

# Security Policy for ActionAid International

*Approved version*

## Introduction

This document sets out the overall principles for managing security within ActionAid International (AAI), as set by the Board. It is complemented by AAI Security Procedures, and by Security Plans for each country in which AAI is working. There are thus three levels of document, as follows:

**AAI Security Policy** – overall principles for AAI’s management of security. This is established by the Board, and reviewed regularly by the CEO.

**AAI Security Procedures** – security procedures are applicable worldwide and are mandatory. These are reviewed regularly by the Organisational Effectiveness (OE) Director.

**Security Plan for each country** – detailed, context-specific procedures, established by the Country Director, Head of Affiliate or, for International Secretariat offices, by the appropriate manager.

For the purposes of these documents, AAI defines security as the protection of its staff and assets from intimidation, violence and theft.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the AAI gender policy, sexual harassment policy and HIV/AIDS policy and health and safety policy (to follow), all of which have a bearing on security. This policy builds on the general provisions of the global HROD framework. This policy now takes precedence over the global HROD framework in matters of staff security and applies to all parts of ActionAid International, its affiliates and associates.

## Key principles

The security of all staff is of utmost importance to AAI. AAI will strive to do all that it reasonably can to ensure that its staff are secure as they go about their work.

People come first: the security of AAI staff is always of higher priority than the security of AAI’s property.

As well as protecting our staff and property, good security enables AAI to continue working in challenging environments – which is where AAI’s work is often most needed.

Since many people whom AAI serves live in insecure areas, AAI and its staff accept a certain amount of risk in order to fulfil AAI’s mandate. AAI managers will carefully weigh the likely risk against the likely benefits of operating in each context, and will ensure, as far as possible, that AAI staff only face those necessary risks that are

outweighed by the likely benefits to the people AAI serves. AAI managers and staff will do all they can to minimise and manage these risks.

AAI will endeavour to manage the security of its staff and property in such a way that it does not endanger or act contrary to the interests of the people it serves.

AAI acknowledges the unique experience and sometimes different needs of women in relation to security, and will strive to ensure that both are fully taken into account when deciding on security measures.

### **Responsibilities**

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has overall responsibility for the security of AAI staff and property.

The CEO delegates day-to-day security management to line managers at every level. All line managers are responsible for the security of themselves, the staff reporting to them, and any invited visitors or others for whose security AAI is responsible while they are in the area under their responsibility. Security management is demanding and adequate time must be allocated to it.

The OE Director will establish a programme of regular review of security management standards, and will encourage and enable shared learning on security matters across AAI.

The responsibility for monitoring standards lies with each Country Director, Head of affiliate and head of office in the case of international secretariat (including regional) offices. The OE Director is available to managers to provide advice and other help in security management, if they require it.

All AAI staff, trustees, consultants and visitors to AAI are responsible for:

- Their own security
- Being aware of security risks
- Behaving responsibly and positively as a representative or guest of AAI
- Understanding and following AAI security policy and all relevant security procedures
- Adhering to local laws and customs
- Promoting the security of other AAI staff
- Actively contributing to the maintenance of security measures
- The security of AAI property under their control
- Reporting any action that breaches security procedures or jeopardises security

### **Threats**

There are a number of serious threats to AAI staff and property. They vary from country to country but include:

- Crime, particularly theft

- Accidents related to travel (road, rail, air and sea)
- Disease
- Conflict-related violence, either aimed at AAI or affecting AAI because of its presence in violent contexts
- Terrorist attacks, either aimed at AAI or affecting AAI because of its proximity to terrorist targets
- Threats or intimidation by governments or other organisations, particularly where AAI opposes them in public statements
- Kidnap
- Fire
- Natural disasters
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment – a particular threat for women
- Other forms of harassment

All staff should take suitable precautions against current and potential threats against themselves and against AAI. They should be aware that some of the most serious threats are related to health and safety, rather than security. Line managers should assess the threats, of all kinds, in each context and ensure that all staff are aware of them and what precautions to take. When assessing threats, line managers should take advice from experienced colleagues and other sources of advice, if necessary.

