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Introduction:

A Risk Assessment of the Burnet Institute undertaken in 2005 rated all aspects of the Institute's 'Overseas Activities' as a "significant risk". In response, detailed risk management guidelines have been developed to identify and raise awareness of the risks and how these risks should be managed/addressed.

While many aspects of the overseas activities require different risk management initiatives than required for Melbourne based activities, the overall approach and commitment to managing risk is consistent with the Institute's Risk Management strategies.

While the principles can be applied across the Institute's activities this document details risk management guidelines specific to the Institute's international health and development activities [i.e. in developing country settings]

Burnet Risk Management:

Burnet's approach to risk management is based on the development and application of sound program management policies, systems and procedures that are periodically reviewed as part of a process of continuous improvement. Risk management is central to Burnet's program and project management work.

The following guidelines outline specific risk management strategies adopted by Burnet to avoid or mitigate risks to Burnet's reputation, program, financial resources and personnel.

Maintaining Burnet's Reputation:

The following approaches and principles are to be applied to Burnet's program and projects to ensure that Burnet's reputation is maintained:

- All research carried out under Burnet's name must be carried out ethically and professionally and commence only after appropriate ethical clearance in-country has been sought and obtained
- Staff recruited to work on Burnet projects must share Burnet's development philosophy and values and have the skills to carry out their work in accordance Burnet's quality standards
- Staff should be informed of Burnet's Code of Conduct and adhere to it in order to remain with the organisation's employ

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- Staff should be provided with fair and equitable terms and conditions in relation to their employment with Burnet Institute
- Staff should have clearly documented position descriptions, regular performance assessment and opportunities for development
- Staff should be aware of, and compliant with Burnet's Child Protection Policy
- Implementing partnerships should only be developed with local organisations that respect Burnet's development philosophy and values
- Burnet should explicitly outline and document the scope of partnerships and specific roles and responsibilities that will underpin partnerships with local organisations during the partnership development process (prior to commencement of any activities)
- Burnet should always work collaboratively with other development organisations to maintain good cooperation within the sector and to maximise potential for positive change within the communities in which Burnet works
- Program growth should be carefully monitored and managed to ensure the integrity of Burnet's current activities
- Burnet should maintain a constant dialogue with stakeholders at all levels in the countries in which it implements its health and development program
- Burnet should always utilise its financial resources (provided by donors) according to the stated purpose and if this is not always possible, a consultation with donors must be held before any redirection of support to alternative activities
- Burnet should always maintain a high level of cross-cultural sensitivity whilst engaging with individuals, families, organisations and communities in the countries where it works
- Burnet should always seek to fulfill any local requirements for registration as required by local authorities
- Burnet should always carry out its health and development work in accordance with local laws and regulations
- Burnet should always undertake partner capacity assessment in a way that respects the potential new partner and introduces them to processes of self assessment. These assessment processes should allow both organisations to have a clear understanding of how both organisations work and how a partnership will stimulate a two-way process of development between Burnet and the partner organization.

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Program and Project Risk Management

Design and Appraisal:

Burnet in Melbourne works closely with its Country Offices and partners on the development of project concepts and designs. The design process should always include an initial risk analysis and development of a project specific risk management plan. Project designs are then appraised by the relevant Country Team and Technical Working Group in Melbourne with feedback provided to the design team which may necessitate changes before submission to donors, such as AusAID.

Partner Capacity Assessment and Capacity Building:

Burnet should always undertake an initial capacity assessment of potential partners before finalizing partnership arrangements. This process informs Burnet of both strengths and weaknesses in technical and institutional areas and facilitates the development of a tentative capacity building plan. As most of Burnet's activities are predominantly capacity building, risks due to low capacity are managed through planned capacity building training and mentoring over several years.

After partners have completed the range of training provided by Burnet, if appropriate, they may be given small seed funding for pilot activities to enable them to apply their new skills on a small scale activity. Burnet will monitor the pilot activities with its partners. Burnet has very close contact and regular dialogue with its partners through its capacity building activities. Partners are encouraged to undertake self assessment through project monitoring, planning, review and evaluation processes so capacity building remains relevant to the needs of partners and they start to identify and address risks within their own organisations and programs. Burnet will assist partners to identify and mobilize local resources for increased quality and scale of service delivery to communities.

Agreements, Roles and Responsibilities:

Burnet enters into an agreement with its partners so that they are aware of the terms and conditions of the partnership with Burnet. Agreements also outline any contractual obligations Burnet has to its own donors that have implications for partners. One important condition within the Burnet agreement is that any proposed change to the implementation plan cannot be made without the approval of Burnet and its donors, e.g. AusAID.

The partnership agreement outlines Burnet's expectations regarding notification of problems to enable Burnet to participate in problem solving (if required) to ensure that implementation can proceed as planned, or if necessary, in the most appropriate new direction.

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Burnet and its partners also go through a process to clarify roles and responsibilities to finalise the partnership agreement, as this helps avoid problems due to lack of clarity regarding roles and expectations once implementation commences.

Activity Monitoring:

Burnet's Melbourne-based staff undertake both desk and in-country monitoring to ensure that activities are being implemented appropriately and cost effectively so as to deliver sustainable health and development outcomes which address community identified needs. Therefore, monitoring for the existence of risk and appropriate risk management measures is a high priority.

Burnet staff in-country are responsible for day to day monitoring of activities and they work to a monitoring plan that has been collaboratively developed with partners and Burnet technical staff in Australia. Quarterly activity monitoring reports are provided to Burnet country offices by partners and these are sent to Country Teams in Australia for review. These reports provide the basis for desk-monitoring in addition to regular email correspondence and telephone discussions.

