cultural differences. ▪ Know their responsibilities and ensure compliance under legal and policy obligations within and outside their work environment at all times, including the policy for the Collection of Information, Stories and Images and the Symbiosis International Complaints. ▪ Uphold the dignity and respect of children. ▪ Ensure a safe environment for children is created through preventative measures. ▪ Provide guidance to those they lead or manage on child protection issues and good practice. ▪ Ensure appropriate child safety checks are undertaken for all local staff. An Australian Blue card or similar is required for international visitors. 		
Approved by	Symbiosis International Board		
Date Approved	April 2019	Review Date	2021

Child.2	Child Safety Policy Guidelines - Abuse		
Policy	To clearly define the activities that constitute child abuse		
Basis for Policy	To ensure that the staff, volunteers and visitors to Symbiosis International projects understand what constitutes child abuse.		
Process	<p>Symbiosis International requires that all staff, volunteers and visitors are required to understand that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children are all persons under the age of 18. ▪ Child abuse is defined as all forms of action or inaction resulting in harm (or risk of harm) to children under the age of 18 in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, while also recognising the cultural norms of the society. ▪ Recognised types of abuse include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Physical Abuse results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents. – Sexual Behaviour - is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent or that violates the laws and social taboos of society. – Emotional Abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies. Acts of emotional abuse may include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment. – Exploitation - commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. – Neglect - or negligent treatment is the inattention or omission on the part of a caregiver to provide for the development of the child in all spheres such as health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions. This includes the failure to properly protect children from harm as much as possible. 		
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Child.3	Child Safety Policy Implementation		
Policy	To implement the child safety policy throughout the work of Symbiosis international.		
Basis for Policy	To ensure the safety and protection of children and recognise their worth and value as members of the community.		
Process	<p>The ongoing implementation of the Child Safety Program will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise awareness within Symbiosis about the potential risks to children including the definitions of child abuse, harm and exploitation ▪ Ensure the Child Safety Policy is embedded in all activities. Information about the Child Safety Policy is specifically included in the Functional Education Course and awareness sessions, enabling the group members and wider community to understand the importance of this policy ▪ Require that staff acknowledge in writing that they have received and understood the Child Safety Policy and signed the Code of Conduct. ▪ As the implementing organisation, Symbiosis International ensures the Child Safety Policy is integrated into our work, meeting any specific requirements of Donor organisations. ▪ A detailed Child Safety Risk assessment is undertaken for each Project during the program planning and design stage, to identify any particular factors that may indicate specific risks and the policies and procedures that will need to be implemented or program inclusions to ensure that the outcomes for the children can be realised. ▪ The Child Safety Officer is responsible for ensuring the Child Safe Policy is disseminated and implemented throughout Symbiosis by staff and volunteers. The officer will provide ongoing feedback to the Country Director, who will advise the CEO of Symbiosis International and the Board of any issues of concern. <p>The Child Safety Officer is the principle point of contact for individuals wanting to make a complaint or report Alternatively the Chief Program Officer, Symbiosis Bangladesh can be contacted on 880 171 6037144 or the Chairman of the Board or CEO Symbiosis International in Australia on 61 7 33 55 5985 or by email to officebne@symbiosis-int.org</p>		
Date Approved	Symbiosis International Board		
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Child.4	Child Safe Code of Conduct		
Policy	To require all Symbiosis International staff and volunteers and visitors to Symbiosis projects and activities read and sign the Child Safe Code of Conduct and the Child Safe Code of Conduct - Use of Children's images.		
Basis for Policy	Symbiosis International upholds the right of all people, including children, values the different cultural traditions and is committed to the safety and well-being of all children and young adults. The Code of Conduct ensures that all staff, volunteers and visitors are aware of this policy and agree to comply with its requirements.		
Process	<p>Signing and Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each staff member, volunteer and visitor is required to read and sign the Symbiosis Child Safety Code of Conduct (Child.F01) and Child Safety Code of Conduct - Use of Children's Images (Child.F02) ▪ All visitors who are scheduled to visit projects will be made aware of the Symbiosis Child Safety Policy. ▪ The Child Safety Policies are to be reviewed annually for the first two years and every three years thereafter. Each staff member and volunteer is required to read and sign the Child Safe Policy following each review. ▪ A review may also be triggered by an incident, changes in the activity or structure of Symbiosis or changes to Government Legislation. ▪ Any review will incorporate comments and suggestions from staff, volunteers, children and young people. 		
Approved by	Symbiosis International Board		
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Child.5	Child Safeguarding - Staff and Volunteers – Recruitment, Employment and Training
Policy	To ensure that all staff understand the importance of child safety and that there are no impediments to maintaining a child safe environment throughout Symbiosis International projects.
Basis for Policy	To ensure that the philosophy of Symbiosis International to protect vulnerable people, including children, is not only implemented, but fundamental to the motivation of the Symbiosis International staff.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake a rigorous employment process for staff and volunteers applying Symbiosis International projects including for Symbiosis Bangladesh. This will include a screening and selection process to ensure child safe employment outcomes for all staff and volunteers, including where possible, a police check.. However, while ‘police checks’ are available for Visa applications, they are often unreliable in Bangladesh and not generally otherwise available, including for recruitment purposes. Symbiosis carefully screens applicants. Given the network of Symbiosis projects, reference checks are often able to be provided by existing staff. Staff will only be recruited through other agencies if their policies are similar to those of Symbiosis International. ▪ Recruitment guidelines are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that they accurately reflect current child safe recruiting and screening standards. ▪ A statement of commitment to child safety and the requirements of the organisation are included in all advertisements for staff and volunteer positions and included in all employment contracts. ▪ All staff and volunteers shall be interviewed and verbal referee checks will be included. The interview will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The use of behavioural questions – Questioning around child safety ▪ Symbiosis International will not employ (in any capacity, paid or unpaid) any person with a known history of abuse or violence towards children. ▪ Employment contracts and agreements include the requirement to abide by the Child Safeguarding Policy and associated disciplinary actions if these requirements are breached. ▪ All staff and volunteers will receive child safe training as part of their induction training on relevant organisation policies and procedures, including the Child Safe Policy. Ongoing and refresher training will be provided on a regular basis to ensure the highest possible child safeguarding standards are maintained. ▪ Additional training will be offered to staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children, such as teachers and short-term teams.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbiosis International staff and volunteers cannot hire children as domestic help, unless that arrangement is in the best interest of a child and in alignment with local law and international standards 		
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Child.6	Child Safeguarding - Children in Projects
Policy	To ensure that appropriate measures are in place at all time to provide a safe environment for children.
Basis for Policy	To provide a safe and secure environment for children within Symbiosis projects
Process	<p>Protection of Children in Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All relevant country and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour, will be complied with. Children are not to be employed in any hazardous work, or work that is inconsistent with the child's personal development. At least two adults shall be with children under supervision at all times. Apprentice leaders will not be in sole charge of activities or events involving children. All leaders under the age of 18 will be supervised at all times. Where possible, both male and female leaders should be involved in activities with children. This is particularly important when providing support for a mix of boys and girls. Where participants of Symbiosis International events are under the age of 18 and not accompanied by parents or teachers, staff and volunteers are responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring parents grant permission for their child to participate in the activity or event obtaining emergency contact information prior to the activity or event. Where activities require children to stay overnight at accommodation for an event or activity or other approved purpose, Symbiosis will ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no less than two leaders will be supervising children at all times

