

Project Management Group – Guidelines

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We trust that this document assists you in reviewing the responsibilities of a Project Management Group (PMG). There are constant references to our Policy and Procedures, Working Template and Fund Guidelines (PP) document for a full understanding please review it alongside this document.

Introduction

Australian Mercy (AM) is a Christian Aid and Development organization. We work from a Christian ethos and we see every person as having a God given unique value. We do not give preference to those we seek to assist based on nationality, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, creed or religion and we seek to serve those in need with sustainable programs that provide lasting results.

To accomplish this, we use what is referred to as a human rights based framework. Simply stated, a human rights based approach seeks to identify the root causes of injustice and discrimination and work to change these and to empower communities to grow rather than just putting "band aids" on recurring problems. Our aim is to see communities move forward towards sustainability, and not be reliant indefinitely on external aid.

Our projects work towards sustainable solutions. Each project is designed to address researched and recognised needs, and are managed by what we call Project Management Groups (PMG).

The Australian Mercy Board provides the legal framework through which all projects can meet the regulatory standards with the likes of the Australian Tax Office, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission. We are signatories to the Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct. We desire and plan to ensure that our structures and policies reflect the legal requirements of ASIC, DFAT, ACFID, ACNC and other regulators.

What is a Project Management Group (PMG)?

A PMG is a group of at least three people appointed by the AM Board to oversee a project within the framework of the policies and procedures of AM. The PMG looks solely at the project itself and focuses on the need(s) that the project is trying to address. It is responsible for the management of the project and reports back to the AM Board.

Project Declaration

All PMG members and project leaders will be asked to fill out a comprehensive declaration. This helps the Australian Mercy Board do its due diligence so it better understands the background of all PMG members and project leaders.

What does a Project Management Group do?

Policy and procedures

First, and foremost, the PMG makes sure that the project runs in accordance with Australian Mercy's policies and procedures. If the project is to benefit from Australian Mercy's DGR status it must make sure that the project runs in accordance with the laws and rules and regulations that make status possible. There are key policies and procedures that ensure that Australian Mercy is complying with the Australian External Conduct Standards and other regulatory laws. The PMG must make sure that these policies and procedures are in place, and being followed. These include but are not limited to,

- Aid and development vs other activities policy
- Anti-terrorism policy
- Bullying and other unacceptable behaviours policy
- Child protection policy
- Communications policy
- Complaints policy
- Conflict of interest policy
- Financial crimes policy

- First aid policy
- Funds Handling policy
- Fundraising and appeals policy
- Human rights policy
- Incident and injury reporting policy
- Projects Policy
- Risk management
- Safeguarding policy
- Transparency and accountability policy
- Volunteer policy
- Vulnerable persons people

All of our policies are clearly outlined in our policy manual along with the relevant procedures and other important information. The most recent edition of the policy manual is always available in the project's web portal.

A word about Australia's External Conduct Standards

The Australian External Conduct Standards laws were passed in mid 2019, all Australian not for profits had to be compliant by January 1, 2020.

Australian Mercy is compliant to these standards, the Board has worked hard to make sure that its policies, and procedures reflect that compliance. All above policies must be known and practiced by each project. It is the job of the PMG to make sure that this happens at the project level, so all members of the PMG should make themselves aware of these policies and should provide project staff with necessary training as needed. You can find out more about the External Conduct Standards via the link below.

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/for-charities/manage-your-charity/governance-hub/acnc-external-conduct-standards>

Project Management

In essence the PMG look after the practical details of a project as it is framed in the Project Proposal. The PMG manages things such as fundraising, staff and volunteer management, bookkeeping and stakeholder engagement. They ensure a project complies with all legal requirements such as having a child protection policy in place and that risk management is adequately addressed on location. The PMG monitors if the project is on track with its intended outcomes. They are the primary liaison between Australian Mercy and any other partners on the project.

The PMG meets regularly, (at least twice in any 6-month reporting period, either face to face or electronically). They make and execute decisions that will hopefully ensure the continued success of the project. The PMG does not necessarily work at the project location, On-site managers, staff and volunteers may be more involved in the actual project tasks but the PMG should at all times be aware of the projects status.

