

Child Safe

POLICY NAME	CHILD SAFE
REFERENCE NUMBER	1-SI-PO-3
POLICY OWNER	RISK MANAGEMENT OFFICER (SAFEGUARDING)
POLICY APPROVER	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL BOARD
RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE	FINANCE AND RISK COMMITTEE
RELATED POLICIES	RIGHTS, PROTECTION AND INCLUSION POLICY PSEAH POLICY
RELATED DOCUMENTS	SEE SCHEDULE 1
ACFID CODE REFERENCE	1.4
SP3 REFERENCE	CS0
APPROVAL DATE	2 JULY 2022
REVIEW DATE	2 JULY 2023

POLICY ALIGNED WITH SP3 STANDARDS:



1 INTRODUCTION

Symbiosis International upholds the right of all people to be treated safely 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.

We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times.

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.

2 LEGAL BACKGROUND

Organisations and institutions are bound by legislation in Australia and Bangladesh to provide safe places for children and other vulnerable people. Our policy and associated procedures have been developed to provide a framework for our responsibilities under Australian state and federal legislation and standards as well as those of Bangladesh.

We affirm our commitment to the ten Australian national standards which as of February 2019 had been endorsed by the Australian federal government and all state and territory governments. These are:

Standard 1: Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved

Standard 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account

Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported

Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused

Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training

Standard 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur

Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved

Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

Our philosophy of care is based upon the conviction that we must care for children in ways that respect their dignity and value as unique individuals.

To that end this Policy aims to promote the well-being of children and other vulnerable people under our care and to protect them from harm.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 Symbiosis International (SI) is committed to providing a child-safe and child-friendly environment.
- 3.2 SI adopts the ChildSafe SP3 system and is committed to its sound implementation. This policy is intended to help the organisation achieve this.
- 3.3 The SP3 system includes consideration of other classes of vulnerable persons. SI also commits to use this system to guide the care of these people.
- 3.4 This system must be followed by every person involved in any activity of SI based in Australia or carried out by Australians or other expatriates visiting Bangladesh.

The system will be adapted for use in Bangladesh to comply with local laws and culture, while still complying with the overarching policy.

- 3.7 For the purpose of this policy a child is a person under the age of 18 years.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE

- 4.1 The SI board accepts ultimate responsibility for ensuring SI is child-safe.
- 4.2 SI board will appoint the Risk Management Officer (Safeguarding) (RMO) who is responsible for overseeing the integration of ChildSafe SP3 into SI operations in Australia and programs carried out by expatriates in Bangladesh.
- 4.3 The Country Director (CD) for Symbiosis Bangladesh (SB) shall be responsible for appointing the Child Safety Officer (CSO) for all SB programs in Bangladesh.
- 4.4 The RMO and CSO Officer shall report annually to the SI Board and Country Director. In the absence of the RMO the SI CEO will assume the role or delegate this responsibility to another, and where such delegation takes place shall inform the Board in writing of this delegation. In the absence of the Child Safety Officer the CD shall assume this role or delegate this responsibility to another, and where such delegation takes place shall inform the Board in writing of this delegation.
- 4.5 Team Leaders are the people in SI who are authorised by the SI Board or CD to implement and oversee child related programs.
- 4.6 Team Members are people invited by Team Leaders to assist them in their program(s). They also include expatriates who visit Symbiosis programs in Bangladesh.

SCREENING

- 4.7 Australian visitors and volunteers, other expatriate visitors and volunteers, as well as staff and SI Board Members must fulfil the screening requirements in accordance with the appropriate procedure. These requirements are outlined in the Volunteer Appointment Procedure and the Recruitment Procedure. All requirements must be fulfilled before involvement with Symbiosis International.
- 4.8 A person who has been charged with a violent or sexually-related offence (whether convicted or not) cannot be involved in child-related programs or work in immediate proximity to child-related programs.

- 4.9 Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis where the offence is one of violence, not sexually related, and the person has a current Working with Children Check (or equivalent).
- 4.10 Only the SI Board has the authority to authorise such exceptions, usually after receiving a written report from the RMO, or where a group visit is organised by another organisation, after receiving a written report from the leader of that group.
- 4.11 Under no circumstances may an adult without a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) be involved in or work in close proximity to child-related programs.

