

Child Safeguarding Policy Guidelines

July 2022

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY GUIDELINES

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Related policies & guidelines within ChildFund	Child Safeguarding Procedures & Annexes (under revision) Code of Conduct (including in this policy) Whistle Blower Policy Personnel Policy Handbook Grievance Procedures Members own policies and guidelines

1.0 Policy Statement

The policy affirms ChildFund Alliance core values and commitments to children in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹. These values and commitments define ChildFund Alliance’s collective identity, establish our accountability, require adherence to the highest standards, and promote an organizational environment supportive of our work to ensure children’s protection, rights, and well-being and best interests.

Our safeguarding measures aim to prevent and respond to any actions and omissions, whether deliberate or inadvertent, among our practices, policies or processes that expose children to the risk of any kind of child abuse.

This policy applies to all ChildFund Alliance staff and representatives who have direct access to children or their data.

Working together with children, their families, and communities, ChildFund Alliance will take all steps possible to create safe environments for children in all aspects of its work.

This policy sets forth the *minimum standards* for members of ChildFund Alliance and for ChildFund Alliance staff and representatives for child safeguarding (CS). Each Member should have their own contextualized Child safeguarding policy, using this policy as its guide to ensure consistency and standard in policy and procedures across the Alliance.

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989): www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

Responsibility for compliance lies with each member. For non-operational members who do not have a policy, this policy can be adapted into their own policy.

When Alliance Members form local partnerships for the delivery of programs, they should promote and provide support to these local organizations to ensure that corresponding standards are adapted to these programs. Alliance Members must ensure the local partners are providing safe programs to children and that the necessary program risks are mitigated.

ChildFund Alliance has ZERO Tolerance for Child Abuse and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

2.0 Guiding Principles

ChildFund Alliance members, staff and representatives agree to the following values regarding children.

Dignity and worth of every child: We facilitate the creation of a safe environment that promotes the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of ethnicity, race, color, language, religion, opinion, gender, LBGTQI+, origins, birth status, ability, or membership in a particular group. We prohibit our representatives from discrimination.

Children's right to participate: We recognize that children are active and competent contributors to their development with the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives.

Empowerment: We encourage the empowerment of children to develop capacities for self-protection and to advocate for issues that concern them.

Respect for children's rights: We respect the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and promote the four core principles of the Convention- non-discrimination; the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival, and development; and respect for the views of the child.

Do no harm: All children have equal rights to protection from harm. Everyone has a responsibility to support the protection of children. ChildFund Alliance has a duty of care to children that we work with and we will ensure all risks are mitigated.

2.1 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR SAFEGUARDING DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

Openness: We will create a conducive environment wherein knowledge regarding Child Safeguarding measures will be shared, and concerns openly raised and discussed.

Confidentiality: All safeguarding concerns and investigations will be dealt with on a need- to-know basis. Records and communication will be handled securely.

Timeliness: Given the nature of concerns relating to CS, and the potential for increased or repeated abuse, timely responses to concerns are essential. Reporting procedures establish mandatory timeframes on reporting and responding to concerns once raised.

Partnership: We will work with partner organizations to promote corresponding standards as described in this Child Safeguarding Policy. We will network with other agencies to promote Child Safeguarding within their organizations and the wider community in which they operate.

Compliance: ChildFund Alliance Members, its staff and representatives will comply with ChildFund Alliance's Child Safeguarding Policy by ensuring that their own policies and procedures meet the same standards. Alliance Members must also comply with all relevant laws in countries where they operate, and policies should reflect this. However, our policy and procedures sometimes go beyond local laws with more rigorous expectations.

3.0 Definitions and Terms²

For the purpose of this document, the term **Alliance Members** is used to refer to all of the Members of ChildFund Alliance.

Child: For the purpose of this policy and in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a **Child** is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years.³

Child abuse includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent treatment, and commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the main categories of abuse as:

- physical abuse;
- emotional abuse;
- neglect and negligent treatment;
- sexual abuse; and
- exploitation.

Child abuse images are defined as any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities, or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for sexual purposes.

Child protection is an important part of safeguarding and refers to the actions taken to address a specific concern that a particular child is at risk of significant harm due to her or his contact with staff, partners, or other representatives.

² These definitions have been adapted from: United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13 (2011): The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, UN document CRC/C/GC/13, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, 18 April 2011; Keeping Children Safe Coalition and UNICEF Toolkit on Child Safeguarding; ECPAT-Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

³ In line with the UNCRC, Article 1.

Child protection is only one part of child safeguarding, which is the umbrella that covers all the child-centered actions and measures an organization needs to have in place in order to prevent or reduce the likelihood of concerns arising (eg, codes of conduct, safe recruitment procedures, policies and safe recruitment practices, training and communication).

Child safeguarding within ChildFund Alliance refers to a set of organizational policies, procedures and practices employed to ensure that we do not harm children. Our aim is to ensure that everyone associated with ChildFund Alliance is aware of and responds appropriately to issues of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect towards children.