They report back to the Australian Mercy Board citing the project's progress, difficulties, financial status and any project design changes deemed. This is done through the projects reporting cycle.

PMG responsibilities can be grouped into four basic categories;

- Project design.
- Project implementation
- Project reporting and monitoring
- Project evaluation

Project Design

A project design is the conceptual framework that guides a project. Projects are designed around needs. Generally, a need is recognised and a project is formed in order to address that need.

Different stakeholders may have a different view of the immediate needs of a community. Project design is a process of gathering information; analysis and decision-making that prioritises these needs and leads to definite plans and actions. The quality of the design is determined by the consultation, understanding and expertise, of the PMG, project staff and stakeholders within the local community involved.

Australian Mercy recognises that those directly affected by aid and development activities are the primary stakeholders in project activities, irrespective of age, gender, and disability or other vulnerabilities: The views of these primary stakeholders are required to be included and prioritised in formulating and evaluating AM projects. Primary stakeholders should also play a key role in the implementation of AM projects.

Good project design helps to keep a project on target. The project design is constantly changing, growing and developing according to the circumstances and setting in which it is framed.

Example: *A person may observe that a community is sick because they do not have access to clean water. As a consequence to this need a process is put in place through which new wells are drilled.*

Project design however needs to take into consideration and remediate factors such as:

- *Do the people recognize that un-potable water is the cause of their sickness?*
- *Where will the money come from to drill the new wells?*
- *What sort of environmental consequence will the wells have?*
- *Will disabled people have easy access to the new wells?*
- *What education needs to take place in order to maintain the wells? etc.*

Project design looks at all the issues, it maintains a human rights based framework and includes the opinions of stakeholders and comes up with a strategy to address the need that answers as many of the issues as possible. PMGs need to use a "twin-track" approach to things such as disability, i.e. supporting people with disability to participate in projects and designing projects for people with disability.

The PMG should also cost the project and provide a projected budget during the design stage.

Implementation

Implementation is the rolling out of the project design. It is in the implementation stage that problems and risks sometimes arise that mean that the original design of the project needs to be adjusted. Adjustment is not a negative it shows that there is flexibility within the project. All adjustments to the original project proposal are detailed in the subsequent six monthly reporting, and the project proposal is adjusted accordingly.

Part of implementation is fundraising. With the project design providing the projected budget, implementing the project implies that funds must be raised in order for the project to be completed. PMGs need to raise the funds needed for the project to be established and reach its goal. If the funds are not forthcoming a project redesign may be necessary. If a formal fundraising appeal such as a can rattle is held this needs approval from the AM board which can then supply all the legal requirements for such an event.

All funds raised for the project by the PMG must be receipted into Australian Mercy's accounting system and submitted for audit.

Example: *In their project proposal the PMG sets a goal of drilling 3 wells in a community in a 12 month period and providing potable water to 60 households at a cost of \$AUD3000.00. Funds for the projects are slow in coming in and only 2/3 of budgetary targets can be met. Through its six monthly reporting the PMG adjusts the project design to drill only two wells in the 12-month period and provide water to 40 households. The PMG then looks at ways that it can improve its fundraising over the next 12-month period to keep project projections in track. It also looks at cost saving measures that may improve delivery of the wells, etc.*

Attention to policy matters is a critical part of implementation. The PMG is responsible to ensure that the project complies with Australian Mercy Policy Standards. The Australian Mercy Policy and Procedures, Working Templates and Fund Guidelines manual is made available to all projects and has been designed to

assist a PMG in managing the project in such a way that issues such as Privacy, Child Protection, Risk Management, First-aid and Volunteer processing to name a few are managed in the most responsible manner. It is essential that a PMG is familiar with this document and implements the appropriate procedures to ensure compliance. A PMG should also be familiar with the ACFID code of Conduct ([free online training here](#))

Reporting and Monitoring

Monitoring, in the context of a community development project is the on-going record-keeping of an activity (and its various components), to ensure that its inputs, its work processes, its desired outputs and other required actions are proceeding according to plan.