Annual Review and Planning:

Annual review and planning is a part of all Burnet projects. This may be a more formalised process on larger projects and involve a review and planning workshop with participation from partner and Burnet in-country and Melbourne staff. During annual review and planning, a review of risks will be undertaken and if any further risk management measures may be required, these will be agreed to and put in place by Burnet and its partners.

Evaluation:

Through evaluation, Burnet looks critically at project impact and also at the key processes and systems that were applied during the entire project cycle in terms of their effectiveness and relevance to the resulting level and type of impact the project was able to achieve. Evaluation results are added to Burnet's Lessons Learned Database to assist with future project planning, design and management.

Technical Support:

Burnet has a large team of technical staff with expertise across a wide range of health and development areas. Their primary function is to provide technical support to improve program and project quality and sustainability.

Information Sharing:

Information sharing is critical to project innovation and quality and Burnet has many lessons that it can share both internally and externally.

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Burnet regularly shares information about its programs and specific projects in Australia and in-country to facilitate learning and potentially avoid the unnecessary repetition of any implementation problems that arose.

Project Management Systems and Procedures:

Burnet's project management systems and procedures are fully documented in its Field Operations Manual. This Manual was developed collaboratively with Burnet Country Representatives to ensure that it meets the needs of staff in-country and in Australia.

Financial Risk Management

Initial Assessment and Agreements:

Financial risk is first assessed during the appraisal of project designs and budgets initially by in-country program and financial staff and then in Australia by Country Teams, Technical Working Groups and the International Programs Accountant. Details of financial monitoring and reporting requirements are then clearly outlined for partners in the Burnet agreement.

Burnet staff and partners will typically come together for a project inception workshop. These workshops are used to ensure that the design is still relevant, and that the necessary project management systems and relationships that underpin the effective and efficient implementation of Australian funded projects, and the delivery of quality outcomes are in place. Inception visits can also be used to review risks and modify project risk management plans. Staff from Burnet Melbourne, also participate if possible.

Audit:

Burnet also audits a sample of its projects each year. These audits either are undertaken by local auditing firms working to a Terms of Reference established by the International Program Accountant in Melbourne or by the finance staff dedicated to the international program. Local auditors send audit reports directly to Melbourne and any actions necessary are then discussed with the Country Representative on completion of the audit process. Burnet's International Program Accountant is also an experienced auditor of programs and projects.

Internal Control:

Detailed financial management systems and procedures are documented in the **Field Operations Manual**. The finance system being used was specifically designed for Burnet's international health and development program and was jointly designed by program and finance staff in Melbourne and then field tested in one location to identify any problems.

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After field testing the system, Burnet in Melbourne brought its accountants to Melbourne for intensive training on the new system and financial management of Burnet projects.

Regularly financial monitoring of project expenditure by Burnet enables risk to be minimised. Burnet receives monthly financial data directly from its Country Offices or directly from partners if there is no Burnet Country office.

Burnet Melbourne also developed the **financial reporting** system within the broader finance system and receives a range of reports including:

- Profit and loss statements
- Balance sheet
- Budget versus expenditure reports on all projects
- Bank reconciliation and bank statements
- Partner and employee advances outstanding
- Asset register
- Cash count
- Detailed transactions listings
- Trial balances

Melbourne finance staff will flag issues of concern regarding over or under expenditure when providing reports to the relevant country team member and any irregularities are promptly dealt with via email to the Country Representative or partner organization.

Personnel Risk Management

Staff Health and Safety:

Burnet developed specific guidelines for health in the field. This document entitled 'Personal Health in Field Situations' is intended for staff travelling overseas for regular short-term inputs on projects and for based overseas on longer term contracts. The document covers preparation, immunisation, working in a new community, international travel arrangements, procedures to be followed on arrival, physical health, and procedures on return. Specific protocols have been developed for post-exposure HIV prophylaxis and for the prevention and treatment of suspected avian influenza. Each country office in Asia has an emergency stock of Tami flu.

All Melbourne based staff are required to apply for Travel Authorisation to the Director or Deputy Director of CIH.

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As part of this process, staff are required to complete the accompanying checklist to ensure they have addressed medical, communication and logistical preparations for travel. Staff are also required to check DFAT travel warnings. Mobile phones are made available to staff travelling overseas and are maintained in the Melbourne and country offices. Two satellite phones are also available for those travelling to areas with no local coverage.

Additionally, Burnet provides a facility for emergency contact with ACE Assistance for all staff whilst overseas. Burnet also maintains a 24 hour contact facility. Staff are able to be patched through to a service which has access to 6 senior staff who are in mobile contact.

Security Plans:

Detailed Security Plans are developed by the Country Representative and these are provided to all in-country staff. Personnel are also given a comprehensive security briefing each time the Plan is revised to ensure they understand the contents and the procedures that are in place. The Plans provide detailed risk assessment focusing on security issues, civil unrest and political tension and include procedures for personal safety in the country context. Security Plans specifically cover:

- Security conditions and assessment
- Links to Consular support
- Reporting security incidents
- Stages of alert
- Emergency response arrangements
- Evacuation procedures

Visiting staff from Melbourne and consultants are expected to read the Plan before departure and will also receive a briefing from the Country Representative on arrival. These Plans are revised when any significant changes occur and are trialled periodically to ensure that systems are effective.

National Staff Health:

Burnet provides local health and accident cover for its national staff. As this cover can be extremely limited, in some contexts, provision for staff health is supplemented by provisions outlined in the Burnet National Staff Health Policy. Burnet developed a National Staff Health Policy to provide additional cover where local cover is restricted or not available. This policy also provides for treatment and care options for any HIV positive staff members and was developed by the Burnet Health Policy Committee in Melbourne. National staff can directly and confidentially seek information from three nominated members of the Health Committee.