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying can also happen online, in person and through texting and posts on social media.

Grooming refers generally to behavior that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity. It also includes online grooming, which is the act of sending an electronic message by an adult to a recipient whom the sender believes to be under 18 years of age, with the intention of establishing a sexual relationship.

Harassment consists of inappropriate comments or behavior that is demeaning, suggestive, offensive, or physically harmful. It may include physical harassment, assaults, impeding movement or blocking movements, unwanted attention or verbal harassment such as name calling and labeling.

Partner organizations include local partners, networking agencies, contractors, and suppliers with which ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Members are involved for the delivery of services to children.

Online abuse, including grooming or online bullying, is exposure to inappropriate content or contact through for example online chatrooms or video games, or inadequate data protection.

Representative includes employees, volunteers, interns, consultants, Board members, and others who work with children on ChildFund Alliance's behalf or on behalf of Alliance Members, visit ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Member programs and have direct access to children or sensitive information about children in our programs.

Sexual abuse, including sexual activity with a child, irrespective of local country definitions of when a child reaches adulthood. This could include an employee soliciting children for sex or a company employee-downloading child sexual abuse images on their computer.

Sexual Exploitation of Children is a form of child sexual abuse and a criminal offense. Under this policy, a child under age 18 cannot consent to sexual activity. In line with this policy, any sexual activity with a child who is under the legal age of consent of the country in which she/he lives or in which the activity occurs regardless of whether they consent, is child abuse and may be a crime.

Exploitation includes engaging with children in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family need.

The terms “child prostitution” and “child sex tourism” describe forms of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation also includes Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children (OSEAC), which is the production, for the purpose of online publication or transmission, of visual depictions (eg, photos, videos, live streaming) of the sexual abuse or exploitation of a minor for a third party who is not in the physical presence of the victim, in exchange for compensation.

Neglect/Negligent Treatment: persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs; for example, failing to provide adequate food, clothing and/or shelter; failing to prevent harm; failing to ensure adequate supervision; failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment; and failing to provide a safe physical environment (exposure to violence, unsafe programming locations, unsafe sleeping environment; releasing a child to an unauthorized adult; access to weapons or harmful objects, etc.)

Social Media: forms of electronic communication and content used to share information publicly. Comments, messages, images, video, and other content delivered via social networks.

4.0 Scope

This policy applies to all ChildFund Alliance and Alliance Member staff and representatives who have access to children and children information. These include the following:

- Staff members
- Interns and volunteers
- Local partner organizations and their staff (when working on ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Member projects)
- Contractors
- Consultants
- Members of governing bodies (ie, board members)

Furthermore, the policy and procedures apply to “other representatives” who may become engaged with ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Member activities, including:

- Journalists
- Sponsors
- Donors
- Supporters
- Celebrities
- Politicians

For example, documentation may refer to keeping detailed records to show that representatives have been briefed about ChildFund Alliance’s safeguarding policy, know, and have agreed to the policy.

Similarly, attention and documentation are needed in supervising these other representatives when they are engaged with or visiting ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Member programs or interacting with children and beneficiary communities (such as when communicating with sponsored children).

5.0 Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting

5.1 ACCOUNTABILITY

There are different levels of accountability. The board of directors of the organization interacting with children through a program, whether it be ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Member, is ultimately accountable for Child Safeguarding in accordance with this policy. The Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance is accountable to ensure implementation of the policy within the secretariat.

5.2 MONITORING

ChildFund Alliance and each Alliance Member will put in place regular monitoring and review of their respective safeguarding measures. ChildFund Alliance and Alliance Members will document their Child Safeguarding procedures, and code of conduct to demonstrate the active use of the policy and compliance to determine gap for learning and adaptation.

5.3 REPORTING AND RESPONDING

All staff and representatives of ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Members are obligated to report concerns. Alliance Members must ensure that their policies stipulate the reporting of concerns not as a choice, but an obligation. For example:

- you see or hear of abuse or suspect a case of abuse;
- an allegation of abuse is made known to you through a staff member; and
- a child discloses an incident of abuse.

All Safeguarding concerns must be reported within 24 hours using clearly documented process within the child Safeguarding procedures.

An initial response will occur within 72 hours of learning of the report by the appropriate person. It is important for all staff to remember that their responsibility is to report concerns, not to conduct investigations. In all cases, maintain confidentiality by reporting concerns only to the appropriate person.

- Report **internal cases** (which involve staff and other representatives) to a designated Child Safeguarding policy focal point.
- Report **external cases** (which involve community members and other agencies) to the relevant community authorities and the organization concerned.

- Serious external cases (eg, sexual violence, torture or severe physical abuse) where the alleged perpetrator is not a representative of ChildFund Alliance or an Alliance Member must also be reported to the local authorities.
- External cases where the alleged perpetrator is a staff member or representative of another organization must be reported to the designated person within that organization.