Monitoring means watching the progress, results, achievements and standards of work in a project. Monitoring and reporting are thus management tools serving major purposes in the internal and external review of the project's progress towards its goals. Such review is not just a description of what is happening in the project, but more importantly is an analysis for both the beneficiaries and the various stakeholders, of how and why the project is developing the way it is.

All projects that are using public moneys to achieve their goals need to be accountable for the use of those moneys. This is a clear expectation of the Australian Mercy board, donors and government regulators. Accountability needs not be onerous but measures need to be put in place to show that funds are being expended in ethical ways that are consistent with the project proposal. Reporting and monitoring is how that accountability is expressed.

Because accountability is required of Australian Mercy it is only appropriate that we ask our projects to have that same level of accountability. **All AM projects are required to lodge regular reports.**

Six monthly reports; outline how the project is progressing. These reports explain any project difficulties, tell of any successes and explain any changes that should be made to the initial project proposal. The report will indicate staff and volunteer morale and the number of hours inputted to the project as well as cover finances and other management practices.

Six monthly reports explain how the project is progressing and any changes that need to be made to the original proposal. This process of observing the project goals, outcomes and budgets as well as refining and reporting on the project helps to make more effective projects and clarifies any challenges or adjustments that need to be made to the project itself. These reports follow a template issued by Australian Mercy.

Twelve monthly report; for inclusion in the Australian Mercy Annual Report, this report is more of a narrative including pictures and sums up of how the project has gone over the past year.

Financial reports; Australian based projects need to lodge quarterly financial statements with the Australian Mercy National Office. International Projects need only send in 6 monthly financial reports. Under guidelines set out by the ASIC and other regulators, the Australian Mercy Board must be able to demonstrate that it is always financially solvent. The timetable for this reporting is timed to coincide with dates Australian projects would normally send in their BAS statements.

Annual Project monitoring report; all overseas projects *should receive monitoring visits on an annual basis*. A monitoring visit is much like a pastoral visit; Monitors not only look at project financial records but they see first-hand what is happening on site. It is an opportunity to interview staff and stakeholders about their welfare including dynamics such as risk management, participation and involvement of project beneficiaries or gender opportunities. The Monitor will observe all facets of the project and discuss with project management any areas of opportunity observed, concern and celebration.

Monitoring visits are an expectation of DFAT and the ATO. The person doing the monitoring reviews and discusses with the onsite representatives the project, and together they fill out a monitoring evaluation form. Photos are taken and stories for fundraising and reporting are detailed. The monitoring assessment is used by

the PMG to gauge how the implementation of the project is going and helps it in its project evaluation processes. Copies of all monitoring forms must be lodged with the Australian Mercy National Office after the completion of the monitoring visit.

PMGs are responsible to see that all the reporting is done and that monitoring visits are done annually. In some cases, the Australian Mercy National Office will join PMGs on a monitoring visits but the responsibility is carried by the PMG. This should not be onerous for the PMG as there is usually travel between the projects and members of the Project Management Group.

Report Date Summary		
Date	Australian Location	Overseas Location
January 22	6 monthly project report 1 July to 31 Dec Balance sheet at 31 Dec P&L 1 Oct – 31 Dec	6 monthly project report 1 July to 31 Dec Balance Sheet at 31 Dec P&L 1 July – 31 Dec
April 22	Balance sheet at 31 March P & L 1 Jan – 31 March	
July 22	12-month summary report 6 Monthly Project Report 1 Jan – 30 June Balance Sheet as at 30 June P&L Statement - 1 Apr – 30 June	6 Monthly Project Report 1 Jan – 30 June This report will have extra information that will be published in the Annual Report. Balance sheet as at 30 June P & L Statement 1 January – 30 June
October 22	Balance sheet as at 30 September P & L Statement 1 July – 30 September	

Evaluation

Evaluation is making a judgment about the value of a project to the beneficiaries and measuring the progress of the project against the goals and objectives that are set out in its project proposal. The process of evaluation may identify problems or deficiencies in a project and make recommendations for improving the goals or the delivery of that project.

