

Child Safeguarding Policy Guidelines

October 2025

CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY GUIDELINES

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

1. Policy Statement

The Child Policy Safeguarding Guidelines embody ChildFund Alliance’s core values and commitments to children in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child¹, shaping our identity, accountability, standards, and culture to safeguard and advance children’s rights, well-being, and best interests.

Our safeguarding measures seek to prevent and respond to any actions or policies that may unintentionally or deliberately put children at risk of abuse.

Purpose

This policy establishes minimum child safeguarding standards for:

- All members of ChildFund Alliance
- Staff and representatives working under the Alliance

¹ [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(1989\)](#)

Key Requirements

- Each member organization must develop its own child safeguarding policy.
- These individual policies should be contextualized to local needs and realities.
- However, they must align with the overarching standards set by this Alliance-wide policy to ensure:
 - Consistency
 - Uniform procedures
 - Shared accountability across all members

Non-operational members without a policy can adapt this policy for their own use.

The framework ensures a unified child safeguarding approach yet remains adaptable to each member's cultural and legal context. Working with children, their families, and communities, ChildFund Alliance strives to ensure safe environments for children in every aspect of its work.

When Alliance Members partner with local organizations to deliver programs, they should support these partners in adapting standards to their activities. Members must ensure programs are safe for children and that risks are effectively managed. ChildFund Alliance maintains ZERO tolerance for child abuse, sexual exploitation, and abuse.

2. Guiding Principles

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

Dignity and worth of every child: We create safe environments that uphold the dignity and value of every child, regardless of ethnicity, race, language, religion, gender, ability, or group membership. Discrimination by representatives is prohibited.

Children's right to participate: We recognize children as capable contributors to their own 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 the right to protection from harm. Everyone shares responsibility for safeguarding children, and ChildFund Alliance ensures that all risks are appropriately mitigated.

2.1 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR SAFEGUARDING DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

Openness: We foster an environment where knowledge about Child Safeguarding is shared, and concerns can be raised and discussed openly.

Confidentiality: Safeguarding concerns and investigations are managed strictly on a need-to-know basis, with records and communications managed securely.

Timeliness: Due to the urgent nature of child safeguarding issues, concerns must be addressed promptly. Reporting procedures include mandatory timeframes for raising and responding to concerns.

Partnership: We collaborate with partner organizations to uphold safeguarding standards and collaborate with other agencies to promote Child Safeguarding within their organizations and communities.

Compliance: ChildFund Alliance members, staff, and representatives must adhere to this Child Safeguarding Policy and ensure their own policies meet or exceed its standards. Members must also comply with local laws, while recognizing that our policies may set higher standards than those required by law.

3. DEFINITIONS AND TERMS²

For this document, the term “**Alliance Members**” is used to refer to all of the individual Member Organizations 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 years³.

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:** Intentional use of physical force that results in harm, injury, or impairment.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Involves engaging a child or vulnerable person in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, are unable to consent to, or that violates laws or social taboos.
- **Emotional (or Psychological) Abuse:** Behaviors that harm a person’s self-worth or emotional well-being, such as verbal abuse, humiliation, intimidation, or isolation.
- **Neglect and Negligent Treatment:** Failure to provide for a person’s basic physical, emotional, educational, or medical needs.
- **Exploitation:** Using a person for profit, labor, or other advantage, often in ways that are harmful or violate their rights.

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.

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 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.

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 (e.g., 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 refers to unwanted aggressive behavior, often repeated, that exploits a real or perceived power imbalance. It can take place face-to-face, online, or via messages and 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, networks, 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 includes any sexual activity involving a child, regardless of local definitions of adulthood. It can involve actions such as employees soliciting children for sex or accessing child sexual abuse material.

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 (e.g., 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. 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 (i.e., 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

Documentation involves keeping records that confirm representatives have been informed about, understand, and agreed to the safeguarding policy. Supervision and documentation are also essential when representatives engage with ChildFund Alliance or Member programs, or interact with children and communities, including sponsored children.

5. ACCOUNTABILITY, MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1 ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability for child safeguarding exists at multiple levels. The board of directors, whether of ChildFund Alliance or an Alliance Member, is responsible for safeguarding in programs involving children. The Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance is responsible for ensuring the

policy is implemented across the Secretariat.

5.2 MONITORING

ChildFund Alliance and each Alliance Member will regularly monitor and review their safeguarding measures. They will document their child safeguarding procedures and codes of conduct to demonstrate active implementation, ensure compliance, and identify gaps for learning and improvement.

5.3 REPORTING AND RESPONDING

All staff and representatives of ChildFund Alliance and its Members are required to report any safeguarding concerns. Alliance Members must ensure their policies frame reporting as a mandatory duty, not an option. This includes situations such as:

- Observing or hearing about abuse or suspecting a case of abuse.
- Receiving an allegation of abuse from a staff member.
- A child disclosing an incident of abuse.

All Safeguarding concerns must be reported within 24 hours using clearly documented process within the Child Safeguarding policy.

An initial response will be made within 72 hours of the report by the designated person. Staff should remember that their role is to **report concerns, not investigate them**, and must maintain confidentiality by reporting only to the appropriate authority.

- 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 (e.g., 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 must provide child-friendly reporting mechanisms and ensure transparency and accountability. Guidance on these processes and tools is available in the Child Safeguarding procedural guidance accompanying this policy.

5.4 RECRUITMENT

Child 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.

Child Safeguarding 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
- behavior-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 must ensure that all staff and representatives are fully aware of, adhere to, and implement the Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Alliance Members should ensure that their recruitment, staff induction, training, and program management practices actively support this policy.

All representatives should remain vigilant to safeguarding risks, acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to promote strong practices, understand the safeguarding procedures, and act in line with them.

All ChildFund Alliance and Alliance Member staff and representatives must:

- Familiarize themselves with and follow local procedures for reporting and responding to child abuse⁴.
- Immediately report any concerns of child abuse or sexual exploitation according to local procedures.
- Respond to children at risk or who fear abuse, prioritizing the child's best interests and safety.
- 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:

- ChildFund Alliance staff: disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, in accordance with personnel policies and law.
- Local partners and representatives: actions up to and including termination of contracts or partnerships.
- Where applicable: legal action.

All representatives of ChildFund Alliance or an Alliance Member are obligated to report

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

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.

All representatives are obligated to report violations of this policy following safeguarding procedures, organizational policies, and local laws.

Concerns and breaches will be investigated under this policy and, if necessary, referred to government authorities for criminal investigation according to local law.

If a reported concern is investigated and found to be unsubstantiated, no action will be taken against the reporting person. Malicious or false reporting, however, will be investigated and addressed appropriately.

5.8 REVIEW OF POLICY

At least every three years (or sooner, if necessary) the Secretary General of ChildFund Alliance will appoint a lead to review and update the Policy and Procedures, with the review process set at the Secretary General's discretion.

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.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____