

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



Reference	P0001	Date approved	19 th January 2023
Approved by	Board of Directors	Date for review	19 th January 2024

STATEMENT OF POLICY

LiteHaus International will advocate and support strengthening the protection, and promoting the rights, of all children with whom we work. We do this explicitly through our programs which empower children and equip them with the skills and tools to achieve their dreams in the digital age. We also do this implicitly by ensuring that organisationally we do no harm in the way we work or through our people.

LiteHaus International will comply with all laws in countries where we operate. However, our policy and procedures also sometimes go beyond local laws, with more rigorous expectations. LiteHaus International respects, and will generally work to strengthen, the culture, traditions and practices of the communities in which it works. However, in instances where cultural practices are harmful to children's rights, we advocate for their elimination. The best interests of the child as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) are always central to our decisions.

INTRODUCTION

LiteHaus International believes in a global community where children are safe and are empowered with the opportunity to reach their full potential. We promote children's rights as described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). LiteHaus International recognises that children can be more vulnerable due to their age, gender, race, ethnic origin or socio-economic status. Children with disabilities, who are orphaned, are indigenous or from ethnic minorities, can face an even higher level of vulnerability. Natural disasters, disease, armed conflict and displacement expose children to additional risks. Further, access to the digital world also presents challenges for children's safety and we acknowledge and mitigate these risks to the best of our ability. Many of these risks can impact the children we work with, so we regularly assess and manage risks at all stages of our activities. Additionally, the international nature of development work means we must take care to ensure we do no harm through our work. We take extensive steps to safeguard children in our work in Australia and overseas, and through contact between our staff, volunteers and interns, supporters or partner organisations.

This Child Protection Policy broadly outlines the steps we take in our work and with our people, to ensure we do no harm to children.

SCOPE

Protecting children is the responsibility of all those who participate in the work of LiteHaus International. This includes:

- Board members
- Staff (Australia and country offices and including volunteers and interns)
- Supporters
- Any person representing the organisation at LiteHaus International's request (including the Patron of the organisation or any formal ambassadors)

As a condition of organisational partnership, LiteHaus International also expects compliance with certain protection requirements when partners will have contact with children or access to children's personal information. This includes:

- Partner organisations
- Consultants (both organisations and individuals)
- Suppliers and Contractors

DEFINITIONS

- **Child** – A child is any individual under the age of 18 years. While we acknowledge this includes youth, we use the term 'child' for ease of understanding in documentation.
- **Child abuse** – Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligent treatment, commercial or other forms of exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Both boys and girls can suffer all types of child abuse. The following types of abuse are described; however, children often experience more than one type simultaneously:
 - Physical abuse – the use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling or poisoning.
 - Emotional abuse – a continuing pattern of inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or failure over time to provide a child with adequate nurturing and emotional availability. Emotionally abusive behaviour includes threats, rejection, isolation, belittling, and name calling.
 - Sexual abuse – the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Child sexual abuse is the use of power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity by another person. Sexually abusive behaviours can include touching genitals or breasts, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal

penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, and exposing the child to sex or pornography.

- Neglect – the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for the child’s physical and emotional development and well-being.
- Harassment – Unwanted or unreasonable contact or behaviour which intimidates, humiliates or offends.
- **Child exploitation** – Child exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for purposes or for profiting sexually, monetarily, socially or politically from exploitation of another. This includes the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that is unacceptable because it deprives them of their childhood, education, development or dignity. It also includes unacceptable child labour, child prostitution or trafficking, and child pornography.
- **Child labour** – Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, interferes with their schooling, or that is harmful to physical and mental development.
- **Child pornography** – In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ‘child pornography’ means ‘any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.’
- **Grooming** – Behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity. This can occur in person or through electronic equipment. For example, an offender might build a relationship of trust with the child, and then seek to sexualise that relationship by encouraging romantic feelings or exposing the child to sexual concepts through pornography.
- **Harm** – Any detrimental effect or impact on a child’s physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm may be caused by all forms of physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect or exploitation whether intentional or unintentional.