### **Security of Affiliates**

Affiliates are responsible for managing their own security. As soon as practicable, they will bring their security policy into line with the AAI Security Policy. AAI will support them in this, including supporting capacity-building, if they so request and if AAI is able to do so.

### **Security of partners**

AAI's partners are responsible for managing their own security. AAI will support them in this, including supporting capacity-building, if they so request and if AAI is able to do so.

The actions of AAI staff may have an impact on the security of partners, and *vice versa*. It is therefore important that there is close liaison between AAI staff and partners on security matters.

### **Security of visitors, trustees and consultants on contract to AAI**

AAI is responsible for communicating the security policy and procedures to invited visitors, trustees and advisory committee members, and consultants on contract to AAI who are being hosted by AAI. In locations where there are high security risks, all such visitors and consultants should be briefed, on arrival, on the security situation and any precautions they should take. Such visitors are expected to respect and follow the policies and procedures of AAI.

## **AAI Security Procedures**

The document “AAI Security Procedures” contains procedures which are mandatory for all AAI staff worldwide. It is reviewed regularly by the OE Director.

For issues on which no AAI security procedure exists, staff, trustees, consultants and visitors should use their own judgement, consulting AAI managers if necessary. The ECHO Generic Security Guide contains a wide range of security advice and is a recommended source ([http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/security\\_review\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/security_review_en.htm)) Field staff and line managers responsible for field staff are advised to become familiar with it, adapt it where necessary, and use it as appropriate to their situation.

## **Security plans**

The Country Director, the Head of the Affiliate, or for International Secretariat offices, the appropriate manager, is required to produce a security plan, giving security procedures specific to that context. For new programmes, an outline version of the security plan, based on best judgment, should be produced before the programme begins.

The security plan should be reviewed as often as necessary, and at least annually. All staff, and all invited visitors, trustees and consultants on contract to AAI, are required to follow the procedures in the security plan for their area.

## **Training, briefing and equipping**

Before starting work, all AAI staff and consultants receive:

- Briefing on the security situation in their location, and appropriate precautions to take
- Any equipment necessary for their security

Before travelling, all invited visitors to AAI field teams receive briefing on the security situation in their location, and appropriate precautions to take. It will not normally be necessary to provide visitors with security-related equipment, but if it is necessary, AAI will provide it.

From 1 January 2006, all new appointment letters issued to incoming members of staff will include a statement “*I confirm I have received a copy of the Security Policy of ActionAid International and have read and understood its provisions.*” Acceptance of a position with any part of ActionAid International will thus include signed acknowledgement of receipt of this security policy. All existing staff will be informed of this new policy by means of posting on the intranet; distribution to all staff in the email system and alerts during various meetings.

From 1 January 2006, AAI intends that, before starting work, all new staff working in or visiting high-risk countries will receive security training. Appropriate security training will also be provided to existing staff in this category, unless their experience is assessed by their line manager to justify a waiver.

By 31 December 2006, AAI intends that managers (or designated persons) who are not working in high-risk countries but who are responsible for staff who are, or for other security matters, will receive training in the aspects of security management relevant to their role, including crisis management where applicable.

The duration and type of security training may vary according to the background and expertise of staff members. This will be decided by the Country Directors, Heads of affiliates or heads of offices of the international secretariat, in consultation with staff of the human security function.

### **Incident reporting**

It is vital that all security incidents, and all near-misses, should be properly reported to the immediate line manager. This includes threats, such as a threat of sexual violence or harassment. The line manager and affected staff should think through each incident and consider whether there are any lessons to learn or procedures to adjust.

Serious incidents, including death, serious injury, kidnap or violence (including sexual violence), and any incident likely to attract media attention should be reported immediately to the International Director for the Region (for Country Programme staff) or to the relevant line manager for International Secretariat staff. They should also be reported immediately to the OE Director who will keep a record of such incidents. He/she will assist line managers, if required, in responding to serious incidents.

### **Crisis management**

If a serious security incident occurs, the International Director for the Region will decide whether to set up a Crisis Management Team. This Team will include the necessary managers and support staff to manage AAI's response to the incident for the whole of its duration. In the event of an AAI staff member being kidnapped, the International Director for the Region will always set up a Crisis Management Team immediately.

