

MAA INTERNATIONAL



**HUMAN RIGHTS AND WORKING WITH
MARGINALISED GROUPS AND VULNERABLE
PEOPLE POLICY**

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1 INTRODUCTION

Human rights are central to achieving effective and equitable conservation and development outcomes. They are universal, inalienable, interdependent and interrelated. Everyone is born with and possesses the same human rights, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, indigeneity, race, age, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, religious or political affiliation, disability, poverty, socio-economic status, caste, class, displacement, or any other status.

MAA is signatory to the Australian Council for International Development's (ACFID) Code of Conduct, which commits members to:

- Respect and protect human rights
- Respect and respond to the needs, rights and inclusion of those who are vulnerable and those who are affected by marginalisation and exclusion.
- Promote the empowerment of primary stakeholders
- Promote gender equality and equity
- Promote the empowerment of people with disabilities
- Promote the participation, and advance the safeguarding of, children.
- Complementing the work of assisting partners, individuals
- Promoting the role of local leader/actors

1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that MAA 's commitment to respect and promote human rights and advance the inclusion of marginalised groups and vulnerable people, especially through the design and implementation of Aid and Development Activities.

2 POLICY & PROCEDURES

2.1 POLICY

General human rights

1. International human rights standards, and the codes and frameworks to which MAA is bound, outline principles that affect not just the scope of development programs and projects, but the process through which development strategies are formulated and implemented. MAA endorses these principles as a framework for our Aid and Development Activities, particularly recognising:
 - The inherent dignity of each person
 - The principle of equality and non-discrimination
 - The indivisibility and interdependence of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights
 - The fundamental principles of the right to participation, and principles of inclusion and plurality.
2. MAA recognises that the promotion of human rights in the context of conservation and development programs and projects involve complex issues not easily resolved by a policy commitment or human rights checklist. In considering the human rights dimensions of our work, MAA is open to dialogue with Partner Organisations, local communities, and bodies representing the interests of marginalised groups.
3. MAA is committed to respecting and promoting the human rights of all people, and recognises that special attention must be given to the rights of people and groups who are often marginalised or particularly vulnerable to infringements of their rights.

Promoting Gender Equality and Equity

Note: this section should be read in conjunction with MAA_POL-OPS016_Gender Equality and Equity

4. Cultural perspectives are often deeply entrenched and can influence a wide range of societal norms, roles, responsibilities, relationships, power dynamics, and access to resources. MAA understands that gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics applied to women and men, boys and girls, as well as transgender and people who do not necessarily identify as male or female. MAA does not make the assumption that gender is fixed and acknowledges that people express or experience gender in different ways.
5. MAA recognises that all people, regardless of gender or sexual identity, possess the same human rights, including the right to participate in and benefit from development, and in many cases, people face discrimination and/or exclusion due to their gender or sexual identity.

6. MAA believes that contributing to gender equality is an essential building block for sustainable development and effective conservation. An integral part of MAA's mission is to ensure that natural resources of our planet are shared equitably.
7. MAA ensures that the design and implementation of our conservation and development programs and projects incorporate different gender perspectives and are based on gender disaggregated data and contextual analysis of barriers to the full participation of people marginalised due to their gender. In particular, MAA and our Partner Organisations promote opportunities for women and girls to participate in decision-making.
8. MAA also recognises integral to achieving gender equality. Ensuring that all people have information on, and access to, safe, effective and affordable family planning methods of their choice is also an important means of improving global health and reducing pressures on the environment.

Promoting the Rights of People with Disabilities

9. MAA understands that disability refers to the interaction between persons with impairments and social and environmental barriers that hinders their full, equal and effective participation.
10. MAA endorses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol, and recognises people with disabilities as active agents, capable of claiming their rights and making decisions about their lives based on their free and informed consent.
11. Noting that an estimated 20% of the population of the poorest people in developing Annual report Submission countries have a disability, and that people with disabilities are more likely to face increased risks of social exclusion, violence and marginalisation, MAA recognises that disability is a major development concern for individuals, their families and wider communities.
12. MAA and our Partner Organisations commit to embedding disability-inclusive approaches across our development and conservation work, including through:
 - Culturally-appropriate disaggregation of social and economic data by disability indicators
 - Consultation with local Disabled People Organisations (DPOs)
 - Adapting project and program designs and implementation processes to facilitate the participation of, and equitable benefit sharing with, people with disabilities with local Disabled People Organisations (DPOs)

Promoting the Rights of Children

13. MAA is committed to protecting the rights of children and recognises children as a social group often excluded or marginalised in development processes.
14. Children are endowed with the same inalienable rights as adults. Due to their increased vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, children also have the right to additional, special protections.

15. MAA's first priority is to manage the risks of any inadvertent infringement of children's rights, particularly the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children.
16. MAA also recognises the rights of children to express their views freely in all matters affecting their lives. In the context of our aid and development work, we seek opportunities to safely and meaningfully facilitate the participation of children and, where appropriate, incorporate their perspectives into the design and implementation of activities.