ACTIONS

The Board of Directors and Management will:

- Ensure child safe recruitment, including screening of all staff;
- Monitor and ensure compliance with LiteHaus International’s Code of Conduct and Child Protection Code of Conduct;
- Induct new staff, including information and training on child protection;
- Arrange regular child protection refresher training;
- Conduct screening and risk assessment of partners;

- Ensure monitoring and supervision of interactions between supporters, volunteers or guests, and children and communities;
- Undertake child protection risk assessment as part of program design;
- Monitor child protection risks during program implementation;
- Ensure information held about children is safely stored;
- Report to authorities suspected or known instances of harm or abuse in line with our procedures; and
- Ensure that the Board of Directors is informed of any child protection incidents and the response or mitigating factors undertaken.

Partner organisations (including organisations engaged as contractors and consultants) will:

- Comply with screening and risk assessment at commencement and over the life of the partnership;
- Be alert to child protection risks and incidents in their work; and
- Report any child protection concerns using LiteHaus International's reporting mechanisms within 24 hours of the concern being raised.

RECRUITMENT

LiteHaus International will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that our staff, volunteers and interns do not pose an unacceptable risk to children. As outlined in detail in the *LiteHaus International – Equal Employment Opportunity Policy*, LiteHaus International will consistently apply robust recruitment procedures for all staff that include:

- Criminal record and working with children check; and
- Behavioural-based interview questions.

RAISING CONCERNS AND REPORTING INCIDENTS

All personnel, contractors and consultants, and partner organisations, must inform LiteHaus International when they have a reasonable belief that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. Concerns and incidents that must be raised include:

- An observation or disclosure of harm (by an adult or child) of actual harm or abuse to a child;
- A suspicion, suggestion or indication of actual or potential harm or abuse to a child;
- A breach of the LiteHaus International Code of Conduct, Child Protection Code of Conduct, Child Protection Policy;
- Child pornography or child abuse that is received or accessed through LiteHaus International's digital equipment;

- Individuals are aware that an individual involved with LiteHaus International or a partner organisation has abused a child outside of work;
- A child unconnected to LiteHaus International programs approaches a LiteHaus International staff member, consultant, volunteer or partner for help with an issue of abuse or exploitation.

Within 24 hours of becoming aware of the concern or incident personnel must inform one of the following LiteHaus International contact points:

- Chief Executive Officer;
- Country or Regional Lead;
- Any member of the Board of Directors, chiefly the Chair of the Board;
- Emailing incidentreporting@litehausinternational.org which is monitored by the Chair of the Policy & Risk Committee (always a Director) and the Chief Executive Officer.

Concerns or incidents can be made in person, by phone or email. Verbal methods should be followed up with written notification as soon as possible. A report can also be made anonymously through our whistleblowing policy and procedures. Incidents which have occurred will be formally investigated and responded to by the Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Directors. This will include externally reporting to the relevant authorities when a suspicion of a criminal offence has occurred.

CONSEQUENCES

LiteHaus International is committed to preventing a person from contact with children through their work if they pose an unacceptable risk. Following a formal investigation, a confirmed breach of the Child Protection Policy (or the LiteHaus International Codes of Conduct, or the Child Protection Code of Conduct) will lead to disciplinary action which may involve termination of employment or contract. During the process of investigation, staff members may be stood down or restricted from all duties, or those duties involving contact with children and beneficiaries, or be placed on leave with or without pay, and/or suspended from all duties related to their employment.

LiteHaus International assures that no action will be taken against those who inform of incidents or risks in good faith. All reports and information provided to LiteHaus International will be treated with respect and confidentiality and that LiteHaus International will take steps to ensure that the whistleblower can report without fear of retaliation. However, anyone who wilfully informs using false information or accusations may be subject to disciplinary action.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- LiteHaus International – Standard Operating Manual;
- LiteHaus International – Codes of Conduct;

- LiteHaus International – Children & Youth Participation Policy;
- LiteHaus International – Human Rights Statement;
- LiteHaus International – Cultural Sensitivity Program (Papua New Guinea);

ANNEX 1 – CHILD PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT

I _____ (insert name) acknowledge that I have read and understood the *LiteHaus International – Child Protection Policy* and agree to abide by it and the following expectations in my work with LiteHaus International.

