

Principles of Child Safeguarding

Keeping children safe

Document control

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1 Introduction

1.1 WaterAid is fully committed to the safeguarding and wellbeing of all individuals it encounters, including children. 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.

Everyone associated with WaterAid has a responsibility to minimize the risks of harm to children. WaterAid will not tolerate its employees, volunteers, consultants, partners, contractors or any other representatives associated with its work, engaging in, or being subjected to, any form of harm including sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment (SEAH).

1.2 Children have a right to be protected from all forms of violence and abuse. This includes:

- **Physical abuse:** when a child is deliberately hurt or injured by an adult or another child (this could include hitting, burning, inappropriate restraint).
- **Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child (this could include withdrawing care and affection, making threats, degrading punishments).
- **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs (this could include withholding food, water, medicine or a failure to protect a child from a known danger).
- **Sexual abuse and sexual harassment:** when a child is used, forced or enticed into taking part in sexual activities (this could include penetrative acts such as rape) or is subject to sexually inappropriate comments or touching (this could include receiving or being asked to send sexually explicit photos or emails or phone messages).
- **Exploitation:** when a child is exploited in exchange for money, gifts, affection, access to food, water or opportunities (this could include the child being coerced and/or manipulated into harmful acts e.g. unsafe work, sexual activity, or becoming a victim of trafficking in persons).
- **Harmful discriminatory practices:** These are acts which may be committed against children, regularly, over long periods of time resulting in society beginning to consider them acceptable (this could include forced marriage, or female genital mutilation).

Full descriptions of terminology can be found in the Global Code of Conduct Definitions.

1.3 WaterAid may be in direct or indirect contact with children through its work. Both may present the opportunity for harm to occur as abuse can be directly

perpetrated, for example through in-person contact, or indirectly, for example online.

- **Direct contact** involves in-person contact or being in close proximity with a child or children (e.g. trips to local communities and schools, fundraising 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).

1.4 Everyone has a role to play in ensuring that WaterAid upholds its *Do No Harm* approach. All WaterAid staff and representatives must therefore:

- Be familiar with the Principles of Child Safeguarding, Global Safeguarding Policy and Global Code of Conduct.
- Be clear about their responsibilities to prevent harm and protect children.
- Report any concerns about actual or possible abuse or harm to children to WaterAid.

WaterAid's reporting process is outlined in the Global Procedure for Reporting Malpractice and Breaches to the Global Code of Conduct. The Global Safeguarding Team's process for responding to and managing safeguarding concerns is outlined in the Global Safeguarding Internal Operating Procedure. All concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of children, must be reported to the Global Safeguarding Team within 24 hours.

2 Aims of the Five Principles of Child Safeguarding

2.1 WaterAid's five principles of child safeguarding provide guidance to staff and representatives to reduce risks and to work safely in the best interests of children.

2.2 The five principles fall into three categories:

- **Protect and 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 upheld through projects and programmes. Children are able to meaningfully and safely participate and report safeguarding concerns through any of WaterAid's confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms.
- **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.

Principles of Child Safeguarding

**Protect
and
Prevent**

Principle 1: Everyone must know about child safeguarding
Principle 2: Everyone must be safe to work with children
Principle 3: Children must be represented ethically and safely

Participate

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

Respond

Principle 5: Everyone must know and follow reporting procedures

3 Five Principles of Child Safeguarding

Principle 1: Everyone must know about child safeguarding

- WaterAid staff and representatives must understand child safeguarding and be able to confidentiality uphold the rights of all children. All WaterAid staff, board members and external parties for whom it applies, must complete the Safeguarding e-Learning module upon engagement with WaterAid, and every two years thereafter.
- Every WaterAid Member and Country must have at least one Safeguarding Focal Point appointed at all times.
- All new joiners to WaterAid, including staff, interns and work experience students, should have a safeguarding induction with a Head of People or a Safeguarding Focal Point when they join WaterAid.
- Safeguarding Focal Points must attend advanced safeguarding training delivered by the Global Safeguarding Team every 2 years.
- Any individual representing WaterAid or visiting a community where WaterAid are managing a programme or project, must be briefed on safeguarding by the in-country Safeguarding Focal Point.
- All WaterAid Partner organisations must have appropriate safeguarding training in place for their staff and associated representatives. It is recommended that safeguarding training should be reviewed every 2 years, upon renewal of partnership agreements or as the need arises.
- WaterAid's approach to safeguarding should be contextualised and cascaded to all individuals including children, in the communities with whom WaterAid works (e.g. through community sensitisation sessions, billboards, radio or television broadcasts, distribution of pamphlets/leaflets, role plays).
- Schools and community-based programs must incorporate regular child-friendly safeguarding sessions to build awareness and promote a culture of safety. These sessions should be interactive, inclusive, and adapted to local contexts to ensure effective learning and engagement.

Principle 2: Everyone must be safe to work with children

- WaterAid's approach to safer recruitment aims to prevent people who may pose a risk to children from working for WaterAid. Safeguarding statements should be included in all job advertisements, job descriptions should reflect safeguarding responsibilities and a commitment to Do No Harm, and the interview process should always include a question on safeguarding.
- The Global Policy for Obtaining and Providing References ensures that all prospective candidates are subject to appropriate reference checks.

- WaterAid's Global Disclosure Policy ensures relevant disclosure checks are in place for all WaterAid staff and representatives, where required.
- Any work experience scheme, event or activity involving children must have a safeguarding risk assessment, which Safeguarding Focal Points can provide input to. Depending on the participation of children and level of risk, these may need to be reviewed by the Global Safeguarding Team, however they will always need to be signed off by an appropriate Director.
- When working with Partners, WaterAid's Global Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Partner Self-Assessment Tool, are available to support Partners to integrate safeguarding into their approach. Similarly, when working with Contractors, WaterAid's Working with and Monitoring Contractor Guidance and Contractor Global Code of Conduct outlines core standards Contractors must uphold on WaterAid's behalf.

