

Child Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

ChildFund Australia believes in a global community where children are safe and have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We promote children's rights as described in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*.

ChildFund Australia recognises that children can be more vulnerable due to their age, gender, race, ethnic origin or socio-economic status. Children with disabilities, who are orphaned, are indigenous or from ethnic minorities, can face an even higher level of vulnerability. Natural disasters, disease, armed conflict and displacement expose children to additional risks. Many of these risks can impact the children we work with, so we regularly assess and manage risks at all stages of our activities.

Additionally, the international nature of development work means we must take care to ensure we do no harm through our work. We take extensive steps to safeguard children in our work in Australia and overseas, and through contact between our staff, volunteers and interns, supporters or partner organisations.

This *Child Safeguarding Policy* broadly outlines the steps we take in our work and with our people, to ensure we do no harm to children.

The *Child Safeguarding Procedures* (which should be read as an accompanying document) describes, in detail, the practical actions that we perform to apply this policy.

Policy statement

ChildFund Australia will advocate and support strengthening the protection, and promoting the rights, of all children in the communities where we work. We do this explicitly through our direct child protection programming which protects children from the risk of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. We also do this implicitly by ensuring that organisationally we do no harm in the way we work or through our people (as set out in this *Child Safeguarding Policy*).

ChildFund Australia will comply with all laws in countries where we operate. However, our policy and procedures also sometimes go beyond local laws, with more rigorous expectations.

ChildFund Australia respects, and will generally work to strengthen, the culture, traditions and practices of the communities in which it works. However, in instances where cultural practices are harmful to children's rights, we advocate for their elimination. The best interests of the child are always central to our decisions.

SCOPE

Safeguarding children is the responsibility of all those who participate in the work of ChildFund Australia. This includes:

- Board members
- Staff (Australia and country offices and including volunteers and interns)
- Supporters
- Any person representing the organisation at ChildFund Australia's request (including Ambassadors)

As a condition of organisational partnership, ChildFund Australia also expects compliance with certain safeguarding requirements when partners will have contact with children or access to children's personal information. This includes:

- Partner organisations
- Consultants (both organisations and individuals)
- Suppliers and Contractors

EXCLUSIONS

Nil.

Definitions

CHILD

A child is any individual under the age of 18 years. While we acknowledge this includes youth, we use the term ‘child’ for ease of understanding in documentation.

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is defined as an act (or failure to act) by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that endangers a child’s physical or emotional health, development or dignity. Both boys and girls can suffer all types of child abuse. The following types of abuse are described, however children often experience more than one type simultaneously:

- **Physical abuse** – the use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling or poisoning;
- **Emotional abuse** – a continuing pattern of inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or failure over time to provide a child with adequate nurturing and emotional availability. Emotionally abusive behaviour includes threats, rejection, isolation, belittling, and name calling.
- **Sexual abuse** – the use of power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity by an adult or significantly older child

or adolescent. Sexually abusive behaviours can include touching genitals or breasts, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, and exposing the child to sex or pornography.

- **Neglect** – the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for the child’s physical and emotional development and well-being.

CHILD EXPLOITATION

Child exploitation is the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others that is unacceptable because it deprives them of their childhood, education, development or dignity. It includes unacceptable child labour, child prostitution or trafficking, and child pornography.

CHILD LABOUR

Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, interferes with their schooling, or that is harmful to physical and mental development.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ‘child pornography’ means ‘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 primarily sexual purposes.’

GROOMING

Behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity. This can occur in person or through electronic equipment. For example, an offender might build a relationship of trust with the child, and then seek to sexualise that relationship by encouraging romantic feelings or exposing the child to sexual concepts through pornography.

SUPPORTER

For the purpose of this policy, supporters include donors, child and community sponsors, community fundraisers, potential donors as well as any members of the general public who have dealings with ChildFund Australia.

Policy in action

This section briefly describes how we apply safeguarding in our work. The accompanying Child Safeguarding Procedures provides in-depth detail of the procedures we have in place.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior management will:

- Ensure child safe recruitment, including screening of all staff;
- Monitor and ensure compliance with Staff Code of Conduct
- Induct new staff, including information and training on child safeguarding;
- Arrange regular child safeguarding refresher training;
- Conduct screening and risk assessment of partners;
- Ensure monitoring and supervision of interactions between supporters and children/communities;
- Undertake child protection risk assessment as part of program design;
- Monitor child protection risks during program implementation;
- Undertake humanitarian response in accordance with the UN Global Protection Cluster's Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Emergencies;
- Ensure information held about children is safely stored; and

- Report to authorities' suspected or known instances of harm or abuse in line with our procedures.

All Board members, staff, volunteers and interns will:

- Comply with this policy and Staff Code of Conduct;
- Follow the Child Safeguarding Procedures;
- Be alert to child safeguarding risks and incidents in their work; and
- Identify and seek continued understanding of child safeguarding through training

Partner organisations (including organisations engaged as contractors and consultants) will:

- Comply with screening and risk assessment; and
- Provide or develop child safeguarding policies with assistance from ChildFund Australia;

Individual consultants and contractors will:

- Comply with recruitment and screening procedures (as per staff);
- Commit to and comply with our Child Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Procedures.

RECRUITMENT

ChildFund Australia will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that our staff, volunteers and interns do not pose an unacceptable risk to children.

