

Child Safeguarding Policy

WaterAid Australia

Document control

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1 Introduction

WaterAid believes that safe water, sanitation and hygiene are fundamental to life and everyone has a right to these basic services. Through our work WaterAid will come into contact with some of the world's most vulnerable and marginalised communities, where a commitment to child safeguarding is paramount.

The provision and delivery of safe water, sanitation and hygiene through our partners is just one way in which we come into contact with children. Our fundraising and advocacy activities, along with the rise in use of different communication channels also results in direct and indirect contact with children.

Adopting the appropriate level of duty of care to safeguard children is vital for the organisation. We must ensure that those benefiting from, or working with, WaterAid are not harmed in any way through contact with it. As such, we aim to be a child safe organisation in all that we do.

This document outlines the global standards that WaterAid has made in order to safeguard children through our work.

2 Purpose

- 2.1** WaterAid recognises that children have a right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse as enshrined in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- 2.2** By providing guidance and direction on the responsibility that WaterAid has to the children with whom its staff, volunteers, consultants, partners and supporters come into contact, the standards and associated guidance aim to reduce risks of child abuse.
- 2.3** All members must ensure that all WaterAid representatives are able to understand issues of child safeguarding, and their role and responsibility when interacting with children directly or indirectly.
- 2.4** Furthermore the standards in this policy aim to minimise organisational risks and ensure WaterAid's duty of care is covered through all members implementing procedures that are designed to safeguard children participating in or impacted by WaterAid programs and activities.
- 2.5** Further, the WaterAid Australia Child Safeguarding Procedures provides clear guidelines for WaterAid representatives to follow so that they can fulfil their child safeguarding responsibilities and meet the commitments in this policy. The Procedures sets out mandatory requirements for:
 - Preventative measures;
 - Risk Assessments;
 - Managing investigations; and
 - Clear reporting requirements should an incident or a concern around child abuse occur.

3 Policy Principles

- 3.1** WaterAid recognises that in line with our mission to transform lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities, that the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of children may be the most likely to suffer from abuse and be the least likely to speak up.
- 3.2 Rights of all children:** The standards therefore protect the rights of all children, including those who have a disability, those from minority ethnic / faith groups and regardless of gender, sexuality or status.
- 3.3 Best interest of the child:** All decision made by WaterAid regarding the welfare and protection of children will be made based on the principle of the best interest of the child.
- 3.4 Zero tolerance to child abuse:** WaterAid has zero tolerance to any form of child abuse by anyone who is working within its programs or represents WaterAid in any way. WaterAid will not permit anyone to have contact with or work with children or access communities with whom it works if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or well-being.
- 3.5 Shared Responsibility:** All WaterAid representatives have a shared responsibility for Child Safeguarding and WaterAid will ensure that all stakeholders are made aware of their responsibilities under this policy so that they are adequately equipped to safeguard children. Senior leaders are ultimately accountable for implementation and operation of this Policy. Senior leaders may delegate the day-to-day responsibility to others in their teams, although they remain ultimately responsible.
- 3.6 Risk management approach:** Whilst it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child abuse, WaterAid will ensure risks of child abuse are identified, monitored and reasonably mitigated against in the assessment of all its activities and throughout the project cycle.
- 3.7 Procedural fairness:** WaterAid will apply procedural fairness to all stakeholders when responding to concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse or policy and code non-compliance.

4 Scope

- 4.1** Child safeguarding is a global standard and the commitments made in this policy apply to all representatives of WaterAid and countries where WaterAid works.
- 4.2** WaterAid's country programs have a duty to determine specific national legislation or practice that should be applied in their specific context, however, these policy commitments are to be applied and adhered to across WaterAid.

4.3 The standards cover all WaterAid representatives which include:

- WaterAid staff (those employed and paid by WaterAid)
- WaterAid Board Members and volunteers (an unpaid worker)
- Consultants (those engaged by WaterAid on a contract for service rather than an employment contract)
- WaterAid partner organisations and sub-contractors
- Supporters and other participants on field visits organised by WaterAid.

5 Definitions

Child – WaterAid adopts the UNCRC definition of a child as anyone under the age of 18.

