POLICY AND CULTURE REVIEW

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ADVISORY GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

Safeguarding policies and practices across the international development and humanitarian sector have been under scrutiny in light of recent scandals.[1] WaterAid Australia has been proactive in seeking to review the organisation's safeguarding policies and culture with a view to strengthening them as required.

This report documents the key findings and recommendations from the review and provides detailed recommendations in relation to agreed policies in Annex 1.

The overall objectives of the review process are:

1. To review WaterAid Australia's relevant policies and procedures and make recommendations about how they can be improved in line with safeguarding best practice, including improving induction practices.
2. Review/assess WaterAid Australia's culture and awareness around safeguarding issues in Melbourne and the Country Programs WaterAid Australia manage (Timor-Leste, PNG and Cambodia).
3. Development of scenarios to facilitate discussions with staff and partners that draw out and emphasise safeguarding issues, including identifying grey areas that might require further discussion.
4. Explore in scenarios, the interaction of WaterAid Australia's policies and procedures for safeguarding with the legal and employment law requirements of the countries where they work (to the extent possible).

METHODOLOGY

The review used a mixed methodology approach. Methods included: a policy and procedure review, a staff survey, key informant interviews and a validation workshop.

Staff Survey
The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into WaterAid Australia's staff knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to safeguarding (across policies including code of conduct, anti-bullying and harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse). The survey results provided context to inform key informant interviews. The survey received 57 respondents, representing 57% of WaterAid Australia staff.

Key Informant Interviews
11 interviews were conducted with WaterAid Australia staff from the Australia, PNG, Cambodia and Timor-Leste offices. The interviewees were selected by WaterAid Australia to ensure a range of experience, teams and length of employment. The purpose of the key informant interviews was to explore in more detail particular areas and issues that emerged in the survey results and policy review.

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[1] https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/oxfam-timeline-haiti-scandal-unfolded/governance/article/1459242
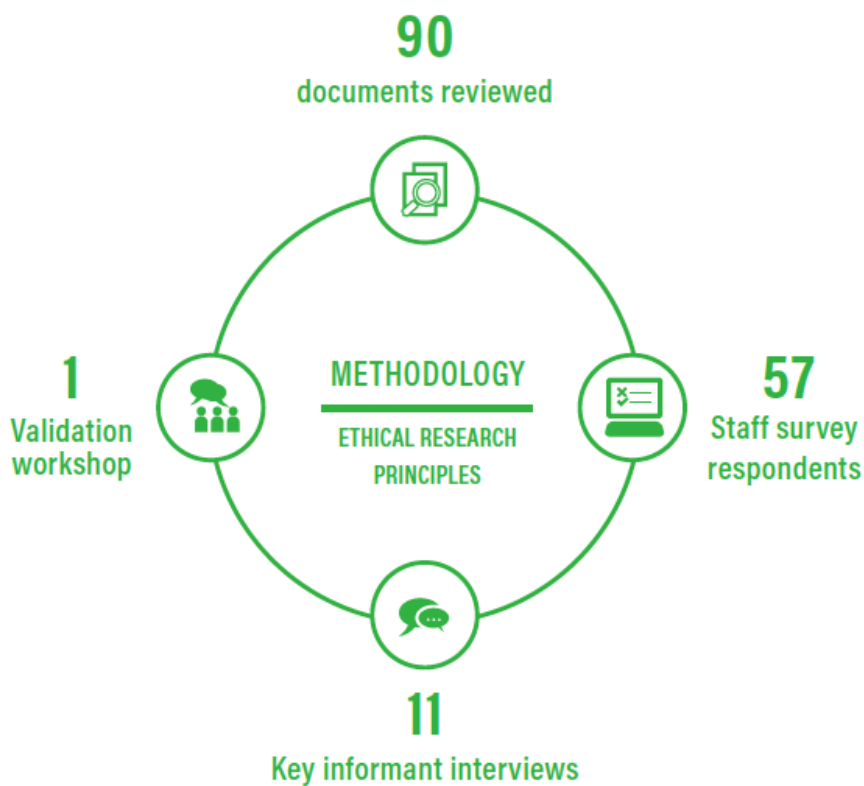https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/haiti-sex-scandal-leaves-mark-on-all-charities-20180225-p4z1ng.html

Validation workshop

15 WaterAid Australia employees participated in the validation workshop. The validation workshop used a range of interactive sessions and tools to test findings from the review and provided an opportunity for participants to discuss grey areas.