Principle 3: Children must be represented ethically and safely

- WaterAid is committed to ensuring that children are represented ethically and safely in all forms of media, research, and communications. Guidelines for the gathering, usage and storage of media content involving children must be followed. These can be found in the Representation in Communications Policy and Toolkit. 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.
- All interactions with children for media, research, or storytelling purposes must follow safe and trauma-informed approaches to prevent distress, re-traumatization, or emotional harm. Staff and representatives must use child-friendly interviewing techniques, ensuring that questions are appropriate, non-intrusive, and do not place children at risk of harm or exploitation.
- All content gathering activities and events involving children must have a safeguarding risk assessment in place, a designated safeguarding lead, and safeguarding briefings must be held. See the Content Trip Risk Assessment Guidance for additional support.
- Any staff or representative undertaking research on behalf of WaterAid that involves children must complete the Safeguarding eLearning module and read the Safeguarding in Research Guidance. Research involving children must also be subject to a thorough risk assessment.
- 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,

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.

campaign or fundraising activity. All data must be processed and stored in accordance with national and regional data protection laws.

- 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.
- 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.

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. As in all WaterAid's work, our approach is non-discriminatory, and we encourage the voices of all children, recognising and celebrating difference.
- WaterAid values all children's involvement, however, must think carefully about how and when to involve them in programmes, activities and events. The participation of children must be on the basis that their involvement will have a direct positive impact on their lives, that they have the opportunity to have their voices heard and to effect change.
- All programmes and projects which involve children directly or indirectly, must ensure risks to children have been identified and mitigated on the relevant risk assessment. Where practical and safe to do so, children should be involved in the risk assessment process to support understanding and contextualisation.
- The Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Code of Practice should always be followed. This includes not spending any time alone with a child. Additional considerations must be taken when involving children with additional education needs, or those living with a disability to ensure equitable access to information, and safe participation.
- All participants involved in WaterAid's activities (including children and adults), must have a safeguarding briefing. Children must be equipped with knowledge of safe and trusted reporting channels, ensuring they can confidently raise concerns without fear of retaliation.
- 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. See WaterAid's Safer Programming Guidance for more information on integrating safeguarding into the project cycle.

- Children, their parents and/or 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.
- Children should be safely invited to participate in any Monitoring and Evaluation activities carried out which they have been a part of.
- 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.

Principle 5: Everyone must know and follow reporting procedures

- Where programmes and projects are working with children, accessible child friendly reporting mechanisms must be in place. This could include a designated child advocate, teacher or other trusted adult within the community. Children must be consulted with safely, on the trusted pathways suitable for them.
- WaterAid are responsible for creating safe and trusted spaces, where children are comfortable to report any concerns or negative behaviours.
- Children should always be aware of how they can raise a concern or complaint about WaterAid's work or the behaviour of anyone associated with or representing WaterAid.
- Any concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of a child must be reported as outlined in the Procedure for Reporting Malpractice and Breaches to the Global Code of Conduct. This includes reporting to the Global Safeguarding Team within 24 hours. This Reporting Procedure applies to WaterAid staff, consultants, partners, contractors, volunteers and trustees. A summarised list of where to report safeguarding concerns is contained in Section 4.
- WaterAid takes a survivor-centred approach and will always act in the best interests of the child. This includes assessment of and referral to immediate protection or medical services where required.
- Safeguarding Focal Points are responsible for ensuring their Country Safeguarding Map is up to date with local legislation and referral pathways which are suitable and safe for children to access.
- WaterAid staff may become aware of child safeguarding concerns in the communities in which they work (e.g. domestic/family violence, abuse by authorities, sexual exploitation, child labour). The Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Code of Practice provides guidance on what to do if a child reports abuse. There may be times where WaterAid cannot or should not respond directly. The Global Safeguarding Team should be informed of these

concerns, to ensure the safety of the child. This may include referrals to local support services or law enforcement if safe to do so.

- Children have a right to privacy and the highest level of confidentiality should be maintained when reporting a safeguarding concern. Information should always be shared on a need-to-know-basis only and kept secure.
- Where concerns relating to a child are reported to the Global Safeguarding Team and subsequent action taken, the Global Safeguarding Team welcomes feedback on the process of referral and support offered.

4 Pathways to report concerns to WaterAid

- Directly to the Global Safeguarding Team: safeguarding@wateraid.org
- To a WaterAid Safeguarding Focal Point
- To a WaterAid point of contact
- To WaterAid’s external whistleblowing provider, Safecall: <http://www.safecall.co.uk/wateraid>

5 Supporting policies and documents

Global Safeguarding Team	Other Departments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Safeguarding Policy • Global Code of Conduct Definitions • Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults at WaterAid (Code of Practice) • Global Safeguarding Internal Operating Procedure • Global Safeguarding Standard • Global Safeguarding Framework 2023-2028 • Safeguarding Partner Self-Assessment Tool • Safer Programming Guidance • Safeguarding in Research Guidance • Working with and Monitoring Contractor Guidance • Contractor Global Code of Conduct • Content Trip Risk Assessment Guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Code of Conduct • Global Procedure for Reporting Malpractice and Breaches to the Global Code of Conduct • Representation in Communications Policy and Toolkit • Data Protection Policy • Global Policy for Obtaining and Providing References