

Child Safeguarding Policy

Version 1.1

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Introduction

At ChildFund Australia, it is everyone's responsibility to keep children safe.

ChildFund Australia is committed to community and systems change through partnerships which enable vulnerable children and young people, in all their diversity, to assert and realise their rights. We protect and promote children's rights as described in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*. As a child rights focused organization, we will ensure all steps are taken to safeguard children and to create a culture of safeguarding at ChildFund Australia, in Country Offices and in partner organizations.

In this policy, child safeguarding refers to ChildFund Australia's duty of care to adopt preventative and responsive internal measures to **ensure our people, our programs, and our operations, do no harm to children and young people.**

Full compliance with this policy is mandatory.

Policy statement

ChildFund Australia is guided by the best interests of the child in all of our decision making. We protect and promote 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 and through our programs that strengthen and advance children's health, development and social and emotional wellbeing. We do this through systemic child rights advocacy. We also do this implicitly by ensuring that organisationally we do no harm in the way we work or through our people.

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 to protect children.

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 or violate children's rights, we advocate for their elimination.

Purpose

This *Child Safeguarding Policy* outlines the principles and commitments we adopt 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.

Scope

Safeguarding children is the responsibility of all those who participate in the operations and programs of ChildFund Australia. Hence forth referred to as ChildFund staff and representatives, which includes:

- Board members
- Staff (Australia and country offices, including volunteers and interns)
- Supporters¹
- Any person representing the organisation at ChildFund Australia's request such as:
 - ChildFund Ambassadors
 - Partner organisations
 - Consultants (both organisations and individuals)
 - Suppliers and Contractors

The *Child Safeguarding Procedures* clearly outline requirements for roles dependent on level of contact and potential impact on children.

Exclusions

Nil.

Policy principles

Best interests of the child: All actions of ChildFund Australia to support the child and their family will be based on a determination of the best interests of the child.

Child Rights: ChildFund Australia is committed to vulnerable children and young people, in all their diversity, to assert and realise their rights as laid out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Do No Harm: ChildFund Australia ensures that our people, operations and programs will only act to protect, rather than make a child or young person more vulnerable. This involves assessing risks to children, proactively monitoring risks and mitigating identified potential of harm.

Zero tolerance of violence against children, exploitation and abuse: ChildFund Australia has a zero tolerance approach to child exploitation and abuse and is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children.

Shared responsibility: Child Safeguarding is a shared responsibility for ChildFund Australia, our partners and individuals as child safeguarding is everybody's business.

¹ 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.

Inclusive safeguarding: ChildFund Australia is committed to inclusive child safeguarding. This means that safeguarding is inclusive of all children, regardless of their identity or status. This includes identities based on their sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social class, citizenship, refugee or other social status, even when some of these identities are restricted in national law.

Survivor-centred: 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. This may include referral and access for survivors and their families to services to meet immediate and ongoing needs.

Risk identification and management

Organisational risk

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 Policy*.

Project risk

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. This includes the consideration of intersecting vulnerabilities and ensuring we apply a Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) lens to risk assessments. Managing child safeguarding risks are managed at the project level and department level using a centralised approach.

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 and new partnerships. 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.

Roles and responsibilities

All ChildFund staff and representatives will:

- Comply with this policy and ChildFund Australia Code of Conduct.
- Comply with any ChildFund request for screening or assessment related to child safeguarding.
- Undertake training as requested by ChildFund on risk identification and management.
- Follow the Child Safeguarding Procedures which provide detail on levels of responsibility for role and level of contact with children.
- Be alert to child safeguarding risks and incidents in their work, travel, and online conduct.
- Ensure incidents that breach the Child Safeguarding Policy, Procedures, and Code of Conduct are reported through the appropriate mechanisms within **24-hour timeframe**.

The following responsibilities also apply.

All Board members, staff, volunteers and interns will:

- Seek continued and contemporary understanding of child safeguarding through regular training.

Partner organisations will:

- Provide or develop child safeguarding policies consistent with this policy and any relevant compliance standards, with assistance from ChildFund as required.

Reporting

To assist in the reporting of safeguarding concerns, ChildFund has established multiple entry points, any one of which can be used to report an incident. These are:

- Country Safeguarding Focal Point
- Country Director
- Child Protection Advisor (Sydney)
- an Executive Team member or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- the email address childsafeguarding@childfund.org.au

Reports must be made within **24 hours**.