Evaluations are sometimes seen as something that is negative, the reverse is true, evaluations are designed to positively improve the delivery of development project. Evaluation can address issues such as decision-making and operational issues that may be affecting project performance or delivery. It can look at the impact that the project is having upon the target group, the project's progress towards sustainability, any identified problems or hindrances, different ways of accomplishing the same goals, and finally come up with recommendations for improvements to the project.

The PMG needs to evaluate how the project is progressing. In the evaluation, factors such as cost, effectiveness, and risk management are all measured against the existing project design. The evaluation process helps to shape the project into the future so that all its strategies and outcomes are more successful.

Summary

This process of design, implementation, reporting and monitoring and evaluation is what drives and shapes the project and keeps it effective and relevant to its stated goals and outcomes. Making changes to the project and tweaking aspects of its delivery prove to regulators that Australian Mercy is showing due diligence in managing the project. It assures donors both large and small that funds are being used properly. The process assists in ensuring that staff and volunteers are positive about their involvement and that the project is in all ways successful.

(More see: PP Australian Mercy Charter, Human Rights Policy, Aid and Development versus Other Activities Policy, Projects Policy, Monitoring Visit Checklist and Guide, Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Risk management Policy, First-aid Policy, [ACFID Code of Conduct online training](#) etc)

Project application process

The project application process starts with an Expression of Interest (EOI) a person or group wanting to submit a project for consideration downloads and fill out an expression of interest form from our website. This form generally outlines the project. After considering the EOI the Australian Mercy Board decides whether or not the projects fits into its portfolio of interests. If the EOI is successful, the Board will invite the person or group to submit a full Project Proposal for consideration.

What is a project proposal?

A project proposal is the document that outlines a project (which has a life of three years). In the proposal, the need that is going to be addressed and its background are described. Just how the project will address that need and what the likely risks and outcomes are also discussed. A detailed analysis of the project is also included. A projected budget is set and relevant details of the PMG are submitted. A project team should expect to spend several hours creating the project proposal, it is the fundamental planning tool for the project.

Australian Mercy provides a project proposal templates to help in this process. Once the project proposal is accepted the Australian Mercy Board appoints the PMG and the project commences.

Deed of Agreement

Once Australian Mercy has approved a project, a deed of agreement is set in place that outlines the rights and responsibilities of Australian Mercy and the PMG. This deed needs to be in place in order for the project to move forward.

Fees and charges

Australian Mercy has a range of fees and charges that will apply these are there simply to help us cover the costs of maintaining our DGR status, and providing the necessary services for each project.

There will be a signing on fee of \$500 for every new project payable to Australian Mercy at the time that the Deed of Agreement is signed.

There will 5% deducted from all income that passes through Australian Mercy's accounting for every registered project.

We try not to make these project costs excessive, but every year Australian Mercy needs to pay \$20,000+ in basic compliance and administrative costs that are necessary in order to maintain our DGR status.

Project Web Portal

Every project is given an online project portal. This portal provides the PMG and project leadership with a quick and easy way to complete 6 monthly reports, access vital information and access helps and other resources. The most recent policy manual is always available through the project portal, along with Project Memos (explanations and decisions from the Board concerning Australian Mercy's policies. The Project Portal is a key way to keep up to date and glean helpful information.

A word about Volunteers

Every PMG will be looking at the possibility of using volunteers to further the objects laid out in its project proposal. AM has very strict and very clear volunteer guidelines that PMG's must follow when recruiting volunteer support for their project.

Volunteers for projects supported by Australian Mercy may include existing AM staff, new volunteers and volunteers of other organisations who are partnering with AM for the project.

All volunteers must complete a volunteer application in order to volunteer on a project.

A PMG may use in entirety or adapt Australian Mercy forms as part of their application procedures. Partner Organisations (PO) may use their own version of a registration form but it must cover the same information as the AM registration form.