All Alliance Members should have in place a child-friendly way for children to report concerns. They should also have child-friendly methods to demonstrate transparency and accountability. Details on this process and tools are available in the Child Safeguarding procedural guidance, which accompany this policy.

5.4 RECRUITMENT

Safeguarding policies of Alliance Members will stipulate steps to take all reasonable precautions to ensure that staff, volunteers, and interns do not pose risk to children.

Policy and Procedures will reflect that ChildFund Alliance and all Alliance Members will consistently apply robust recruitment procedures for all staff, volunteers, and interns that include:

- criminal record check (or alternative in some country contexts);
- at least two verbal reference checks; and
- behaviour-based interview questions.

5.5 CODE OF CONDUCT

Clear guidelines for the behavior of staff and representatives are essential to ensure people do not harm children. All Alliance Members must agree and sign up to the Code of Conduct within this policy. (See the Code of Conduct signing sheet.)

Alliance Members should have a code of conduct that all staff are required to sign and abide by as a condition of their employment.

5.6 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

All Members of the Alliance must undertake a range of precautions when sharing information about children in all marketing and communications. Practices should reflect general principles of caution for protective reasons:

- Do not disclose information that could reveal the identity of a child (date of birth, full name, location, etc);
- Do explain requirements for how images can be used, and for obtaining formal consent about their usage; and
- Give clear guidelines on how to portray children in images and reporting.

5.7 RESPONSIBILITIES

ChildFund Alliance and Alliance Members should ensure that all staff and other representatives are fully aware of, and adhere to, the Child Safeguarding Policy and implement the Procedures. All Alliance Members should be vigilant in ensuring their procedures around recruitment practice, staff induction and training, and the management of program activities promote and support this policy.

All representatives of ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Members should remain alert and responsive to any child safeguarding risks, acquire relevant knowledge and skills to enable them to promote strong safeguarding practices, understand the child safeguarding procedures, and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the procedures.

All ChildFund Alliance staff, Alliance Member staff and other representatives will:

- become familiar with and understand local procedures for reporting and responding to individual or specific cases of child abuse;⁴
- immediately report concerns that a child is a victim of child abuse or sexual exploitation in accordance with the local procedures;
- respond to a child who has been or fears being at risk of abuse or exploitation in accordance with the local procedures and with the child's best interest and safety in mind; and
- cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns or allegations.

Breaches of this policy and failure to comply with these responsibilities incur the following sanctions:

- For ChildFund Alliance staff: disciplinary action including possible dismissal in line with personnel policy and laws;
- Local partners and other representatives associated with ChildFund Alliance or Alliance Members: actions up to and including termination of all relations including contractual and partnership agreements; and
- Where relevant, legal action.

All representatives of ChildFund Alliance or an Alliance Member are obligated to report violations of this policy in keeping with the Safeguarding procedures or other policies established by the Alliance Member organization and as required by local laws in the countries of operation.

Concerns and breaches will be investigated under this policy and, where appropriate, will be referred to government authorities for criminal investigation under the law of the country in which the incident occurred, or where the representative works, and in accordance with disciplinary procedures.

Accordingly, if a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised that proves to be unfounded after investigation, no action will be taken against the reporting person. However, false and malicious reporting will be investigated, and appropriate actions will be taken.

⁴ Local Procedures will be developed in line with the local resources and laws in the countries where the policy is implemented.

5.8 REVIEW OF POLICY

At least every three years, the Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance will appoint someone to lead the review of the Policy and Procedures and update the documents as appropriate. The procedure for conducting the review will be determined by the Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance.

CHILDFUND ALLIANCE CODE OF CONDUCT

This code will be used in tandem with the Child Safeguarding Policy, ChildFund Alliance Standards, and other policies.

As employees or representatives of ChildFund Alliance or an Alliance Member, you are required to promote the organization's core values, commitments and principles.

You will:

- work actively to protect children and comply with the child safeguarding policy guidelines and procedures;
- protect the safety and well-being of others as well as yourself;
- protect the organization's assets and resources;
- maintain confidentiality of sensitive information;
- respect and listen to the opinions of young people; and
- report any matter that breaks the standards contained in this code of conduct.

Maintaining high standards of personal and professional conduct means you will not behave in a way that breaches the Code of Conduct, undermines your ability to do your job, or places ChildFund Alliance's reputation into disrepute.

You will not:

- engage in sexual relations with anyone under the age of 18, even if the age of consent is lower;
- abuse or exploit a child in any way;
- exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual favors;
- drink alcohol or use any other substances in a way that adversely affects your ability to do your job or affects the reputation of the organization;
- possess or profit from the sale of illegal goods or substances;
- accept bribes or significant gifts (except small tokens of appreciation) from governments, beneficiaries, donors, suppliers, or others, which have been offered as a result of your employment;
- cause the organization to purchase goods or services with family, friends or personal contacts or use the organization's assets for personal benefit;
- behave in a way that threatens the safety or security of yourself or others, or contravenes the law of the country in which your work is taking place; and
- use the organization's computer or other equipment to view, download, create or distribute inappropriate material.