ChildFund encourages the reporting of child safeguarding concerns and will ensure that no action will be taken against those who report incidents or risks in good faith. Our Whistleblower Policy and Procedure applies.

In Responding:

- Incidents will be formally investigated and responded to, in consultation with the Child Protection Advisor and/or a member of the Executive Team or the CEO.
- External reporting to relevant authorities will occur when there is a suspicion of a criminal offence.
- Concerns and incidents will be assessed, rated, and logged in the Child Safeguarding Register using de-identified language and the rating will determine how the ongoing or residual risk is managed.
- All Child safeguarding concerns and incidents will be reported to the ChildFund Board and, consistent with our contractual arrangements, to our donors.

We are committed to preventing a person from having contact with children through their work if they pose an unacceptable risk. To that end:

- During an investigation, staff may be stood down or restricted from all duties involving contact with children. Partnerships and other arrangements involving work for or on behalf of ChildFund may be suspended until the matter is resolved.
- Following a formal investigation, a breach of this or another relevant policy will lead to disciplinary action, which may involve termination of employment where such a relationship exists, or termination of the partnership or other arrangement between ChildFund and the relevant organisation or individual.

Definitions

CHILD OR CHILDREN

A child is any individual under the age of 18 years.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING

The **internal organisational** measures to reduce risk to ensure we are a safe organisation, program safely and respond appropriately; making sure our people, programs and operations do no harm to children.

CHILD SAFEGUARDING CONCERN

Any situation or behaviour that places a child at risk or that has the potential to harm a child, whether online or in person. This can include physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

CHILD PROTECTION

Protecting children who are experiencing harm or at risk of harm. For ChildFund Australia these are the **programmatic activities** we do that prevent and respond to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect of children.

CHILD ABUSE

Behaviours and treatment 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. Child abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, exploitation and exposure to family violence. Child abuse can occur online or in person.

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

Physical force used against a child that results in harm to the child. This includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling, poisoning, inappropriate restraint or confinement; or cultural practices that could cause long term distress, harm or health ramifications such as female genital mutilation.

- **EMOTIONAL (PSYCHOLOGICAL) 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 in line with their age and developmental stage. This includes threats, rejection, isolation, belittling, and name calling.

- **SEXUAL ABUSE**

When a child is forced or persuaded to take part in any type of sexual act. These can be contact or noncontact acts, online or offline, including sexualised language, voyeurism, inappropriate touching, forced removal of clothing, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration and exposing a child to sexual activity including pornography. It also includes creating, accessing, possessing and sharing child sexual abuse material and grooming. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are in a position of responsibility, trust or holding greater power.

- **NEGLECT**

The persistent 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. This generally includes health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions.

- **EXPLOITATION**

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, but is not limited to, unacceptable child labour, child sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse materials or trafficking including forced marriage.

- **EXPOSURE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

Children living in households where they are being exposed to repeated abuse perpetrated by one or more adults to another resulting in emotional abuse and /or the potential for other types of harm to occur to the child.

CHILD LABOUR

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

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL

Various forms of materials – photos, videos, audio, any other recording or representation - that depict acts of a child engaged in or depicted as being engaged in explicit sexual activity. This includes creating, accessing, possessing and sharing materials.

GROOMING

Building a relationship with someone with the goal of exploiting a child for sexual activities or to obtain sexual images or videos. This can occur in person or through electronic equipment.

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Child sexual and exploitation and abuse when it involves digital, internet, and communication technologies at some point. Includes all acts of a sexually exploitative nature carried out against a child that have, at some stage, connection to the online environment.

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.

Related policies and procedures

- Child Safeguarding Procedures including Behavioural Guidelines for Supporter Visits and Child Safeguarding Values for Supporters
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Behavioural Guidelines for Supporter Visits
- Child Safeguarding Values for Supporters
- Child Protection Approach
- Partner Engagement Policy
- Consent Policy
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy
- Risk Management Procedures
- Privacy Policy
- IT Policy

Other related documents

- [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#)
- [DFAT Child Protection Policy](#)
- [ACFID Code of Conduct](#)

Document control

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Revision history

Version Number	Date	Policy Sponsor	Authorised By	Remarks
1.0	November 2019	Rebekah Kofoed (Child Protection Advisor)	CEO	Review
1.1	September 2023	Lauren Miles (Child Protection Advisor)	CEO	Review