Policy and Procedure review

The Policies and Procedures review identified how the policies and existing procedures align with existing and emerging guidelines, minimum standards and best practice. 90 documents were reviewed. An overview of each WaterAid Australia policy document with associated recommendations for suggested amendments is provided in Annex 1.

Figure 1 below provides a summary of the review process.

90
documents reviewed

METHODOLOGY

ETHICAL RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

1
Validation workshop

57
Staff survey respondents

11
Key informant interviews

REVIEW FINDINGS: AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

This section presents the findings in relation to values and organisational culture, policy awareness and policy understanding.

VALUES AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

72% of interviewees mentioned the **importance of WaterAid values informing their attitudes and approaches to work**

Challenges exist across the sector of to embed organisational values into practice. This is an area where WaterAid models best practice and has a strong and positive organisational culture based on clear understanding of and commitment to WaterAid Australia's values. Although the key informant interview questions did not specifically include a question related to values, 72% of interviewees spontaneously mentioned their importance and talked about how the values informed the way they worked internally and externally with partners. In the absence of understanding the details of specific policies, staff would refer to the values as guiding principles for their work and as the standards to which they held other staff accountable.[2]

"We have WaterAid values and when performing my role, I try as much as possible to live by the values in the working environment and outside with the partners."[3]

It was also very clear that the staff have an extremely positive attitude to getting safeguarding right and, with a few exceptions, key informants in this review process confirmed the commitment is strong.[4] This commitment is reflected all the way to the top with over 80% of staff reporting that senior management has a good commitment to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse.[5] This provides a very positive environment and foundation for strengthening safeguarding practice.

"(protecting their personnel from harm and from harming others) cuts to the heart of what WaterAid is about. There is an explicit focus on working with the most marginalised and vulnerable and hand in glove is protecting people from harm....if people weren't committed to it, it wouldn't sit well with why they are working with the organisation.."[6]

Positive culture was also reflected in the fact that no staff independently raised concerns regarding power dynamics between international and national staff.

Despite the general positive organisational culture, WaterAid Australia was also found to have subcultures that exist in the country programs (both positive and negative). WaterAid Australia subcultures are

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[2] Interviews 1, 7, 8

[3] Interview 7

[4] Interview 3, 4, 5 6, 7, 8

[5] Survey results

[6] Interview 6

informed by a number of factors such as values, local cultures and norms, and country context. A potential challenge to meeting best practice is the tension that might exist between the overarching culture and values and the subcultures that exist reflecting local norms and cultural practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS — VALUES AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

1. Continue to build on the strong and positive organisational culture through the promotion of WaterAid Australia's values.
2. Create a culture of openness to discuss potential tension between WaterAid Australia's culture and values and subcultures that exist.
3. In each context, request the senior leadership team to identify potential risks based on the norms and cultures within their offices that might contradict or conflict with overarching cultural values and develop plans to mitigate them.

POLICY AWARENESS

95% of WaterAid staff are **aware that WaterAid has policies on staff conduct that relate to safeguarding** [7]

The relevant policies and related documents are detailed in the table below.

For WaterAid Australia relevant policy and procedural documents include:	For WaterAid Australia relevant practices documents include:
• Global Code of Conduct; • WaterAid Australia Programme Agreement; • WaterAid Australia: Reporting serious malpractice and dealing with fraud; • WaterAid Australia People Policy; • Country Programme People Manuals for Cambodia and Timor-Leste; • WaterAid Australia Induction Package.	• Recruitment processes; • Induction processes for new staff; • Training; • Reporting; • Reviews.

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[7] Safeguarding includes all actions taken by organisations to protect their staff and personnel from harm and from harming others.

Whilst 95% of survey respondents are aware that WaterAid Australia has policies on staff conduct, this awareness mostly relates to child protection policies. The strong understanding of the importance and application of child protection policies reflects recent work to improve practice in this area. The existence and knowledge of content of other safeguarding policies such as sexual harassment, bullying and whistleblower policies is lower (see below). 20% of respondents are not sure if WaterAid has any policies related to broader safeguarding (beyond child protection).