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – separate male and female sleeping facilities are provided, with at least two same sex leaders in each facility – leaders do not sleep in the same room as children. ▪ Staff will ensure that clear procedures are in place to handle accidents and emergencies, including the provision of first aid. High priority will be given to the health and safety of the child. <p>Involvement of Children in Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Symbiosis International seeks to listen to the views of children, respect what they say and involve them when we make decisions, especially about matters that will directly affect them. ▪ Special focus is paid to the status of children when planning projects. <p>Child Abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any concern or allegation of child abuse will be reported immediately in accordance with the Child Safety - Complaints Handling Process (Child.8) 		
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Child.7	Complaints Handling Process		
Policy	To ensure that any complaints relating to breaches of the Child Safety Policy are handled appropriately.		
Basis for Policy	To ensure the Symbiosis core value of commitment to the most marginalised in society, including children, is adhered to.		
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complaints by staff or community members or children are made to the appropriate leader whether that be Field Staff or the project team leader. If required, the complaint can be taken to an appropriate Senior Staff member. For complaints within projects, the field staff person who receives the complaint, liaises with the Project Team Leader and they fill out a Symbiosis International Complaint Form ▪ The Complaint Form must then be passed onto the Project Coordinator and Child Safety Officer within 24 hours of the complaint being registered. ▪ The Child Safety Officer, the Project Coordinator along with other relevant senior staff members and specialist advisors, conduct an investigation of the complaint including contacting the initial complainant to notify them that they have received the complaint and to give them a guide as to how long the investigation will take and when they will respond with a report. ▪ An investigation of the complaint will be undertaken, supervised by the Child Safety Officer and the Project Coordinator. Truthfulness and fairness will be fundamental to this investigation, which will be completed within two weeks of the complaint being received and a report of investigation findings prepared. At all stages of this process, the complaint is to remain confidential, with all those involved protected. ▪ The Report of the Investigation will be made to the Child Safety Officer, Project Coordinator, Country Director and relevant members of Organisation Management Team (OMT) and the CEO of Symbiosis International. If necessary, this group will then undertake any necessary disciplinary action and if required, refer the matter to relevant legal and judiciary authorities. ▪ A report of the findings of the investigation will also be made to the original complainant including an explanation of the response of the organisation. ▪ The Investigation Report and complaint report form will be filed in the Symbiosis Bangladesh Administration Office, with a copy provided to Symbiosis International. 		
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SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