Child safeguarding – Preventative activities, initiatives and systems designed to safeguard children from any form of harm (including the risk of abuse and exploitation), or adverse impacts arising from their participation or interaction with programs and organisational operations.

Child abuse – as part of the global standards WaterAid recognises that there are 6 categories of child abuse:

- **Physical abuse** – When a child is hurt or injured by an adult or another child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning
- **Emotional abuse** – The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child, or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child's self-esteem or social competence.
- **Neglect** – The persistent failure or the deliberate denial to provide the child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.
- **Sexual abuse** – When a child is used, forced or enticed into taking part in sexual activities by an adult or significantly older child or adolescent. Sexual abuse involves contact and non-contact activities which encompasses all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing a child to online child sexual exploitation material, or taking sexually exploitative images or videos of children.
- **Bullying** – Usually includes one or all of the above defined categories of abuse and used as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time

- **Exploitation** – The abuse of children and their rights, including one or more of the following:
 - committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of abuse against a child
 - possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material
 - committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming
 - using a child for profit, labour, sexual gratification, or some other personal or financial advantage for the benefit of others that are to the detriment of the child's physical and mental health, education, or moral and social-emotional development.

Racism and other types of discrimination are also considered by WaterAid as forms of child abuse. Like other kinds of abuse they can harm a child physically and emotionally.

Access to children – Through our work there are many ways in which we come into contact with children. WaterAid has defined two categories in which contact could be made and they are:

- **Direct contact** is usually when there is face to face contact with a child, this may also include being within close proximity to a child or children. This can happen in a number of ways such as:
 - Delivery of safe water, sanitation and hygiene to a local community
 - Field trips to visit local communities, particularly schools and health centres
 - Organised events
 - Work experience in the office
 - Film and photography
- **Indirect contact** is when you are not physically close to a child but may still have an ability to communicate or impact a child or group of children in some way, including via marketing and communications, or access to personal information via research and program activities. Indirect contact can happen in a number of ways such as:
 - Emails
 - Social media (e.g. Facebook, twitter, YouTube)
 - Telephone
 - Written communication on our website
 - Design of programme work

6 Commitments

- 6.1** WaterAid will not knowingly allow a person to be in contact with or work with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety or wellbeing.
- 6.2** As part of this Policy a number of key commitments have been identified and incorporated in the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct outlines the expected behaviours of all WaterAid representatives when interacting with children. All staff, volunteers, consultants, supporters and participants on field visits organised by WaterAid are required to sign the Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (Annex A to this policy).

6.3 Child Safeguarding Focal Person

WaterAid will appoint a Child Safeguarding Focal Person (CSFP) (or more than one where appropriate such as where there are regional offices) anywhere that WaterAid has an in-country presence. The name, contact details and the role of the responsible officer will be clearly communicated to all staff and WaterAid representatives and kept updated.

The responsible officer/s will:

- identify and ensure that local, national and statutory legislation and/ or guidance is being appropriately adopted;
- monitor the implementation and compliance to the global standards and the WaterAid Australia Child Safeguarding Procedures;
- support in organising and delivering Child Safeguarding briefings and trainings;
- ensure all reported incidents are documented and escalated in accordance with the procedures;
- champion Child Safeguarding considerations at all times.

6.4 Reporting Child Safeguarding Concerns

All WaterAid representatives must immediately report any concerns, incidents or allegations relating to:

- child exploitation
- child abuse
- non-compliance with the Child Safeguarding Procedures or Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

Once any concerns, incidents or allegations have become known, the individual must follow the reporting guidelines outlined in the Child Safeguarding Procedures. A child safeguarding incident report form is located in the Procedures.

When a report has been made a preliminary investigation will take place to determine the nature of the allegation and the appropriate course of action to be taken. All reports will be acted upon in a timely manner. They will be treated seriously, in confidence and acted upon fairly and without bias. All decisions will be made in the best interest of the child.

Requirements to report to statutory or other bodies should be identified within each country.

6.5 Disciplinary Sanctions

Noncompliance with the WaterAid Australia Child Safeguarding Policy or Code of Conduct by a member of staff is treated as gross misconduct and subject to disciplinary action as per the disciplinary policy in each country. WaterAid may terminate an employment contract summarily and without notice if an employee breaches any provision in the Child Safeguarding Policy.