- 63% of respondents are aware that WaterAid has policies in relation to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
- 45% of respondents are aware that WaterAid has policies in relation to mandatory reporting of suspected cases of sexual exploitation and abuse
- 61% of respondents are aware that WaterAid has policies in relation to sexual harassment
- 60% of respondents are aware that WaterAid has policies in relation to bullying
- 34% of respondents are aware that WaterAid has policies in relation to whistleblower protection

POLICY UNDERSTANDING

Understanding of the content of the policies is inconsistent and there are several areas perceived by staff to be unclear. The policies that are clearest to staff relate to child protection and fraud that are out of the scope of this review, but their repeated mention in interviews to explain process or give examples demonstrates the success of socialising and implementing these policies and on the flip side the lack of understanding of the content and relevance of other policy documents. Least understood is WaterAid Australia's commitment to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and protection of whistleblowers. This is understandable in the context of weak policy content in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse and the absence of an explicit policy.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO POLICY UNDERSTANDING?

Lack of policy and practice guidance in key areas
WaterAid Australia does not have a PSEA policy and related provisions within the code of conduct are weak. There appears to be no current provision for sharing the code of conduct with community members, nor recognising within it the imbalance of power.

Different understandings of key terms
Different contexts lend to different interpretations and applications of key terms. Several interviews highlighted the challenges in applying an Australian interpretation of a concept, such as bullying or sexual harassment, to a country program context where the interpretation and understanding is vastly different.

"It is very context specific how behaviours are interpreted and practised."[8]

In addition, some terminology might be acceptable to discuss in one context and not in another.[9]

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[8] Interview 8
[9] Interviews 5, 7

Cultural norms

Grey areas were identified as to what happens when behaviour that is generally accepted in country context contradicts WaterAid Australia's Safeguarding policies and procedures.

"Working cross culturally if in country context – you see something that is not quite right but in context paying for sex is really common – is it okay for a national staff member to do that but not an international [staff member]?"[10]

Lack of translated policies

Policies on staff conducted are generally not translated into local language from national staff (with the exception of the Child Protection policy in Cambodia). 75% of staff reported that policies had not been translated or were not sure if they have been translated.

"One thing for your awareness, with our staff, some of our staff… do not understand English. So there is a communication barrier when communicating the policies to the staff... We don't have copies in our language now."[11]

Lack of clarity as to when the Code of Conduct applies

Staff raised questions as to whether the behaviour set out in the code of conduct was applicable to staff 24/7 or whether it was just during work hours. This led to a lack of clarity if behaviour was acceptable, unacceptable and / or should be reported if outside of working hours, or work premises.

"If staff behaved inappropriately outside work, is it a personal issue or business issue?"[12]

RECOMMENDATIONS — POLICY AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

1. Discuss with WaterAid at a global level some of the overarching policies that can be strengthened (such as Code of Conduct).
2. Develop a policy on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse as per recommendations in Annex 1.
3. Make appropriate amendments to policies as per recommendations in Annex 1 to ensure that areas of ambiguity are clearly addressed.
4. Use scenarios to explore understanding and ensure shared interpretation of terminology and issues.
5. Consider translating policies into local languages.

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[10] Interview 5
[11] Interview 7
[12] Interview 1

REVIEW FINDINGS: PRACTICE

This section presents the findings in relation to putting policy into practice. It reviews the critical stages in a staff member's journey in WaterAid Australia and the associated opportunities to raise awareness and understanding and improve practice. The section considers recruitment and induction, training and ongoing support and reporting processes.

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND INDUCTION

51% of survey respondents reported that **WaterAid Australia's commitment to protecting their personnel from harm and from harming others was clear during the recruitment process** (in job advert or interview)

47% of survey respondents reported that they had received an **induction process that included prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and bullying**

There is no consistent practice across WaterAid Australia to include a stated commitment to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in recruitment and selection processes. Although 51% of surveyed personnel reported that WaterAid's commitment to safeguarding was clear in recruitment and selection, no staff member interviewed during this review provided an example of this commitment being provided in job descriptions or discussed during their hiring process.

All WaterAid Australia staff had induction processes that included safeguarding to some extent, however, induction practices are inconsistent. Some offices such as Cambodia have an induction process that includes orienting staff on key policies, providing a brief training with power point presentations and requiring staff to sign the child protection policy.[13] In other offices when new staff are recruited they are told the policies exist and responsibility for reviewing and understanding the content lies with the new staff member.