Symbiosis International is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults everywhere.

As a Symbiosis **staff member, volunteer or visitor** (aged 16 years and above) you are required to read and sign the following commitment:

I,....., agree that while working or volunteering for Symbiosis or visiting a Symbiosis project or activity, I will acknowledge the Rights of the Child and will:

- Treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative or culturally inappropriate.
- Ensure that a parent, guardian, Symbiosis staff member or a relative of any children is in attendance at all times when there are children present.
- Not invite unaccompanied children that participate in Symbiosis projects into any place of accommodation, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- Not require the child to provide any form of child labour.
- Not sleep close to an unsupervised child at any of Symbiosis projects.
- Not use computers, mobile phones or video and digital cameras inappropriately, or use these devices to exploit or harass children or access child pornography.
- Not give gifts to children.
- Comply with the laws of the relevant country, including laws relating to child labour.
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse to my group leader or the Symbiosis Bangladesh Country Director (as appropriate).
- Not provide drugs and alcohol to children.
- Not develop inappropriate relationships with any child, including those participating Symbiosis community development projects. This includes having contact with a child through social media.

- Be aware of the extra confidentiality and protection needed by children when communicating their stories (e.g. children orphaned by or living with AIDS, victims of abuse etc)

Signature..... Date.....

Child. F02	Symbiosis Child Safe Code of Conduct - Use of Children's Images
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Symbiosis is committed to ensuring the protection of the children and young people participating in the Symbiosis projects and to ensure they are portrayed in a dignified manner at all time.

As a **staff member, volunteer or visitor** (aged 13 years and above) you are required to and sign the following commitment.

I, _____, agree that while working or volunteering for Symbiosis or visiting a project or activity I will:

- Assess and endeavour to comply with local culture and traditions, before photographing or filming a child.
- Prior to taking a photo, obtain the permission of the child and a family member/guardian, and explain how the photographs will be used.
- Not take undignified photos of children or publish or distribute such photos.
- Ensure that pictures I take are decent and respectful and do not deprive people of their dignity
- Ensure that people (especially children) are adequately clothed in photographs and not in poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive.
- Avoid photos that suggest paternalism e.g. portraying Symbiosis or its supporters as ‘saviours’ or project participants as ‘victims’.
- Ensure that photos reflect the context and are a true representation of events.
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- Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about the child when sending images electronically.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....