

Principles of Child Safeguarding

Keeping children safe

Document control

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Principles of Child Safeguarding

1. Introduction

- 1.1** WaterAid is committed to the safeguarding and wellbeing of all individuals impacted by its work, including children. WaterAid will not tolerate its employees, volunteers, consultants, partners or any other representatives associated with the delivery of its work engaging in, or being subjected to, any form of exploitation or abuse. WaterAid adopts the definition of a child as **anyone under the age of 18**. This applies to all WaterAid's activities in every country where WaterAid works, regardless of the legal age of adulthood locally.
- 1.2** Children have a right to be protected from the following forms of violence and abuse:
- **Physical abuse:** when a child is hurt or injured by an adult or another child.
 - **Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child.
 - **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs.
 - **Sexual abuse:** when a child or young person is used, forced or enticed into taking part in sexual activities.
 - **Exploitation:** refers to the abuse of children and their rights.
- 1.3** WaterAid may be in direct or indirect contact with children through its work. Both may present the opportunity for abuse or exploitation; abuse can be perpetrated in person or online. Everyone associated with WaterAid has a responsibility to minimize the risks of abuse to children.
- **Direct contact** involves face-to-face contact or being in close proximity with a child or children (e.g. trips to local communities and schools, events, WASH education, work experience, film, photography and research).
 - **Indirect contact** involves communicating with a child or children without direct physical contact (e.g. through social media, email, telephone, written communication, websites).
- 1.4** Everyone has a role to play in ensuring that children are safeguarded through WaterAid's work. All WaterAid representatives must:
- Be familiar with the [Global Safeguarding Policy](#) and [Global Code of Conduct](#)
 - Be aware of abuse and the risks to children, and be vigilant
 - Be clear about their responsibilities to prevent harm and protect children
 - Report any concerns about actual or possible abuse or harm to children.

WaterAid's reporting process and response procedure is outlined in the [Global Safeguarding Internal Operating Procedures](#). While the process is the same whether the incident involves a child or adult, the safety of children is paramount, and the Global Safeguarding Team must be notified within 24 hours.

