

Child Safeguarding Policy

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Related Policies

- Child Safeguarding Procedures
- ChildFund Australia Code of Conduct
- Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Behavioural Guidelines for Supporter Visits
- Child Safeguarding Values for Supporters
- Child Protection Approach
- Partner Engagement Policy
- Communications Policy
- Consent Policy
- Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy
- Risk Management Procedures
- Privacy 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 with whom 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 or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligent treatment, commercial or other forms of exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to a child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. 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 actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Child sexual abuse is the use of power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity by another person. 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.
- **Harassment** – Unwanted or unreasonable contact or behaviour which intimidates, humiliates or offends

CHILD EXPLOITATION

Child exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for purposes or for profiting sexually, monetarily, socially or politically from exploitation of another. This includes 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 also 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.

HARM

Any detrimental effect or impact on a child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm may be caused by all forms of physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect or exploitation whether intentional or unintentional.

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.

UNACCEPTABLE RISK

The level of identified risk that cannot be tolerated by the organization that must be either eliminated or controlled. For people deemed to pose an unacceptable risk, control mechanisms are not considered acceptable.

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 *ChildFund Australia Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding 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.
- Report to DFAT and other donors any Child Safeguarding incidences as required by contractual partnership and funding agreements.

- Inform the board of any child safeguarding incidents and the response or mitigating factors undertaken

All Board members, staff, volunteers and interns will:

- Comply with this policy and *ChildFund Australia 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
- Be informed of child safeguarding incidents and the response taken by the organisation. Provide guidance or take action to respond where relevant to incidents raised.
- Ensure incidents that breach the Child Safeguarding Policy, Procedures, and Code of Conduct are reported and recorded through the appropriate mechanisms'

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

- Comply with screening and risk assessment at commencement and over the life of the partnership;
- Provide or develop child safeguarding policies with assistance from ChildFund Australia;
- Work towards compliance standards set out by DFAT;
- Report all child safeguarding risks, concerns and incidents to 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, ChildFund Australia Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Procedures*;
- Be alert to child safeguarding risks and incidents in their work;
- Report any child safeguarding concerns using ChildFund reporting mechanisms within 24 hours of the concern being raised.

Supporters will:

- Comply with the child safeguarding values set out for all supporters
- Be alert to child safeguarding risks and incidences in their support for children
- Report any child safeguarding concerns to ChildFund Australia immediately
- Comply with this policy and ChildFund Australia Code of Conduct whilst on a supporter visit

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 during onboarding in which they will be introduced to the *Child Safeguarding Policy, ChildFund Australia Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Procedures* within three months of commencement. All staff will attend comprehensive training on child safeguarding within 6 months of joining the organisation. Refresher training

on the policy and procedures will be provided every two years, and follow up refresher sessions will occur with all staff through staff meetings every 6 months, on average.

Additionally, ChildFund 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 ChildFund Australia expects certain conditions are followed by partner organisations, including contractors and consultants. These are detailed in the *Child Safeguarding Procedures*. At a minimum it is expected that partner organisations will have in place a child safeguarding policy and set of procedures that are compliant with minimum standards. ChildFund acknowledges the challenges of working in low capacity contexts where these conditions are often not standard. Rather than simply being risk averse, when partners or prospective partners do not meet conditional standards at the commencement of a partnership, ChildFund Australia will provide capacity development support to partners in order to develop appropriate policies, procedures and implementation plans 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.

DATA and SENSITIVE INFORMATION

ChildFund Australia has in place procedures and behavioural guidelines which outline how all content assets and data must be secured in ChildFund Australia's headquarter and country offices, with access available only to selected staff to ensure privacy, safety and confidentiality for all children and beneficiaries. Access arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure they are operational and up to date. When sending images electronically or to outside parties, file labels must not reveal identifying information about a child, family or beneficiary. All communications should comply with the *Privacy Policy*.

ORGANISATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Child Safeguarding risk is examined and mitigated against as a key risk at the organisational level on a six-monthly basis. Risks and mitigating factors are first identified at each country office level and this information is consolidated, reviewed and monitored by ChildFund Australia in Sydney and is presented to the Executive

Team and the Audit Risk and Governance Committee of the Board. Full details of this process are outlined in ChildFund Australia's *Risk Management Procedures*.

PROJECT RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

ChildFund Australia acknowledges that the work we do is inherently associated with child safeguarding 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, ChildFund Australia conducts a child protection and child safeguarding risk assessment as part of the development of all new projects. This risk assessment is reviewed during quarterly project monitoring and mitigating factors are put in place to reduce, avoid or remove the risk to children and vulnerable adults.

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, Communications Policy, and Consent Policy*.

General principles include but are not limited to:

- Not disclosing information that could identify the location of a child;
- Requirements explaining how images will be used and for obtaining formal consent;
- Clear guidelines on how children are portrayed in images and reporting.
- Designated image and content approval process at which child safeguarding is examined at critical junctures before approval and use.

RAISING CONCERNS AND INCIDENTS

This policy covers concerns and incidents 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 and incidents 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.

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 suspicion, suggestion or indication of actual or potential harm or abuse to a child;

- A breach of the *ChildFund Australia Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding Policy or Procedures*;
- A breach of the *Behavioural Guidelines for Supporter Visits*;
- Child pornography or child abuse 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 ChildFund Australia contact points:

- Country Safeguarding Focal Point;
- Country Director;
- Senior / Child Protection Advisor (Sydney);
- An Executive Team member or the CEO
- Using childsafeguarding@childfund.org.au
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You can inform in person, by phone or email. Verbal methods should be followed up with written notification as soon as possible. A report can also be made anonymously through our whistleblowing policy and procedures.

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.

As per our contractual requirements ChildFund Australia's executive team or their nominee will inform donors of reported child safeguarding concerns and incidences. All Child safeguarding concerns and incidences shall be reported to ChildFund Australia's board by the executive team and/or child safeguarding focal point.

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 incidents 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 *Child Safeguarding Policy (or the ChildFund Australia Code of Conduct, Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct or the Child Safeguarding Procedures)* will lead to disciplinary action which may involve termination of employment or contract. During the process of investigation, staff members may be stood down or restricted from all duties, or those duties involving contact with children and beneficiaries, or be placed on leave with or without pay, and/or suspended from all duties related to their employment.

ChildFund Australia assures that no action will be taken against those who inform of incidents or risks in good faith. ChildFund Australia's whistleblower policy and procedure outlines that all reports and information provided to ChildFund will be treated with respect and confidentiality and that ChildFund will take steps to ensure that the whistleblower can report without fear of retaliation. However, anyone who wilfully informs using false information or accusations may be subject to disciplinary action.

ChildFund Australia takes a survivor-centred approach to our incident response. Where a child or young person has experienced harm as a result of a child safeguarding incident or concern, ChildFund Australia will act within our sphere of abilities to respond to the survivor and their family's needs for safety and security. Following a needs assessment, ChildFund Australia will, to the best of our ability, in the contexts in which we work, facilitate referral and access for survivors and their families to services to meet immediate and ongoing needs. All actions to support the child and their family will be based on a determination of the best interest of the child. And all actions must uphold a 'do no harm principle, to ensure that any support provided will only act to protect, rather than make the child or young person more vulnerable. This may include, but is not limited to, the referral and facilitation of access to medical and psychosocial services. This includes responding to concerns, incidences or harm that may be connected to ChildFund program delivery.