As outlined in detail in the *Child Safeguarding Procedures*, ChildFund Australia 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 referee checks; and
- Behavioural-based interview questions.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ChildFund Australia will provide all new staff, volunteers and interns with a child safeguarding briefing in which they will be introduced to the *Child Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct* and *Child Safeguarding Procedures* within three months of commencement. Refresher training on the policy and procedures will be provided every two years.

Additionally, we will arrange focused job-specific training for staff on issues related to children protection on an ad-hoc basis.

PARTNERSHIPS

As a condition of organisational partnership we will expect certain conditions are followed by partner organisations, including contractors and consultants. These are detailed in the *Child Safeguarding Procedures*. However, we acknowledge the challenges of working in the developing world context where these conditions are often not standard. Rather than simply being risk averse, when they are not met when beginning a partnership, ChildFund Australia will provide capacity development support to partners in order to develop appropriate procedures within six months of engagement.

SUPPORTER RELATIONS

ChildFund Australia has an active supporter relations program and encourages communication between supporters and children, as it has the potential to positively impact on the development of the child/supporter relationship; the cultural education and awareness of the supporter, child and community; and is an effective fundraising model.

The Child Safeguarding Procedures detail the range of strategies that are in place to ensure that this contact takes place in the context of a safe environment for children. This includes:

- Welcome of supporters;
- Monitoring of all correspondence (including social media)

Where supporters will have in-person contact with children and communities, we will require:

- Criminal record checks;
- Commitment to comply with the Child Safeguarding Policy and Behavioural Guidelines for Supporter Visits;
- Staff supervision of contact at all times.

PROJECT RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

ChildFund Australia acknowledges that the work we do is associated with child protection risks. We are committed to doing everything in our power to identify and minimise preventable risk, and mitigate the impacts of incidents when they occur.

In the interest of preventing risk, we conduct a detailed child protection risk assessment as part of the development of all new projects. This risk assessment is reviewed during quarterly project monitoring.

In line with our Partner Engagement Policy, all new organisational partnerships include child protection screening. Partnership agreements include requirements to provide evidence of child safeguarding policies and active procedures or a commitment to develop these with support from ChildFund Australia within six months of engagement.

HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

ChildFund Australia is committed to reducing children's vulnerability to emergencies, ensuring their right to have humanitarian assistance in crises, and their right to survival and development during and after an emergency. Section 7 of the

Child Safeguarding Procedures outlines our commitments to child safeguarding and protection in humanitarian emergencies.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

ChildFund Australia undertakes a range of precautions when sharing information about children in all our marketing and communications. Detail can be found in the Child Safeguarding Procedures, Guidelines for Communications and Reporting on Children, and Consent Policy. General principles include:

- Not disclosing information that could identify the location of a child;
- Requirements explain how images will be used and for obtaining formal consent; and
- Clear guidelines on how children are portrayed in images and reporting.

RAISING CONCERNS AND INCIDENTS

This policy covers concerns related to board members, staff, volunteers and interns, contractors and consultants, partner organisations, ChildFund ambassadors or supporters. However, through our close partnership with communities, ChildFund will also respond to all concerns raised by identifying appropriate support, facilitating referrals, assisting with reports to relevant authorities and advocating where appropriate.

Board members, staff, volunteers and interns, contractors and consultants, partner organisations, ChildFund ambassadors and supporters must inform ChildFund Australia when they have a reasonable belief that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

- When it is due to the actions of board members, staff, volunteers and interns
- When it involves ChildFund ambassadors or supporters

- When it is due to the actions of partner organisations, contractors, or consultants

Concerns and Incidents that must be raised include:

- An observation or disclosure of harm (by an adult or child) of actual harm or abuse to a child;
- A suggestion or indication of potential harm or abuse to a child;
- A breach of the Staff Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding Policy or Procedures;
- A breach of the Behavioural Guidelines for Supporter Visits;
- Child pornography that is received through ChildFund electronic equipment.
- You are aware that an individual involved with ChildFund Australia or a partner organisation has abused a child outside of work (a family member, domestic worker or through prostitution);
- A child unconnected to ChildFund Australia programs approaches a ChildFund Australia staff member, consultant, volunteer or partner for help with an issue of abuse or exploitation.

Within 24 hours of becoming aware of the concern or incident you must inform one of the following:

- The relevant Country Director;
- Country Safeguarding Focal Point;
- Child Protection Advisor (Sydney);
- An Executive Team member or the CEO
- Using childsafeguarding@childfund.org.au

You can inform in person, by phone or email. Verbal methods should be followed up with written notification as soon as possible.

Incidents which have occurred will be formally investigated and responded to by the responsible role in consultation with the Child Protection Advisor and/or a member of the Executive Team or CEO. This will include externally reporting to the relevant authorities when a suspicion of a criminal offence has occurred.

Concerns and incidents will be assessed, rated and logged in the Child Safeguarding Register using deidentified language. The rating will determine how the risk is managed. Further detail on raising concerns and responding can be found in the Child Safeguarding Procedures.

CONSEQUENCES

ChildFund Australia is committed to preventing a person from contact with children through their work if they pose an unacceptable risk. Following a formal investigation, a confirmed breach of the Staff Code of Conduct will lead to disciplinary procedures which may involve termination of employment or contract.

ChildFund Australia assures that no action will be taken against those who inform of incidents or risks in good faith. However, anyone who wilfully informs using false information may be subject to possible consequences as per disciplinary procedures.