"When I started we didn't go through policies in induction, we were told of the policies but it was our responsibility to read them. I don't think staff then do that."[14]

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[13] Interview 1
[14] Interview 9

> **Signing Safeguarding Policies**
>
> All staff reported signing a Child Protection Code of Conduct. No staff reported signing any other policy . The Child Protection Code of Conduct is shared with consultants and volunteers and they are required to sign the document and adhere to the standards for taking pictures of children. Partners are expected to have a child protection policy (and to use WaterAid's policy if they don't have one). No partners are currently expected to demonstrate meeting standards in relation to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS — RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND INDUCTION

1. Amend the 'Recruitment / Selection' and 'Induction' sections of the People policy as per recommendations in Annex 1.
2. Amend Induction policy as per recommendations in Annex 1.
3. Articulate WaterAid Australia's commitment to safeguarding more clearly in job descriptions and assess this during the selection process.
4. Require signature of the overarching Code of Conduct (and related commitments to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse) in addition to the child protection policy code of conduct.
5. Consider providing basic training on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) or require staff to complete online training (available in Annex 2).
6. Adopt across all offices some of the best practice from WaterAid offices such as Cambodia with respect to induction processes – including providing induction training slides covering critical content for new staff.

STAFF TRAINING AND ONGOING SUPPORT

39% of respondents stated that **WaterAid raises staff awareness about prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse** by training during service

Very few staff have received follow up support or training on safeguarding issues including prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse during their time at WaterAid Australia. Of those interviewed 18% (2 interviews) referred to some training to support their understanding or application of relevant safeguarding policies. 39% of staff said that they received training on PSEA during service, and 48% of staff said they had engaged in conversations with other staff and/or supervisors. In some cases, staff have had supportive conversations with managers, but these are largely in response to issues after they have occurred rather than happening in a preventative space.[15]

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[15] Interviews 3, 5

"I had a conversation with the country director about sexual harassment and how we can do better after he witnessed sexual jokes"[16]

"if someone could go through the policies with all staff and then everyone understands what is acceptable and not and then we can hold people accountable - they shouldn't be penalised if they haven't been trained and don't understand policy."[17]

Importance of training

NGOs, DFID, the Charity Commission and safeguarding experts in the UK convened a Safeguarding Summit on 05 March 2018. A joint statement was released after this meeting outlining five specific pledges to improve safeguarding standards[18] including the recognition for strong codes of conduct and standards throughout the employment lifecycle. **This means ensuring codes of conduct are not just introduced as part of the onboarding of new staff but are regularly reinforced through regular training and performance management**.[19] The CHS Alliance PSEA Implementation Quick Reference Handbook also recommends annual refresher training is provided to all staff to support PSEA measures.

RECOMMENDATIONS – STAFF TRAINING AND ONGOING SUPPORT

1. Provide regular training on safeguarding issues using best practice materials (see Annex 2; also see Serve with Pride: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e62UExSXxZE)
2. Find opportunities to have informal catch ups within existing tools and mechanisms – brown bag lunches, reflection days etc.
3. Follow the training and socialisation process for child protection policy.

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[16] Interview 3

[17] Interview 9

[18] https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2018/03/ngos-and-government-jointly-commit-to-improving-safeguarding-standards

[19] Each of the five pledges has an associated Working Group due to report at the end of April 2018, including 'Safeguards throughout the employment cycle'. **Further guidance about good practice can therefore be expected in the coming months.**

REPORTING

57% feel comfortable or very comfortable reporting an issue or concern

The review suggests that whilst there is evidence that inappropriate behaviour is being reported within WaterAid Australia (see text box 'Survey results') there is room to improve reporting processes.

Some staff were clear on the reporting process and felt comfortable, but many staff described an unclear reporting process. Staff were often aware that they report to their line manager, however were unaware of what the process was from there. In many cases staff expressed that were not aware of the investigative process, or if an outcome was ever reached in a reported issue.[20]

"Sometimes when we report something we don't hear back on the outcomes – I think you need to know something is being done even if details are confidential"[21]

Survey results

During their time at WaterAid Australia, 7% of respondents to the survey have heard about or witnessed sexual exploitation and abuse. 14% of respondents have heard about or witnessed sexual harassment. 28% of respondents have heard about or witnessed bullying.