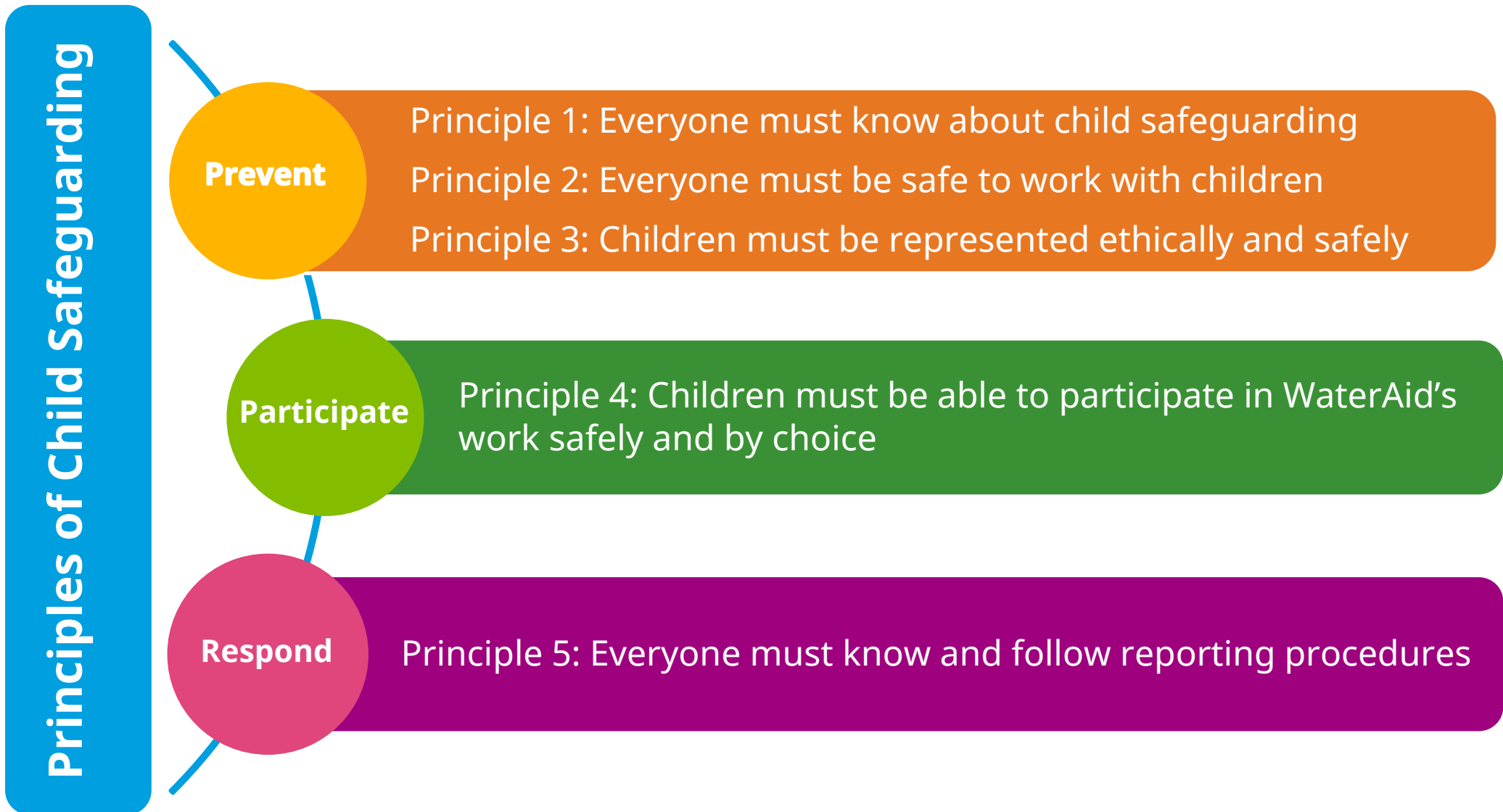
- 1.5** WaterAid works across many different cultures and contexts. We recognise that children and childhood are viewed and treated differently by societies in the countries that we work in. WaterAid approaches its work with cultural sensitivity and respect, understanding the need for contextually relevant responses. However, cultural or traditional practices that harm children are never acceptable, this includes examples of practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation.

2. Aims of the five principles

- 2.1** We believe all people including children have the right to live their lives free from sexual violence and harassment. The five principles of child safeguarding aim to provide guidance to WaterAid staff and representatives to reduce risks and to work safely and in the best interests of children. They are underpinned by WaterAid's Global Safeguarding Policy, Global Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and procedures (see Section 4).

- 2.2** The five principles fall into three categories:

- **Prevent:** WaterAid staff and representatives understand issues of child safeguarding, are safe to work with children and represent children safely in all areas of its work.
- **Participate:** The rights of children are protected and enhanced through projects and programmes, with children able to meaningfully and safely participate and report any safeguarding concerns.
- **Respond:** WaterAid staff and representatives know how, and feel confident to report a child safeguarding concern, and understand what will happen once a report has been made.



3. Five Principles of Child Safeguarding

Principle 1: Everyone must know about child safeguarding

- All representatives of WaterAid must understand child rights, know the types of child abuse that may be committed and report any concerns. WaterAid adopts a zero-tolerance approach towards inaction in respect of any form of abuse or exploitation of children and will always act in the best interests of a child.
- All WaterAid staff, consultants and trustees must complete the Let's Keep Children Safe e-Learning module every two years. This includes those who will have no expected contact with children in their role and other representatives determined by federation members.
- All WaterAid staff, consultants and trustees are required to sign a Child Safeguarding Declaration found in the e-Learning module or federation member's Ethical Image Policy. In some instances, federation members may also require volunteers to sign the Child Safeguarding Declaration.
- Any individual (non-staff) representing WaterAid in their work or visiting a WaterAid project must be briefed on safeguarding by their local Safeguarding Focal Point and sign the Child Safeguarding Declaration prior to any contact with children.
- Safeguarding Focal Points must attend advanced child safeguarding training.
- New staff must have introductory child safeguarding training/briefings and all staff must have refresher training every 2 years.
- All partner organisations must have appropriate child safeguarding training in place for their staff and other representatives determined by federation members. This should be reviewed every 2 years.
- Safeguarding information should be delivered to adults and children in the communities in which WaterAid works, to ensure local knowledge and awareness on child safeguarding. This includes engaging those in local and traditional authorities and should be adapted to suit the context (e.g. billboards, radio or television broadcasts, distribution of pamphlets/leaflets).