I WILL:

1. Treat all children fairly, with respect and dignity, regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status; and
 - a. Encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, staff, and have children and young people participate in the decisions that affect them.
2. Uphold the integrity of LiteHaus International by ensuring that my personal and professional conduct is, and is seen to be, of the highest standard; and
 - a. Always care for and protect the rights of children;
 - b. Act in a manner that ensures that children's best interests are a priority;
 - c. Read and take action to understand and ensure others understand the Child Protection Policy and related procedures;
 - d. Should I have questions or not understand, ask for clarification;
 - e. Conduct myself in a manner that is consistent with the values of LiteHaus International;
 - f. Disclose to my employer, or decline any gifts that may be perceived to impact integrity;
 - g. Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before, or occurs during my association with LiteHaus International that relate to child exploitation or abuse.
3. Endeavour to keep children safe through child safe practices; and
 - a. Maintain and promote a safe environment for children to participate in LiteHaus International's activities;
 - b. Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, and their families and carers;
 - c. Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
 - d. At all times be transparent in my actions and whereabouts;
 - e. Respect cultural differences, but where cultural or traditional practices cause significant harm to children, I will follow the incident reporting procedure to make my concerns known;
 - f. Take responsibility for ensuring I am accountable and not place myself in a position where there is a risk of allegations being made;
 - g. Self-assess my behaviours, actions, language and relationships with children;

- h. Undertake NOT to hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way.
 - i. Prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of children; and
 - j. Undertake NOT to abuse the power and influence that I have by virtue of my position over the life and well-being of a child;
 - k. Undertake not to abuse my position by giving preferential treatment, gifts or payment of any kind to a child, or another person in relation to a child, in order to solicit any form of advantage or favour from a child;
 - l. Speak up when I observe concerning behaviours of colleagues;
 - m. Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy noncompliance in accordance with the incident reporting procedure;
 - n. Report any concerns of child abuse according to the prescribed LiteHaus International procedures;
 - o. Use computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media appropriately;
 - p. Never exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium;
 - q. Comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;
 - r. Undertake NOT to use language or engage in behaviour that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, culturally inappropriate or intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children;
 - s. Undertake NOT to seek to make contact and spend time with any child or young person outside program activities;
 - t. Undertake NOT to request any service or favour from a child in return for protection or assistance; to never engage in any exploitative relationships with a child, including sexual, emotional, financial or employment related relationships;
 - u. Undertake NOT to use physical discipline or punishment with other people's children.
 - v. I will not work under the influence of alcohol, use or be in position of illegal substance on LiteHaus International premises, vehicles or accommodation. Nor will I supply, sell, provide, support or encourage the use of drugs and alcohol to children.
4. Safeguard and make responsible use of the information and resources to which I have access by reason of my relationship with LiteHaus International; and
- a. Exercise due care in all matters of LiteHaus International business and not share any confidential information about a child or other work-related matters;
 - b. Protect, manage and use LiteHaus International's human, financial and material resources appropriately.
 - c. Undertake NOT to use LiteHaus International's resources to exploit or harass children or access child pornography.

5. When photographing or filming a child or using children’s images for work-related purposes, I must:
 - a. Assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child;
 - b. Obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child and explain how the photograph or film will be used;
 - c. Ensure photographs, films, videos, DVDs and online materials present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner; Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
 - d. Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts;
 - e. Ensure file labels, metadata or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form;
 - f. Understand that the onus is on me, as a person associated with LiteHaus International, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse.
6. Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human and child rights or activities that compromise the image and interests of LiteHaus International; and
 - a. Undertake NOT to support nor take part in any form of illegal, exploitative or abusive activities, including child labour, child pornography, the trafficking of human beings and illegal commodities;
 - b. Undertake NOT to engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts;

A breach of the *LiteHaus International – Codes of Conduct* or the *LiteHaus International – Child Protection Policy* constitutes grounds for disciplinary action, and may lead to dismissal from employment or service, and result in legal proceedings.

.....
Name	Position
.....
Signed	Date