Promoting the Rights of Indigenous People

17. MAA recognises that most of the remaining significant areas of high natural value on Earth are inhabited by indigenous people and that indigenous people, their representative institutions and conservation organisations should be natural allies in the struggle to conserve both a healthy natural world and healthy human societies.
18. MAA acknowledges that without recognition of the rights of indigenous people, no constructive agreements can be reached between conservation and development actors and indigenous people.
19. MAA recognises that, around the world, indigenous people are often discriminated against and politically, socially, and economically marginalised.
20. MAA is committed to make special efforts to respect, protect and comply with the collective and individual rights of indigenous people, including customary as well as resource rights, in the context of development and conservation initiatives.
21. MAA recognises the enormous contributions that indigenous people make to the maintenance of many of the Earth's most fragile ecosystems. We endeavour to work with locally recognised representatives of indigenous groups to design and implement programs and projects that meet conservation and development objectives as well as supporting the rights of indigenous people to improve the quality of their lives and benefit directly and equitably from the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources within their territories or other benefits realised from their intellectual property and traditional knowledge.
22. MAA recognises that indigenous people have the right to determine priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands, territories, and other resources, including the right to require that States obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting those lands, territories, and resources.
23. In instances where multiple local groups claim rights to resources in indigenous territories, MAA recognises the primary rights of indigenous people based on historical claims and long-term presence, with due regard for the rights and welfare of other legitimate stakeholders.

24. MAA recognises the right of indigenous people not to be removed from the territories they occupy. Where their relocation is considered necessary as an exceptional measure, it shall take place only with their free, prior and informed consent, and in full respect of national and international laws and conventions which guarantee the rights of indigenous people.
25. MAA recognises the right of indigenous people living in voluntary isolation and/or initial contact to their lives, lands and territories, and to freely decide to remain in isolation, maintain their cultural values, and freely decide if, when and how they wish to contact and/or integrate with the outside world.

Promoting best practices related to Core Humanitarian Standards:

MAA's "Humanitarian assistance Policy" is designed to include best practices in relation to the Core Humanitarian Standards. This is to make sure that the local capacities are built in order to make people in crises able to cope with the crises situations and build resilience in them to be able to deal with any future situation. Also, any harmful and negative effects during and after crises are eliminated. The salient features of MAA policy are to:

1. design projects considering local capacities and capabilities by involving local's feedback.
2. design projects after proper due diligence and risk assessment by involving local authorities and those who are affected.
3. Help in building reliance in locals to cope with any future disaster effectively and efficiently. Also, to include marginalized and excluded people of the community.
4. Have an exit policy which enables local to learn the skills and elevate themselves to cope with any situation themselves. This is to ensure that they become self-dependent rather than depending on others for any future situation.
5. Designing of programs which enable locals to get early recovery from disasters and which help improve the local economy also.

Along with all of the above-mentioned policies, MAA's CHS policy also ensures that any negative or harmful aspects of any program are eliminated which may cause a potential harm i.e. sexual or moral to any person or community by the staff member. Also, MAA's takes the responsibility of protecting and safeguarding any personal information collected during crises.

2.2 SCOPE

26. This policy applies to all MAA board members, staff, volunteers and contractors.
27. This policy applies to all Partner Organisations (including implementing it in the country offices and their board members, staff, volunteers and contractors implementing Aid and Development Activities funded by, or through, MAA.

2.3 PROCEDURES

28. This policy will be included in all contracts and memorandums of understanding with Partner Organisations.
29. No later than December of each financial year, MAA will organise an induction/workshop - which may be held either face-to-face or by Skype or phone conference - at which this policy, its importance and consequences of non-compliance, will be presented to the Partner Organisation's executive and relevant staff, volunteers and contractors.
30. All Aid and Development Activities funded by or through WWF-Australia and Partner Organisations and relevant staff, volunteers and contractors will be monitored to ensure they are not in breach of this policy. Monitoring will be proportionate to the amount of funding the risk of breach (as a result of the funded activities, organisation or skills and experience of board and staff) and will be recorded in the program/project file. Monitoring will include at least one country visit annually at which this policy will be made the subject of special presentation.
31. Applying this policy may be difficult in some situations and sound judgement will be necessary. The policy cannot provide a specific response for every circumstance. MAA will apply the spirit and intent of this clause in the conduct of Aid and Development Activities.
32. If this policy does not provide a clear answer on how to comply in a particular circumstance, MAA will document clearly the decisions made and the reasons behind them and make them available to both recipients and donors.
33. Feedback is important to WWF and our Partner Organisations as it encourages improvement. Therefore, all feedback is welcomed. Feedback will be directed to the relevant Department of WWF-Australia for action. A complainant regarding an alleged breach of ACFID Code of Conduct can be made directly to ACFID (<https://acfid.asn.au/content/complaints>).

3 REVISION HISTORY

Date of this release: 07 January 2021	Date of next revision: 07 January 2024
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Revision Number	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes Marked?
1.0	07 January 2021	Policy Written	Y
2.1	10 January 2022	No change	N
2.2	12 January 2023	No change	N