For any crisis which may have implications for AAI as a whole, the Crisis Management Team should normally include the CEO; the OE Director; the International Director Communications; and the relevant International Director for the region who will usually act as convenor of the team. The CEO will be expected to keep the international board of trustees aware of such serious incidents.

### **Kidnap**

If a staff member, trustee, consultant or invited visitor is kidnapped, AAI will liaise with the appropriate government(s), security force(s) and other relevant bodies, and will urgently negotiate for their release. It will make use of specialist advice and support as appropriate.

AAI believes that the payment of ransom would increase risks to AAI and other humanitarian staff, by encouraging further kidnap attempts. It will not pay ransom to kidnappers.

AAI will support dependents of a kidnapped staff member, continue to pay his or her salary, and make funds available to relatives to travel to appropriate foreign ministries, etc, if such action might help to secure the staff member's release.

### **Evacuation and suspension**

The AAI policy on evacuation is stated in the Global HR/OD Framework Annex on Emergencies Policy. In case of doubt, the policy stated there takes precedence over this document.

Authorisation to evacuate from an area, to suspend operations or to close an office temporarily for security reasons, can be given by the local manager with immediate effect and is binding on all staff. The local manager should always consult his or her line manager before doing so, unless the urgency of the situation makes that impossible.

Senior management may direct a team to evacuate, suspend or close an office and may override a local manager's decision to stay, to continue the programme or for an office to remain open, but cannot override a local manager's decision to leave, suspend or temporarily close.

AAI staff have no right to remain in a location, if they have been directed to withdraw by management. If, nevertheless, they do remain, AAI may no longer be able to take any responsibility for their security.

In an evacuation, AAI's aim is to return staff to their homes or to a place of safety. Therefore, staff who are working in their own country will not normally be evacuated from their country. AAI will endeavour to move any staff, and their immediate family, to a place of safety if they are the target of a serious threat.

Any staff member may decide to leave a location for security reasons, irrespective of AAI's assessment of risks at that location. He or she should inform their line manager, who will arrange for them to leave as soon as possible. A decision will then be taken as to whether the staff member can be assigned to another location.

All staff will be made aware of their and AAI's responsibilities during an evacuation, when they begin work.

### **Guards**

Where AAI employs guards, they will be under strict instructions to use force only in self defence, or in defence of those whom it is their duty to protect. AAI will not use armed guards, unless permission to do so is granted by the International Director for the Region. Such permission will only be granted in cases of great need, where it is assessed that AAI is able to function responsibly with armed guards, and would not be able to function securely without them.

If permission to use armed guards is granted, the local AAI manager is responsible for ensuring that the guards fully understand and obey their rules for opening fire. These

rules should conform to applicable laws, and should be checked and approved by the International Director for the Region.

### **Weapons**

Under no circumstances are AAI staff to be in possession of, or handle, weapons, explosives or ammunition when representing AAI at HQ, when travelling, or in the field.

### **Military and other security forces**

AAI staff should ensure that AAI staff and programmes are not, and are not perceived as being, identified in any way with military or other security forces. AAI staff may have to interact with military or other security forces in the course of their work. When doing so, they should ensure that the independent, humanitarian character of AAI and its work is not undermined.

### **Insurance**

All AAI staff, interns, volunteers, trustees and consultants on contract to AAI are insured, although the range and type of insurance cover will vary. Visitors to AAI are not covered by AAI's insurance: they should make their own arrangements.

### **Funding**

AAI is committed to ensuring that there is sufficient funding for the security measures necessary to enable its staff to work securely. Where sufficient funding for necessary security measures is not available, AAI will not allow staff to work.

### **Discipline**

Failure by any staff member to follow AAI security procedures, or to obey a security-related instruction, will result in disciplinary action and could lead to immediate dismissal.

### **Interpretation and Amendment**

In case of any dispute about the provisions of this policy, the interpretation of the CEO of ActionAid International will be final and binding. The CEO also retains the right to waive or modify the provisions of this policy in particular situations or contexts in consultation with the Chairperson of the Board. This security policy will be reviewed by the CEO every three years, on the advice of the OE Director. It may be reviewed more frequently if necessary.

**Ramesh Singh**  
*Chief Executive*

**January 2006**