



Child Protection Policy

Rationale

ASL works in partnership with a range of local and international organisations, agencies and networks. Up to 65% of ASL's project work in country and 90% of our partner organisations programmes work is with children or young people. All of our work is dedicated for better quality of life for Sri Lankans post tsunami. Often our work is carried out in very difficult conditions, Like other development organisations with a strong child-focus, ASL recognises the need to ensure that child protection awareness and strategies are developed and are active in our Sri Lankan programme and that all partnerships we form in country and overseas adhere to this policy while working in collaboration or in association to ASL.

Who does the policy apply to?

ASL believes that all staff, trustees and volunteers and staff and volunteers in our partner organisations need to be aware of our policy and commitments in relation to child protection, even though the majority of ASL staff and many volunteers may never have any unaccompanied contact with children or young people through their work.

The Policy applies to all staff as part of their contractual obligations to ASL. It also applies to anyone who works with ASL or in ASL's name.

ASL's Statement of Purpose and Values statement sets out our commitment to the rights and dignity of children and young people. As an organisation we have become aware of the need to make explicit and visible our determination that ASL's work and activities must promote the safety and security of children and young people.

65% of ASL's programs are child centred, we are committed to the wellbeing of children and to supporting the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and Adoptsrilanka does not tolerate child abuse.

ASL recognises the personal dignity and rights of children towards whom it has a special responsibility and a duty of care and respect. ASL, and all its staff and volunteers, undertake to do all in our power to create a safe environment for children and young people and to prevent their physical, sexual or emotional abuse. ASL is committed to acting at all times in the best interests of children, by setting in place, implementing and regularly monitoring and reviewing procedures to protect children and young people. These procedures cover ASL's recruitment practice, staff induction and training, and management responsibilities.

We will seek to achieve this by:

- Adopting a code of behaviour for all staff and volunteers.
- Ensuring that any allegations of abuse are promptly and properly dealt with, victims supported and perpetrators held to account.
- Aiming to be an example of best practice in the prevention of child abuse and in responding to it.

A child means anyone under the age of eighteen. ASL recognises that vulnerable adults may also be in need of particular protection, and recognises that the needs and concerns of this group may be different from those of children. ASL will extend this policy to include specific commitments relevant to this group as appropriate. ASL's policy applies to all children with whom ASL has contact regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity.

There are 4 main kinds of abuse:

Physical abuse is actual or likely physical injury to a child, such as hitting, kicking or shaking, where there is definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

Emotional abuse is harm done by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection, such as degrading punishments, threats, not giving care and affection and bullying, resulting in adverse affects on the behaviour and emotional development of a child or young person.

Neglect occurs when basic needs such as food, warmth and medical care are not met, or when there is failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, resulting in serious impairment of a child's or young person's health or development.

Sexual abuse occurs if a child or young person is pressurised or forced to take part in any kind of sexual activity, whether or not the child is aware of or consents to what is happening. Sexual abuse includes incest, rape and fondling. It may also include non-contact activities such as showing pornography or Internet based activity. Sexual abuse may involve siblings or other family members, or persons outside the family.

Abuse occurs when adults or other children hurt children or young people under the age of 18, either physically or in some other way. In the majority of cases, the abuser is someone the child or young person knows well, such as a parent, friend or relative.

There are some groups of children and young people who are particularly vulnerable; children with disabilities are among these, and children from ethnic minority communities who may be particularly vulnerable if their communities suffer from discrimination. Children who are refugees or asylum seeking, and children living in residential care are also among these groups. Abuse may also take place in families in which there is alcohol or drug abuse, domestic violence or mental health problems.

Our Policy

In any ASL activity involving children or young people or vulnerable adults, ASL expects all staff and volunteers to follow this code of behaviour.

General ASL Activities

- ASL staff must familiarise themselves with situations which may present risks and learn how to deal with those situations.
- ASL staff must contribute to an environment where children are able to recognise unacceptable behaviour and feel able to discuss their rights and concerns.
- In any ASL activity organised directly by ASL staff at which children are present, their parents, teachers, carers or relevant responsible adults should be present.
- ASL will also ensure that volunteers organising or involved in ASL activities involving children are aware of our policies and procedures in relation to child protection.
- ASL staff must not invite visitors into any projects involving children, young people or vulnerable adults when their personal dignity or personal rights could be compromised.

Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

- ASL will identify posts in which direct or unsupervised contact with children or young people is possible or likely and ensure that extra care is taken in dealing with applications for such posts.
- Candidates will be asked to describe their previous experience of working with children or young people, to provide a referee who can comment on their work with children or young people, and to complete a CRB disclosure form. 'Identified posts' will include those in which the candidate will come into contact with children.
- Job offers made in relation to Identified Posts will be subject to satisfactory clearance from checking of statutory records and satisfactory verification of qualifications and the candidate's CV.
- A parallel practice will operate with regard to volunteers. Any volunteers who are recruited or designated for work with schools, with young people or with children, will be asked to complete a disclosure form.
- ASL will obtain access to Criminal Records Bureau to enable checks to be made when needed, either directly or via a reputable agency.

All managers have the responsibility for ensuring that the staff they manage are aware of the Policy, and for reminding them of its provisions when the need arises. Managers of Identified Posts will be expected to take part in child protection training.

Any ASL staff planning events should ensure that child protection issues are considered as part of the risk analysis and/or health and safety arrangements.

If or when abuse is reported or suspected

If a child or young person tells you they are being, or have been, abused:

- Listen to and accept what the child or young person says.
- Do not investigate, and do not inform, question or confront the alleged abuser.
- Take the alleged abuse seriously.
- Reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Let the child or young person speak freely but do not press for information.
- Discuss any information you receive with a senior manager do not act unilaterally.

- Let the child or young person know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.
- Record carefully what you have heard whilst it is still fresh in your mind. Include the date and time of your conversation and any incident disclosed.

If any member of staff or volunteer suspects abuse, or if a child or young person makes a disclosure, or if a person external to ASL reports a suspicion or allegation relating to ASL staff, volunteers or activities, the following steps should be taken:

- Avoid any delay.
- Report this to the General Manager or your senior manager.
- If the suspicion or allegation relates to activities or persons working in a school or partner organisation. Ensure that the relevant senior person in that school or organisation is informed.
- The designated senior manager will ensure an assessment is made and a report is filed. However, if urgent action is required to protect children this should be done immediately

An allegation of child abuse is a serious issue. In following this policy and local procedures, it is essential that all parties maintain confidentiality. Sharing of information, which could identify a child or an alleged perpetrator, should be purely on a 'need to know' basis. Unless abuse has actually been proved to have occurred, one must always refer to "alleged abuse". No staff member or volunteer will prejudice his or her own standing or position within ASL by responsibly reporting potential or suspected child abuse.

ASL takes positive action to prevent child abusers becoming involved with ASL and will take immediate action against any ASL employee who commits child abuse.