Principle 2: Everyone must be safe to work with children

- WaterAid staff have a responsibility to uphold the Global Code of Conduct. Staff must respect everyone's human rights, including those of children, and ensure that relationships are not abusive, exploitative or corrupt.
- It is forbidden for WaterAid staff to have sex with anyone under 18 years old.
- WaterAid's approach to safer recruitment aims to prevent people who may pose a risk to children from working with the organisation, with child safe messaging included in job advertisements and the interview process. All staff must sign the

Personal Self-Disclosure Form at the point of recruitment. Anyone presenting an unacceptable risk to children may be suspended or dismissed.

- WaterAid operates a Global Disclosure Policy (due to be published January 2022) and obtains relevant disclosure checks for all WaterAid staff. WaterAid representatives who have direct and indirect contact with children in their roles may be required to undertake additional disclosure or criminal record checks in line with local and national law.
- Any work experience scheme, event or activity for children must include a thorough risk assessment which Safeguarding Focal Points can support with. Depending on the participation of children and level of risk, these may need to be reviewed by the Global Safeguarding Team and signed off by an appropriate Director. If you are unsure, contact the Global Safeguarding Team for guidance.
- WaterAid supports partner organisations to adopt appropriate child safeguarding standards and meet contractual commitments. WaterAid's [Safeguarding Partnership Code of Conduct](#) and [Safeguarding Partner Self-Assessment Tool](#) are available to support Partners to understand these requirements.

Principle 3: Children must be represented ethically and safely

- WaterAid respects the rights, needs and dignity of children in all aspects of its work. Strict guidance on how media content (film, photography, story gathering) involving children should be gathered, used and stored is outlined in federation member's Ethical Image Policy. This includes getting informed assent¹ from children, consent from their parents/guardians and provides guidance on what can and cannot be included in the image or film footage.
- Any staff or representative undertaking research on behalf of WaterAid that involves children must receive child safeguarding training and sign the Child Safeguarding Declaration. Research involving children must also be subject to a thorough risk assessment.
- Children and their parents/guardians must provide informed assent/consent to participate in research, and ideally, be consulted in the research design phase. Informed assent/consent should be taken appropriately (recorded or written) and stored securely.
- In line with its Data Protection Policy, WaterAid does not actively market to children. However, during its work, children may be part of a project, event, campaign or fundraising activity. All data must be processed and stored in

¹ Assent is agreement given by a child or young person not legally empowered to give consent. This is not a fixed age but is the age at which an individual child can understand what is being asked of them and give an opinion.

accordance with national and regional data protection laws, and in the EU, in line with General Data Protection Regulations.

- Children who fundraise for WaterAid, alongside the organisers of the activity, should be involved in a discussion on how to fundraise safely. Advice and guidance from their school, institution or regulatory body (if one exists) should also be followed.
- No harm must be caused to any child in the collecting, storing and using of their personal data. Children have the right to withdraw their consent, at any time and must know how to do so.

Principle 4: Children must be able to participate in WaterAid's work safely and by choice

- WaterAid promotes the inclusive participation of children in its work, when this is meaningful *for them*. Their views and rights must be respected. Participation is about children having the opportunity to use their voices and express their views, influence decision-making and achieve change.
- WaterAid values all children and young people's involvement and thinks carefully about how and when to involve them in programmes, activities and events, making participation accessible to all. The participation of children and young people must be on the basis that their involvement will have a direct positive impact on their lives and must be informed by a risk management approach.
- Projects must consider the safety of children at different ages and stages of their development in all parts of the project cycle. This is especially important with the design of WASH facilities.
- Children, parents and guardians must participate willingly in WaterAid's projects and activities. Participation must be free from coercion or enticement and children must be able to change their minds at any stage and withdraw their consent to participate with no consequences.
- WaterAid's behavioural expectations of those working with children are outlined in WaterAid's Global Code of Conduct and [Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Code of Practice](#).
- Any WaterAid representative planning on involving children or young people in their work must undertake a risk assessment, consult with a Safeguarding Focal Point and get approval by a relevant senior member of staff. A plan for emergencies or incidents must be distributed to those involved.
- WaterAid will create a safe environment for the inclusion and participation of all children, regardless of age, ability or developmental stage. As in all WaterAid's work, our approach is non-discriminatory, and we encourage the voices of all children, recognising and celebrating difference.