At a minimum, the volunteer application process must include:

- Registration information, including personal details, such as name, age, contact information, skills. While POs may use their own version of a registration form, it must cover the same information as the AM registration form.
- Orientation to a Child Protection Policy. must meet the provisions outlined in the Deed of Agreement with Australian Mercy. If the PO does not have a written Child Protection Policy, the Australian Mercy Child Protection Policy must be used. Child Protection applies to all projects, regardless of whether the project has a strong 'child focus'.
- Orientation to the use of Images and Messages, as per the Deed of Agreement with Australian Mercy;
- Provision of a Code of Conduct that outlines the expectations for the volunteer;
- Provision of information about recommended or required insurance. This may include personal insurance, travel insurance, etc. If insurance is provided (for example if the project is covered by volunteers insurance), then this information should be given to the volunteer so that they can make an informed decision about any further types of insurance they require.

The Board of Australian Mercy does not approve of "spontaneous" volunteers who just turn up on a project site offering to "help out". Such practices bypass our volunteer process and put vulnerable people associated with the project at risk.

Project Management Groups are responsible for the application and induction processes for volunteers who visit registered projects. They are required to file application forms securely for reference and in case of future audit.

(More see: PP Volunteer policy and application procedures)

A word about Child Protection

Australian Mercy sees child protection is a serious and vital issue. Every year millions of children suffer some form of abuse. Child abuse is a global problem that is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social practices. Children are abused physically, sexually, emotionally and through neglect. They are forced to endure child labour, including sweat shops and prostitution. In some countries, boys are kidnapped and forced into armed conflict as soldiers. In many countries, children experience severe corporal punishment in schools. Many million children per year are trafficked into exploitative work, many of them into commercial sexual exploitation. Children living in poverty are more at risk of child abuse and exploitation.

While most child abuse occurs within families and communities, children also experience abuse and exploitation in organisations which provide them with support and services. Physical and emotional abuse and neglect in child-focussed organisations and institutions is usually less systematic and often unplanned- it is often the result of poor condition, bad work practices and negligent management. However, child sexual abuse in organisations is often planned and premeditated by individuals.

Child sex offenders may seek employment in children's organisations or may volunteer to work in remote or vulnerable communities. They may also move from 'developed' countries to 'developing' countries due to heightened awareness, tougher laws and more rigorous screening processes in developed countries. The risk of child abuse is elevated when overseas aid activities bring aid workers into regular contact with children (for example, in disaster responses, primary and secondary education activities, women's refugees and some health, infrastructure and human rights activities). It is essential to ensure that risks of child abuse associated with aid and development activities are managed effectively. It is also vital that organisations implementing aid activities remain alert to child protection issues and have the capacity to manage them effectively.

Partner organisations must have a child protection policy in place that is equal our own child protection policy before AM will partner with them. If the Partner Organisation does not have a written Child Protection Policy, the Australian Mercy Child Protection Policy and Statement may be used.

All PMGs are expected to comply with the AM child protection policy. All staff and volunteers on a project must agree and sign the Child Protection Statement whether or not the intended project is child focused. Along side of this is compliance with the images and messages policy of which is the intention to maintain a framework for achieving an effective and honouring environment with regards to the use and communication of images and messages.

(More see: PP Child protection policy, child protection code of conduct, child protection reporting form, images and messages policy)

A word about Gender

Australian Mercy seeks to bring about the full participation of women and men as equal partners and the sustainable development of their societies. As such our projects seek to:

- Increase women's participation in economic, political, social and environmental decision making processes
- Improve women's income levels and economic conditions
- Improve women's access to basic health and family planning services
- Improve women's level of educational achievement and skills.
- protect and promote the human rights of women.
- promote the elimination of discriminatory barriers against women
- promote and support policies and activities among our partners that enables them to integrate gender considerations effectively into their development work.

Our office is available for comment and to provide assistance as you process the PMG responsibilities further.

To watch a video on project management groups, go [here](#).

(Please note Australian Mercy changed its financial year to July 1 to June 30 after this video was made)