Of those respondents above, 57% of respondents who witnessed any of the above reported the incidence or took action. 33% did not report or take action. Reasons for this included not thinking it was their place, they only overheard the incident rather than witness it, or were not sure if the behaviour was classified as bullying.

Some stakeholders indicated that the whistle-blower mechanism is unclear.[22] Staff indicated that they need to feel secure when reporting, and to feel secure the process needs to be clear, particularly in a small organisation. There is also a concern that staff should report to their managers or the CEO (that reperesnt positions of power and may deter reporting).

"If not a good relationship with manager, it is difficult to raise and to then go straight to CEO, seems very intimidating."[23]

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[20] Interview 5, 9
[21] Interview 6
[22] Interviews 5, 9, 6, 7, 8
[23] Interview 5

Reporting Channels

One of the five commitments made in the March Safeguarding Summit in the UK is to ensure concerns are heard and acted upon through a whilstleblowing process which protects anonymity and safety and ensures ways of reporting are actively promoted.[24] Many organisations are now seeking to open up as many channels as possible for concerns to be raised which includes the line manager, senior management (in-country and at the regional and global levels), HR, an Ethics or Internal Audit Office. Some INGOs (e.g., Plan International) have already implemented an outsourced Whistleblower hotline service which is typically a 24 x 7 365 day a year telephone and email service which staff can contact in confidence to raise their concerns.

RECOMMENDATIONS — REPORTING

1. Update the Reporting serious malpractice and dealing with fraud policy as per recommendations in Annex 1.
2. Consider providing alternative channels for reporting beyond line management and CEO positions.
3. Ensure there is a clear feedback process to staff who report concerns on what action is being taken.

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[24] https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2018/03/ngos-and-government-jointly-commit-to-improving-safeguarding-standards

RECOMMENDATIONS

WaterAid has demonstrated itself as a leader in embedding values into organisation culture, and as a result has a strong positive attitude to continuing to improve policy and culture in relation to safeguarding. However, the review identified that policies and practice can be improved. The following recommendations provide focus for improvements.

VALUES AND ORGANISATIONS CULTURE

1. Continue to build on the strong and positive organisational culture through the promotion of WaterAid Australia's values
2. Create a culture of openness to discuss potential tension between WaterAid Australia's culture and values and subcultures that exist.
3. In each context, request the senior leadership team to identify potential risks based on the norms and cultures within their offices that might contradict or conflict with overarching cultural values and develop plans to mitigate them.

POLICY AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

4. Discuss with WaterAid at a global level some of the overarching policies that can be strengthened (such as Code of Conduct) and explore potential for a PSEA policy.
5. Develop a policy on sexual exploitation and abuse as per recommendations in Annex 1.
6. Make appropriate amendments to policies as per recommendations in Annex 1 to ensure that areas of ambiguity are addressed clearly.
7. Use scenarios to explore understanding and ensure shared interpretation of terms and issues.
8. Consider translating policies into local languages

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND INDUCTION

9. Amend the 'Recruitment / Selection' and 'Induction' sections of the People policy as per recommendations in Annex 1.
10. Amend Induction policy as per recommendations in Annex 1.
11. Articulate WaterAid Australia's commitment to safeguarding more clearly in job descriptions and in interview conversations.

12. Require signature of the overarching Code of Conduct (and related commitments to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse) in addition to the child protection policy code of conduct.
13. Consider providing basic training on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) or require staff to complete on-line training (available in Annex 2).
14. Adopt across all offices some of the best practice from WaterAid offices such as Cambodia with respect to induction processes – including providing induction training slides covering critical content for new staff.

STAFF TRAINING AND ONGOING SUPPORT

15. Provide regular training on safeguarding issues using best practice materials (see Annex 2; also see Serve with Pride: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e62UExSXxZE
16. Find opportunities to have informal catch ups within existing tools and mechanisms – brown bag lunches, reflection days etc.
17. Follow the training and socialisation process for child protection policy.

REPORTING

18. Update the Reporting serious malpractice and dealing with fraud policy as per recommendations in Annex 1.
19. Consider providing alternative channels for reporting beyond line management and CEO positions.
20. Ensure there is a clear feedback process to staff that report concerns on what action is being taken.