TRAINING

- 4.12 The RMO, Coordinator, SI Board, Team Leaders and Team Members must be trained (face-to-face or online) in accordance with the Training Procedure.
- 4.13 As per the procedure, refresher training must be undertaken every 3 years.
- 4.14 Where training is done through another organisation, this may be approved by the RMO or CSO as equivalent on production of documented evidence of training completion.
- 4.15 For Australians a register of training shall be kept through ChildSafe online. Where training is completed outside SI and has been approved by the RMO this shall be entered on the online data base by the Coordinator.
- 4.16 In Bangladesh a register of training shall be kept by the CSO.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- 4.17 No-one is accountable to themselves. Everyone is accountable to someone else.
- 4.18 In Australia and for Australians organising activities for children in Bangladesh, a Team Member or Team Leader cannot go ahead with an activity unless 'Permission-to-Proceed' has been granted by the Coordinator using the Permission to Proceed Procedure.
- 4.19 An equivalent procedure shall be followed in Bangladesh where the CSO will receive the risk management plan for the activity and be responsible for authorising it. This is a critical, foundational principle for SI child related activities.

GENERAL RULES FOR CONDUCT

- 4.20 Every person involved in SI activities must treat the safety and care of children as paramount.
- 4.21 SI adopts the Code of Conduct attached as outlined in Schedule 1. Each person involved in SI activities, including every Team Member and Team Leader, must sign and comply with the Code of Conduct. Failure to do so will result in discipline under the Discipline Procedure in Australia and the relevant HR procedure in Bangladesh for their equivalent document.
- 4.22 In the event a request from the media for comment in relation to any Child Safety concerns is made, this should be handled in accordance with Symbiosis International Communications Policy.

5 REPORTING

INCIDENT REPORTING

- 5.1 Allegations of abuse are very serious and require a high degree of care when handling. Children should be believed.
- 5.2 Incidents must be reported in accordance with the Incident Reporting Procedure and where applicable investigated in accordance with the Investigations Procedure. Steps must be taken to ensure the safety of children while an investigation is underway.

RECORD KEEPING

- 5.3 Information and documents that contain personal information must be stored confidentially and securely in accordance with the SI Privacy Policy.

PERSONS OF CONCERN

- 5.4 SI will not allow Persons of Concern (as defined in the document, "An Australian Baptist response to persons of concern - Individual Accountability and Safety Agreements" 2011) to participate in any child related activity or visit SI projects in Bangladesh.

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- 5.5 The procedures and other documents that will be used by SI to implement this policy are set out in Items 3 and 4 in Schedule 1.

REVIEW

- 5.6 This policy must be reviewed and updated by January 31 each year. The person responsible for this is named in Item 5 of Schedule 1.

SCHEDULE 1

#	Description	Names and Positions
1.	Risk Management Officer (Safeguarding) (RMO) and Coordinator	Neil Parker
2.	Those who must have valid Working with Children Checks (or equivalent for countries other than Australia) and be screened	All SI Board members All Team Leaders All Team Members The RMO and Coordinator All SB staff who work with children All Volunteer engaging with children
3.	Procedures and guidelines:	Code of Conduct (Team) (CS Document 1) Code of Conduct (Visitors) (CS Document 1.1) Appointment Procedure (CS Document 2) Training Procedure (Document 3) Permission to Proceed Procedure (CS Document 4) Discipline Procedure (CS Document 5) Incident Reporting Procedure (CS Document 6) Investigations Procedure (CS Document 7) Toileting Procedure (CS Document 8) Discipline Guidelines (CS Document 9)
4.	Other relevant documents: <i>(many other SP3 procedure documents exist at a level below the prime documents referenced here – refer to the SP3 resources list.)</i>	Incident & Accident Form CSE3-IR Alleged Child Abuse Disclosure CSE3-IR Leader Application Form CSE3-OA Resources Summary Index CSE3-SP3R An Australian Baptist response to persons of concern - Individual Accountability and Safety Agreements, 2011 Volunteer Application Form CS2AF Use of Children's Images Form CSA2
5.	Person responsible for ensuring policy is reviewed and updated:	RMO - Risk Management Officer (Safeguarding)