- WaterAid will monitor and review its work with children, ensuring their input shapes changes that are needed and that this is fed back to them. Questions on safeguarding issues should be included in monitoring and support visits.
- All participants involved in an activity (including children and adults), must have a safeguarding briefing including details of how to report a concern, who to report to and what happens after a report has been made. Reporting mechanisms must be accessible and understandable to children.
- WaterAid will not employ children under the age of 18 unless allowed under national legislation. Any employment of children should still be subject to a risk management approach.
- Programme and Project Managers must complete risk assessments for all new projects. Where children are directly or indirectly involved, or impacted by a project/programme, risks to children must be identified and managed.

Principle 5: Everyone must know and follow reporting procedures

- The safety and welfare of children is paramount. WaterAid will always act in the best interests of the child and any immediate protection or medical attention is WaterAid's first concern.
- WaterAid takes a survivor-centred approach which extends to children. WaterAid is accountable to children in its safeguarding and children should always be aware of how they can raise a complaint or concern about WaterAid's staff, Partners or work.
- WaterAid has clear systems in place to manage safeguarding incidents to minimise further impact and trauma. There may be cases where WaterAid cannot or should not respond directly and in these situations WaterAid refers reports to the relevant local organisation to ensure any child at risk will receive the support needed.
- WaterAid's reporting procedure is outlined in the [Procedure for Reporting Malpractice and Breaches to the Global Code of Conduct](#) and the process for managing and investigating reports is outlined in the Global Safeguarding Internal Operating Procedures. Child safeguarding concerns are reported through line management or directly to the Global Safeguarding Team. Reporting procedures apply to all WaterAid staff, consultants, volunteers and trustees.
- The Global Safeguarding Team must be made aware of any incident involving a child within 24 hours of the incident being reported to a WaterAid representative.
- Children have a right to privacy and the highest level of confidentiality should be maintained when responding to a safeguarding concern. Information should always be shared on a need-to-know-basis only and kept secure.

- If the allegation involves a partner organisation on a *non*-WaterAid project, an appropriate manager within the partner organisation should be informed, unless this is likely to place a child or children at further risk. Outcomes must be reported as this may also identify gaps or issues with the partner organisation's approach to safeguarding which may require action by WaterAid.
- If reporting an allegation to a partner might place a child at risk, seek advice from statutory authorities or other agencies identified as being able to support on child protection matters.
- WaterAid staff may be faced with child safeguarding issues in the communities in which they work, for example domestic violence, abuse by authorities, commercial sexual exploitation. It is WaterAid's responsibility to ensure the safety of the child by passing relevant information to the appropriate local support service, or work with local specialised groups to support.
- All WaterAid country offices have a safeguarding map that outlines referral mechanisms for support and statutory requirements for reporting safeguarding concerns to government or other bodies (e.g. law enforcement, social welfare). Reports that breach the local criminal code must be reported or referred to relevant authorities.
- Safeguarding reports involving children are subject to case review by the Global Safeguarding Team. We are committed to learning from safeguarding cases and adapting our policies and procedures accordingly.

4. Supporting policies and documents

Safeguarding	Other departments
Global Safeguarding Policy	Global Code of Conduct
Global Code of Conduct definitions	Reporting Malpractice and Breaches to the Global Code of Conduct
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults at WaterAid (Code of Practice)	Ethical Image Policy (Member specific)
Global Safeguarding Internal Operating Procedure	Research Policy
Global Safeguarding Standard	Data Protection Policy
Global Child Safeguarding Standard	Global Policy for Obtaining and Providing References
Global Safeguarding Strategy 2020-2022	
Safeguarding Partnership Code of Conduct	
Safeguarding Partner Self-Assessment Tool	

All documents and other safeguarding resources can be found on the [Safeguarding Hub](#) on The Spring.