WaterAid may terminate a Contract with a consultant, sub-contractor, partner, volunteer or supporter immediately and without prejudice to any claim for damages on giving written notice to the person/organisation if the person is in breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy.

6.6 Child Safe Recruitment and Selection

Child safe recruitment and selection procedures are in place to minimise the risk of recruiting and retaining people who are likely to pose a threat to children. They include:

- An assessment of the position's level of child safeguarding risk and whether a Working with Children check of the candidate needs to be completed before finalising selection.
- In line with the WaterAid Australia Child Protection Procedures and national legislation, criminal records / police checks will be carried out on staff, volunteers, consultants and visitors to the field. In limited circumstances where it proves impossible to obtain a reliable criminal record check, a statutory declaration, or local legal equivalent, outlining efforts made to obtain a foreign police check, and disclosing any charges and spent convictions related to child exploitation, may be accepted instead.
- Verbal referee checks asking questions regarding the applicant's suitability to work with or be in contact with children.
- Behavioural interview questions regarding child safeguarding for roles identified as working with children.
- Signing on the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.

- A documented request for an applicant to disclose whether they have been charged with child exploitation offences and their response.

6.7 Awareness Raising and Training

All WaterAid Representatives are aware of child safeguarding requirements and the risks to children. All WaterAid representatives will receive information relating to WaterAid's global standards and WaterAid Australia's Child Protection Procedures during induction, briefings and regular training. Where needed, further training will be provided for relevant individuals, for example, responsible officers.

6.8 Assessing Child Safeguarding Risks

WaterAid considers and assesses the child safeguarding risks in all activities where representatives have direct or indirect contact with children and adopt strategies for managing perceived risks. Risk assessments are to be documented, reviewed/monitored and updated over the life of the project/activity. Guidance on how to conduct a child safeguarding risk assessment is provided in the Child Safeguarding procedures.

6.9 Working with Partners

WaterAid will work with partner organisations to build their capacity and ensure compliance with this Policy. WaterAid will include agreed requirements in partnership agreements, sub-contracts, MOUs as appropriate, and if the organisation is in breach the agreement may be terminated.

6.10 Use of Children's Images and Personal Information

The Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct and Procedures both outline expected behaviours and guidelines associated with the use of children's images and personal information. Additional information is outlined in the WaterAid Australia Ethical Photography Policy.

7 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if there is a significant change in legislation and/or practice.

8 Other Documents related to this Policy

- WaterAid Australia Child Safeguarding Procedures
- WaterAid Australia Ethical Photography Policy
- WaterAid Global Standard on Child Safeguarding

ANNEX A – Code of Conduct

WaterAid Australia Child Safe Code of Conduct

To be read and signed by all WaterAid Australia representatives.

WaterAid Australia is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and/or young people who may come in contact with WaterAid Australia Representatives. We support the rights of the child and will act to ensure a child safe environment is maintained. We encourage our staff, partners and volunteers to actively participate in building and maintaining a child safe environment.

I,----- [insert name], have read and understood WaterAid Australia's Child Safeguarding Policy and agree to adhere to the policy.

In particular I will:

- Treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- Not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts, where under the law(s) applicable to the child (including Part IIIA of the Australian Crimes Act 10914 (Cwlth) as amended), the child is below the age of consent or the act(s) are an offence under relevant laws.
- Wherever possible, ensure another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
- Not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- Not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible.
- Use any computers or mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium (see also WaterAid's Ethical Photography Policy).
- Not use physical punishment on children.

- Refrain from hiring children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or development stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- Comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour.
- Immediately disclose all charges, conviction and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occurs during my association with WaterAid.
- Immediately report concerns or allegations in accordance with WaterAid's procedures.
- be aware of behaviour and avoid actions or behaviours that could be perceived by others as child exploitation and abuse.

In the use of children's images for work-related purposes, I must:

- Before photographing or filming a child, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images.
- Before photographing or filming a child, obtain informed consent from the child and a parent or guardian of the child. As part of this I must explain how the photograph or film will be used, how long it will be kept and how the individual can ask for the photo to be removed.
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive.
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts.
- Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending the file electronically.

I understand that the onus is on me, as a person engaged by WaterAid Australia, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child abuse.

Signed:

Date: