

**CHILD  
PROTECTION SUB  
WORKING GROUP  
CHILD  
SAFEGUARDING  
GUIDANCE NOTE**

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Inter-Agency  
Coordination  
Türkiye

# Guidance Note on Applying International Child Safeguarding Standards for Child Protection Sub Working Group in Turkey

## Purpose

The purpose of this guidance note is to support Child Protection Sub Working Group (CPSWG) member organizations to generate a practical understanding of child safeguarding and to strengthen their safeguarding practices. The member organizations carry out various project activities involving people under the age of 18 years. In particular, this guidance note shows concrete steps for the organizations to develop, implement, and monitor their own child safeguarding policies in line with the International Child Safeguarding Standards which were developed by the organization Keeping Children Safe<sup>1</sup>.

## Background

In recent years, there is growing recognition of the importance of Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) in the international development and humanitarian sector. However, PSEA does not necessarily give consideration to the protection needs which are specific to children. In addition to risks from staff and associates, inadequately designed programmes or poor operational management by aid organizations can pose potential harm to children. These risks are not necessarily sexual by nature.

Organizations working for the development and humanitarian sector need to ensure that they “do no harm”<sup>2</sup>. In particular, those organizations directly working for children and young people need to be aware of children’s right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence as described in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 19.

UNICEF defines child safeguarding as all of the actions an organization takes to keep all children they come into contact with safe – and includes the proactive measures put in place to ensure children do not come to harm as a result of any direct or indirect contact with the organization<sup>3</sup>. Child safeguarding encompasses the prevention of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA), neglect and maltreatment of children by employees and other persons whom the organization is responsible for, including contractors, business partners, visitors to premises and volunteers. It covers all children but those who have additional vulnerabilities – such as children with disabilities, unaccompanied children, children outside parental care,

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<sup>1</sup> This guidance note has been written referring to policy documents and guidelines published by a range of organizations specialising in child safeguarding and child protection. Documents used are listed at the end of this document.

<sup>2</sup> “Do no harm” is a principle which has been used in the humanitarian sector but is equally applied to the development field. It refers to organization’s responsibility to minimise the harm they may be causing inadvertently as a consequence of their organizational activities.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF’s “Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children” is found at <https://www.unicef.org/supply/documents/policy-conduct-promoting-protection-and-safeguarding-children>



refugee children, or victims of trafficking – will require organizations to factor in additional safeguarding considerations.

Child safeguarding and child protection are two terms that are sometimes used interchangeably but do not in fact refer to the same concept. Child safeguarding refers to making organizations that come into contact with children safe. It includes a set of policies, procedures, and practices introduced and implemented to make every activity safe for all children. Child protection concerns making the world safer for children, referring to the system and the law which are in place to keep children safe. It includes the procedures that take place once a child has been identified as being at risk.

## Safeguarding: Principle and Approach

In order to keep children from harm, understanding potential risks to children and addressing these risks is paramount. If the risks are assessed and appropriate measures are identified and taken, harm or accidents are less likely to happen. To prevent such harm, all people in the organization need to understand these principles and cooperate with each other to make the organization safe for children.

Different organizations often have slightly different principles of and approaches to child safeguarding. Some organizations may emphasize staff training, others may underline the importance of reporting and responding. An example of the four key organizational principles set out by Save the Children will be helpful.

- **Awareness and Training:** All representatives (i.e. staff members, volunteers, associates, board members) receive training and appropriate support in order to prevent, report, and respond to child safeguarding concerns.
- **Prevention:** Through awareness raising, implementation of procedures, and good practice, representatives demonstrate an understanding of the risks to children within and across programmes and operations, and engage effective strategies to mitigate harm, abuse, and exploitation.
- **Reporting:** All representatives know how to report and who to contact when any concern arises, no matter how seemingly small or trivial.
- **Responding:** Representatives engage in action that supports and protects children, with a child driven approach, to address concerns and ensure children's well-being<sup>4</sup>.

For each principle, there are specific procedures and actions to be taken by the organization's management and staff members.

## Terms and Definitions

Harm to children can be wide ranging and is often difficult to define, but it usually means detrimental effect on a child's or young person's physical, psychological, or emotional wellbeing. The nature and type of harm may depend on the context and culture within which the organization operates. Children may be abused in families, institutions, schools, religious settings, or increasingly via social media and the internet in recent years. They may be harmed by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

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<sup>4</sup> See Save the Children's "Safeguarding Children" website: <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/safeguarding-children>



CPsWG members might be aware of the types of harm and abuse, but in developing organizations' child safeguarding policies, it is important to provide clear definitions of forms of abuse and exploitation to offer guidelines as to what is not acceptable. The box below presents definitions of some of the most common harm to children.

### Definitions of Harm

#### Physical abuse

Actual or potential physical harm perpetrated by another person, adult, or child. It may involve hitting, shoving, slapping, shaking, punching, kicking, poisoning, drawing, or burning. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness or injury in a child.

#### Neglect and negligent treatment

Allowing for context, resources and circumstances, neglect and negligent treatment refers to a persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and psychological needs, which is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's healthy physical, spiritual, moral, and mental development. It may include the failure to provide for nutrition, shelter, and safe and hygienic living conditions. It may also involve maternal neglect during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol misuse and the neglect and ill treatment of a child with disability.

#### Emotional abuse

Persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts on a child's emotional development and self-esteem. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying, and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile and rejecting treatment.

#### Sexual abuse

Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities, and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

#### Child sexual exploitation

A form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs. It usually involves a child being manipulated or coerced, which may involve befriending children, gaining their trust, and subjecting them to drugs and alcohol. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power where victim's options are limited. It is a form of abuse that can be misunderstood by children and adults as consensual.



### **Commercial exploitation**

Exploiting a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It includes, but not limited to, child labor.

### **Online child sexual exploitation**

Includes all acts of a sexually exploitative nature carried out against a child that have connection to the online environment. It includes any use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that results in sexual exploitation or causes a child to be sexually exploited or results in or causes images or other material documenting such sexual exploitation to be produced, bought, sold, possessed, distributed, or transmitted.

References: Keeping Children Safe (2019), Oxfam (2019)

## **International Child Safeguarding Standards**

The International Child Safeguarding Standards (hereafter referred to as “the International Standards”) were first developed in 2001, by a group of relief and development charities which later became Keeping Children Safe. The Standards have been updated several times and are widely recognized and used by government and non-government agencies globally<sup>5</sup>. The Standards set out important elements that should be in place for organizations to carry out both their programmatic activities and also their day-to-day operations.

Major benefits of using the International Standards are as follows:

- 1) Even if organizations put most robust child safeguarding policy measures and procedures in place, it is not easy to eliminate abuse and exploitation completely. But if the International Standards are applied in an appropriate manner, it becomes possible to minimize risks to children.
- 2) By applying the International Standards for all aspects of organizations' activities and operations, staff and associates are enabled to understand how they are expected to behave towards children and what they should do if they observe any incident or have concerns about the safety of a child.
- 3) Globally, it is increasingly expected that aid organizations meet various compliance and accountability requirements not only from donor agencies but also from the general public. By using the International Standards, organizations can demonstrate their commitment to keeping children safe in their activities.

The International Standards consist of four areas: Policy, People, Procedures, and Accountability. All four have equal importance, and organizations are expected to meet all of them. For each area, there is a list of requirements which should be addressed and fulfilled by the organization. It would be unrealistic to expect any organization to comply fully with all the requirements while they introduce safeguarding policy

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<sup>5</sup> See Keeping Children Safe's website for more details: <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/>





procedures for the first time. Rather, the organization should discuss the Standards internally and develop a multi-year plan to meet them step by step.

For organizations which have not yet developed a child safeguarding policy, it is strongly recommended that they review existing policy documents which have been made and publicized by other aid organizations. It is important to recognize that these existing documents should be used to inform the organization's policy development, rather than simply reproducing them. Several safeguarding policy documents are listed in the reference section at the end of this guidance note.

## Application of International Standards

In this section, each of the four Standards is explained together with its corresponding requirements. Concrete actions with examples are described. To enable progress towards meeting each of the four standards to be assessed, a check box is presented at the end of each sub-section. The items in each box derive from the self-assessment tool of the Child Safeguarding International Standards.

## Standard 1: Policy

**Standard: The organization has a policy that describes how it is committed to preventing and responding appropriately to harm to children.**

- a. The policy should reflect the rights of children to be protected from all forms of abuse and exploitation in line with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.
- b. The policy should be approved by the organization's management body (e.g., the board) and applied to all staff members and associates.
- c. The policy should be publicized, and beneficiaries and community members should be made aware of their rights under the policy, what conduct they can expect of staff and how they can safely raise safeguarding concerns.
- d. Managers must ensure an overall work environment exists in which the safeguarding policy can be operated effectively.

### About this Standard

#### (1) Organizational philosophy

First of all, the organization's philosophy behind child safeguarding should be set out in its safeguarding policy document. It should be made explicit that the organization is committed to protecting all children irrespective of gender, ethnicity, faith, and so on. Some examples are as follows:



### Organizational philosophy behind child safeguarding

- “We believe in the inherent rights, freedom, dignity and equality of all people, including children. Children can be extremely vulnerable, especially in situations of poverty, humanitarian crisis or conflict and deserve higher standards of protection.” *Oxfam’s Child Safeguarding Policy p.1*
- “Violet Organization is committed to (...) the best interests of the child regardless of age, ability, gender, language, race or religious belief (...)”  
*Violet’s Child Safeguarding Policy p.6*
- “War Child is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual violence. [...] All War Child representatives have a duty of care and responsibility to keep all children who come into direct or indirect contact with safe. All action taken to protect children will be in accordance with the best interests of the child as defined by the Article 3 of the UNCRC.” *War Child’s Child Safeguarding Policy p.4*
- “We promote child and youth safe practices, approaches, interventions and environments which respects, recognizes, and responds to the specific safeguarding needs and addresses the protection risks of differing gender and other identities.” *Plan International’s Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy p.2*

## (2) Risk assessment and mitigation

In developing or strengthening a child safeguarding policy, the organization needs to generate a full understanding of types of risks children may be exposed to, and how to mitigate them. Risks can be assessed according to the organization’s functions (programme implementation, finance, human resource, fundraising, etc.), or by the type of contact with children (face to face, online, etc.). Examples are as follows.

- a. Risk assessment according to functions of the organization:
  - Staff: How do you recruit your staff? Do you check candidates’ references and seek police clearance?
  - Role of partner organization: Does any partner organization have contact with children? If so, what is the impact?
  - ICT: What images of and information on children does your organization use?
- b. Risk assessment by type of contact with children:
  - Inherent risk: Will the staff be working in a remote location?
  - Degree of isolation: Do activities involve being with children alone?
  - Online contact: Does it involve online access to a child’s personal and confidential information?

Based on the results of risk assessment, the organization should prioritize actions to be taken to strengthen its child safeguarding policy and practice. Various examples of risk assessment tools are available on the internet. Those presented by Keeping Children Safe (2014), IFRC (2021), and Save the Children (2017) are recommended.



### (3) Code of Conduct (behaviour codes)

The child safeguarding policy should contain a Code of Conduct (or behaviour codes) for staff and associates. Organizations that work with children need to set clear expectations about what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable from adults, children, and young people. By setting this out formally the organization can ensure everyone understands appropriate ways to behave. When the Code of Conduct is implemented properly, it should reduce or limit the risk of child abuse occurring. The organization should also make it clear as to what actions will be taken if the Code is broken or not followed appropriately.

In the box below is an example of a Code of Conduct <sup>6</sup>:

#### **Responsibility of staff and volunteers**

You are responsible for:

- Prioritizing the welfare of children and young people
- Providing a safe environment for children and young people
  - Ensuring equipment is used safely and for its intended purpose
  - Having good awareness of issues to do with safeguarding and child protection and taking action when appropriate.
- Following our principles, policies, and procedures, including our policies and procedures for safeguarding and child protection, whistleblowing, and online safety
- Staying within the law at all times
- Modelling good behaviour for children and young people to follow
- Challenging all inappropriate behaviour and reporting any breaches of the behaviour code to the safeguarding focal person
- Reporting all concerns about abusive behaviour, following our safeguarding and child protection procedures
  - This includes inappropriate behaviour displayed by an adult or child and directed at anybody of any age.

#### **Respecting children and young people**

You should:

- Listen to and respect children at all times
- Value and take children's contributions seriously, actively involving them in planning activities wherever possible
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy as far as possible
  - If you need to break confidentiality in order to follow child protection procedures, it is important to explain this to the child or young person at the earliest opportunity.

<sup>6</sup> This is an example provided by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), UK. See its website: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/templates/behaviour-codes-adults-children>



### **Diversity and inclusion**

You should:

- Treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination
- Understand that children and young people are individuals with individual needs
- Respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability, and religious belief systems, and appreciate that all participants bring something valuable and different to the group/organization
- Challenge discrimination and prejudice
- Encourage young people and adults to speak out about attitudes or behaviour that makes them uncomfortable

by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

The organization should make the policy available to all staff and associates. All should be given a printed copy of the safeguarding policy, Code of Conduct, and other relevant policy documents in a language they can understand.

### **(4) Leadership's responsibility for safeguarding**

The child safeguarding policy should make it clear that the day-to-day responsibility to protect children from harm and risk rests with all staff and associates of the organization. Staff and associates need to be aware that they represent and are identified with the organization at all times.

The ultimate responsibility for protection and safety of children who come into contact with the organization lies with the senior and top management. This is why the policy needs to be signed off by the senior management team and the organization's board. In doing so, they show that they have committed to providing leadership on child safeguarding.

### **(5) External communication and engagement with and support of beneficiaries**

All children and adults involved in the organization's programme activities should be informed about the organization's safeguarding policy and code of conduct. This does not mean that they all should receive copies of the policy, but it would be effective if local materials were produced in a user-friendly way. Through awareness and communication materials, children and adults should be informed about their right to be safe from abuse and exploitation, how organization's staff and volunteers are expected to behave, how they should keep themselves safe, and how to safely report any safeguarding concerns and incidents when they arise.

Some organizations publicize their child safeguarding policy on their websites. They may also produce and present visual posters showing their commitment to safeguarding in public spaces of project areas, with contact numbers, so that community members can report any concerns or incidents. Materials addressed to community members including children should be clearly written. The organization should test the design and content of materials with the intended audience to check that they are clearly understood.



### Check items to meet this standard

- 1) The organization has a written child safeguarding policy, approved by the relevant management body, to which all staff and associates are required to adhere.
- 2) The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other Conventions and Guidelines pertaining to children inform the approach of the organization.
- 3) The policy is written in a way that is clear, easily understandable and is publicized, promoted, and distributed widely to all relevant stakeholders, including children.
- 4) The policy makes it clear that all children have equal rights to protection, and that some children face particular risks and difficulties in getting help because of their ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.
- 5) The policy address safeguarding children from harm through misconduct by staff, associates, and others, from poor practice, and from its operational activities where these may harm children or put them at risk due to poor design and/or delivery, for example.
- 6) The policy makes clear that ultimate responsibility for ensuring the safety of children rests with senior executives (CEO and Directors) and managers.

## Standard 2: People

**Standard: The organization places clear responsibilities and expectations on its staff and associates and supports them to understand and act in line with these.**

- a. Dedicated child safeguarding focal points should be designated with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- b. Recruitment and selection process of staff, volunteers, and other associates should reflect the organization's commitment to child safeguarding.
- c. All new staff and associate should receive the safeguarding policy and Code of Conduct. They must read, sign and return copies of the policy to show that they are aware of and have agreed to act in accordance with the policies. All staff and associates should have appropriate learning opportunities to develop and maintain the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge to keep children safe. They can protect children confidently and effectively if they are aware of the issues and have the necessary understanding and skills.
- d. The organization's implementing partners and other partners such as contractors and suppliers should have child safeguarding measures which are consistent with the International Standards.
- e. The organization should ensure that it engages with community members including children and disseminate information about the organization's child safeguarding policy and procedures.



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## About this Standard

### (1) Child safeguarding focal point

All organizations need to have designated persons who are responsible for ensuring child safeguarding measures are in place and integrated into organizations' programmes and operations. These persons constitute a 'focal point'<sup>7</sup>.

The role of the focal point is to provide a point of contact and to advise, support, and assist the organization in implementing child safeguarding policy and relevant procedures, including responding to concerns and incidents. To fulfil these duties, the focal point needs the support of organization's management as well as the cooperation of those who work for the organization.

The role of the focal point is important, but this does not mean that they have sole responsibility for the safeguarding of children who come into contact with the organization. As stated in Standard 1, the ultimate responsibility lies with the senior and top management.

There are times when the focal point has to carry out additional work, such as when a child safeguarding incident occurs. But most of the time, their main role is to be available to assist the management and the staff as required. Some organizations have full time safeguarding managers or officers, while in others, focal points may have other functions and dedicate a certain percentage of their time to child safeguarding work. The organization should appoint at least two people to act as the focal point so that workload can be shared, and when one is absent there is another person available to carry out the tasks. Everyone in the organization should know how to contact the focal person(s).

The people appointed as the focal point should be senior enough to carry out its role, **but the designated person(s) should not normally be a head of service or have sole responsibility for the management of child safeguarding for the organization.** This is because it is important for the organization to have other lines of accountability, rather than just one single reporting route.

### (2) Staff recruitment and selection<sup>8</sup>

It is important for organizations to select and recruit the right candidates for posts that bring them into contact with children and young people. Safe recruitment is a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment and fulfilling commitment to keeping children safe from harm.

Safe recruitment is a continuing process of improvement to ensure the recruitment of the right staff and volunteers. There are several steps to take:

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<sup>7</sup> In some organizations, due to resource availability, the same person(s) might have to play roles of child safeguarding and also of PSEA. In such a case, protection needs which are specific to children must be properly recognised, and appropriate measures should be in place accordingly.

<sup>8</sup> More detailed information about safe recruitment will be found at the NSPCC website:  
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/safer-recruitment>



- i) **Safe recruitment policy statement:** a policy statement setting out the organization’s commitment to recruiting staff and volunteers who are suitable to work with children, sending a clear message that the organization prioritizes the safety and welfare of children. The statement should make it clear that the organization implements robust safe recruitment practices; identifies and rejects applicants who are unsuitable to work with children; responds to concerns about the suitability of applicants during the recruitment process; and ensures that all new staff and volunteers take part in a child safeguarding induction.
- ii) **Safe recruitment procedures:** Based on the policy statement, clearly written procedures should be in place so that all who are involved with recruitment know how to conduct recruitment process effectively and fairly. With written procedures, the organization is less likely to miss anything out, while adhering to relevant legislation and guidance. The procedures should include the following:
  - **Advertisement:** Every advertisement for a role that involves work with children should include a statement about the organization’s commitment to keeping children safe.
  - **Job description:** For any role working with children and young people, both the role description and the person specification should highlight the safeguarding responsibilities. Make sure that selection criteria outline the necessary previous experience if the position entails direct work with children.
  - **Reference check:** A minimum of two references should be provided. The referees should have knowledge of the candidate’s experience, behaviour, values, and suitability to work with children.
  - **Interviews:** In the interview, candidates should show that they can establish and maintain professional boundaries and professional integrity; establish and maintain relationships with children; and take action to protect children.
  - **Proof of identity:** A candidate’s identity needs to be verified.

### (3) Child safeguarding training and education

The organization’s staff and associates need to understand safeguarding policies, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards children, their safeguarding roles, and responsibilities, and how and to whom they have to report when concerns or incidents arise. It is essential for all those involved in programme activities and operations of the organization to be aware of the importance of the safeguarding issue and have the necessary knowledge to implement the relevant policies and procedures. Education and training are effective ways to improve and enhance knowledge and practice.

Newly recruited staff and volunteers should receive mandatory introductory training at an early stage of employment. Afterwards, all staff should receive regular refresher training, ideally once a year. The organization should develop standard training materials for this purpose.





### Induction to Child Safeguarding: Suggested Topics

- Detailed explanations about the child safeguarding policy.
- Detailed explanation about the Code of Conduct: acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards children.
- Reporting mechanism (see Standard 3 Procedures): reporting and investigation process.
- The consequence of non-compliance with the child safeguarding policy and the Code of Conduct.
- Ways to respond when a child or a young person discloses abuse or other safeguarding incidents.

Kaya, the learning platform of the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, offers the following free online courses in safeguarding:

**Safeguarding Essentials:** This short course is aimed at anyone working in the humanitarian and development sector. It is relevant to all working in organizations where safeguarding issues are a concern but is not specific to children. The course is written at an introductory level, modularized to facilitate easy engagement and to suit practitioners in the field. It is both a pathway to understanding what safeguarding is and how practitioners can help tackle safeguarding breaches. It is available in English, Arabic, French and Spanish. Accessible on: <https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=1424>

**Safeguarding:** This short course takes about one hour to complete and outlines the concept of safeguarding and why it matters. It is suitable for anyone involved in humanitarian and development work. The course is available in English and Arabic.

Accessible on: <https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=1651>

**Child Safeguarding in Coordination of Education and other clusters:** This short course takes about 50 minutes to complete and is mainly for Cluster and Areas of Responsibility Coordination Teams. While it is aimed specifically at education cluster or education in emergencies working group coordination teams, it is also relevant to those working in other clusters and sectors. It is available in English and French.

Accessible on: <https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=3948>

The first two courses are on safeguarding in general, not specific to children. Currently, the number of free online learning courses specifically oriented to child safeguarding is limited. For those who seek free online materials, it will be useful to visit the UEFA-Terre des hommes partnership website. UEFA has been implementing a child safeguarding in football project in partnership with Terre des hommes, aimed at improving safeguards for children in European football. The humanitarian and development sector is of course very different from football, but the concept of child safeguarding is common across all sectors. The website offers several free online courses<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Currently four courses are available: <https://uefa-safeguarding.eu/uefa-child-safeguarding-online-courses-english>





As the organization deepens its understanding of concept and practice of child safeguarding, the designated focal point should move towards designing and providing training for the staff and volunteers.

#### (4) Partnership and child safeguarding

In the humanitarian and development sector, organizations typically work with a range of partners such as institutional donors, local government departments, contractors and suppliers, and other NGOs. All parties are expected to agree to the commitment to protecting children from harm. In establishing partnerships with other organizations, the following measures should be considered:

- There should be an agreement between the organization and the partner as to mutual support in order to achieve compliance around child safeguarding jointly.
- In partnership agreements, there should be clarity as to reporting and responding to child safeguarding concerns and incidents, including the line of responsibility for reporting between the partners.
- When a partner organization does not have child safeguarding policy or Code of Conduct, the organization should support the partner to develop minimum child safeguarding measures as appropriate. There should be procedures to receive written agreements from partner organizations entering into cooperative arrangements that they will abide by the organization's child safeguarding policy and Code of Conduct.

#### (5) Engagement with community and children

Standard 1 outlined above pointed to the need to ensure that the organization's beneficiary communities, including children and their families, know about its commitment to child safeguarding. Families and children should be informed about their right to be safe from abuse and exploitation, how the organization's staff and volunteers are expected to behave, and how to report any safeguarding concerns safely.

It is critical to develop trust with the community which the organization serves. If community members feel that the organization will respond to them responsibly and fairly, they will be able to report when child safeguarding concerns or incidents occur. Hence it is important to encourage community members including parents and carers to be involved in project activities.

In addition to the reporting mechanism for safeguarding issues, it would be advisable if the organization could devise a community feedback system to receive comments or complaints. Community members are, for example, likely to notice quickly when a playground equipment is malfunctioning and posing physical risks to children. Accidents are more likely to be prevented if there is a feedback system in place and community members know how to use it.

It is equally important that the organization makes a conscious effort to discuss safeguarding issues with children, to listen to their opinions, and to take necessary action. Children's views as to what makes them feel safe and unsafe are invaluable.



### Check items to meet this standard

- 1) There are written guidelines for behaviour (Code of Conduct) that provide guidance on appropriate and expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children and of children towards other children.
- 2) Staff recruitment processes (advertisements, interviews, contracts) have child safeguarding checks in place.
- 3) The organization is aware that when it comes to child safeguarding, issues can be easily identified, raised, and discussed.
- 4) All members of staff, volunteers and associates have mandatory training on child safeguarding.
- 5) Children who come into contact with the organization are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse and that they are provided with information, advice, and support on keeping themselves safe, including information as to where to go for help.
- 6) The organization designates key people as "focal points" with clearly defined responsibilities for support and communication on child safeguarding and for effective operation of the child safeguarding policy.
- 7) Partner organizations, including sub-contractors, are required to develop minimum child safeguarding measures appropriate to their organization.
- 8) The organization produces and disseminates visible and accessible documents (brochures, posters etc.) for the promotion of child safeguarding and effective execution of child safeguarding policies.

## Standard 3: Procedures

**Standard: The organization creates a child safe environment through implementing child safeguarding procedures that are applied across the organization.**

- a. The organization should have information on local services, on authorities to whom reports should be made, and on other organizations working for child welfare that could provide support where needed.
- b. The organization should develop an appropriate reporting and responding process for child safeguarding concerns and incidents.
- c. The organization should have a system and accompanying guidelines to assess and manage risk. Areas of risk may include: organization's staff, associates, and partners; vulnerabilities of children who take part in programmatic activities; location of activities; thematic areas; use of social media and IT; and procedures for reporting and responding to allegations.
- d. Child safeguarding measures should be integrated into the organization's existing systems such as strategic planning, budgeting, recruitment, performance review, and project management.



## About this Standard

### (1) Local resource mapping

Conducting local resource mapping serves two major purposes.

First, local resource mapping will enable the organization to identify relevant local authorities for reporting of alleged or confirmed child safeguarding misconduct. Organizations are responsible for knowing the mandatory reporting requirements in its local jurisdiction and for complying with these requirements.

Second, local resource mapping should enable the organization to identify service providers in the fields of protection, medical or psychological support. The organization is likely to need support from such service providers when safeguarding incidents occur to provide assistance for the victim.

The local resource mapping should be regularly updated and shared with all relevant staff members.

#### Local resource mapping: Items to be covered

##### Legal resources:

- Government departments or agencies with statutory authority for safeguarding of children.
- Legislation governing welfare, safeguarding and protection of children, including legal age of consent in the country and relevant legislation.
- International conventions to which the country is a signatory or has ratified (e.g., UN convention on the Rights of the Child).
- Existing reports or reviews as to local police's capacity to investigate violent incident against children (e.g., past cases, likelihood of prosecution).

##### Other organizations including NGOs:

- Details of medical, health, and psychological service providers that may be accessed as part of victim support.
- Details of other NGOs or civil society organizations and professional networks which have expertise in child safeguarding issues and safe housing.
- Academic institutions working on children's rights.

##### Local community:

- Information about types of behaviour observed in local areas which might cause harm to children.
- Information about informal or community-based justice and safeguarding mechanisms and ways in which they function.
- Information about local advocacy groups, faith groups, youth groups which could collaboratively support child safeguarding.

From Keeping Children Safe (2019) *The International Child Safeguarding Standard*, p. 24



## (2) Reporting and responding procedures

The organization's staff and volunteers should be observant of signs that may suggest a child or young person is in need of help. The reporting procedure should be made widely available to ensure that all stakeholders are clear as to what steps should be taken regarding the safety of children. Decisions as to whether or not to report may be difficult to make. This issue should be discussed in the organization's refresher training sessions.

Any concern or allegation regarding the abuse or exploitation of a child should always be treated seriously. **The guiding principle is that the safety of the child is always the most important consideration.** Particular care should be taken with regard to confidentiality and with whom information should be shared. If the incident or concern is sexual in nature, the child safeguarding focal point should consult internally with the organization's PSEA focal point, as appropriate. Protection needs which are specific to children should be carefully considered.

The staff and volunteers who have direct contact with children should be trained in receiving disclosures or allegations from children and young people and in child-friendly communication. The box below suggests what an organization's staff and volunteers should say if a child or young person reveals abuse.

### What to do if a child or young person tells you that they are being exploited or abused by an aid worker

#### 1. Listen carefully to what they're saying

Check that the child or young person is not in immediate danger. Be patient and focus on what you are being told. Try not to express your own views and feelings. If you appear shocked or as if you don't believe them, it could make them stop talking and retract what they have said.

#### 2. Give them the tools to talk

If they are struggling to express themselves to you, show them a supportive attitude, by saying, for example, "I think you want to tell me something. I will listen to you.", "You have something important to tell me.", or "You need some advice on something, I think." Don't express your own opinions. Don't probe or ask questions: let them say what they want to say.

#### 3. Let them know they have done the right thing by telling you

Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling you and let them know that they can trust you. Reassurance can make a big impact.

#### 4. Tell them it's not their fault

Abuse is never a child's fault. It's important they hear, and know, this.

#### 5. Say you will take them seriously

They may have kept the abuse secret because they were scared that they would not be believed. Make sure they know they can trust you and you will listen and support them.



## 6. Don't confront the alleged abuser

Confronting the alleged abuser could make the situation worse for the child.

## 7. Explain what you'll do next

For younger children, explain you are going to speak to someone who will be able to help. For older children, explain you will need to report the abuse to someone who can help.

## 8. Report what the child has told you as soon as possible

Don't investigate yourself or follow up in any way: report as soon after you have been told about the abuse so the details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly. It is helpful to take notes as soon after you have spoken to the child, preferably quoting their own words. Don't discuss the incident with anyone else. Information should be shared only on a 'need to know' basis.

**Reference:** NSPCC 'What to do if a child reveals abuse'

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/what-to-do-child-reveals-abuse/>

Allegations of misconduct can be made by victims and their families themselves or by organization's staff or volunteers who have reasonable knowledge or suspicions of safeguarding breach. In either case, keeping the victims and reporters safe, minimizing harm, and conducting a thorough, impartial investigation is paramount.

When the organizations' staff or volunteers receive a safeguarding complaint or have knowledge and suspicion of misconduct by a fellow organization worker, they should notify the child safeguarding focal point immediately. The recipient should not initiate any investigation unilaterally.

Organizations should have written procedures as to how to handle disclosures and allegations from staff members. Similarly, reports made by children and communities should also be dealt with through these procedures.

Safeguarding investigations should be conducted only by qualified individuals who are:

- Independent from the allegations received,
- Free from the appearance or existence of bias, and
- Trained in safeguarding investigation procedures.

In order to make sure that all child safeguarding investigations are handled with professional care, the organization should establish a child safeguarding committee to oversee all investigations<sup>10</sup>.

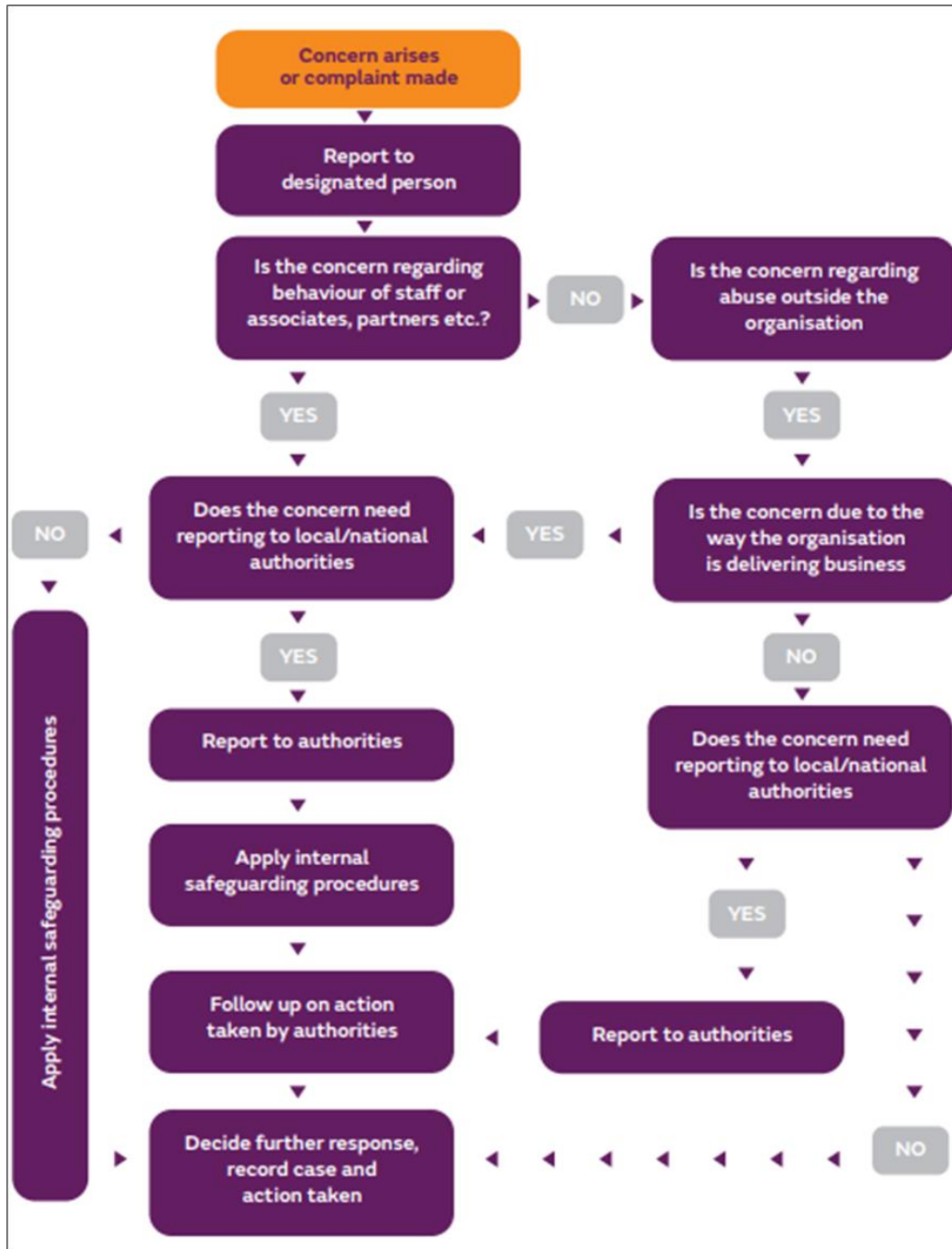
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<sup>10</sup> Rather than establishing a committee each time an investigation takes place, some organizations maintain a permanent child safeguarding management committee to ensure the implementation of child safeguarding policies and to monitor progress. The committee can be used as a forum to discuss issues concerning child safeguarding within the organization.



A sample of reporting procedure by Keeping Children Safe (2019) is presented below:

### Sample Reporting Procedure



From Keeping Children Safe (2019), p.35.

The committee should include the child safeguarding focal point person(s) and key managers.



The basic process which should take place during an investigation include the following:

- i) **Complaint assessment:** The appropriateness of investigation is assessed based on the contents and severity of the information received.
- ii) **Investigation process:** Depending on the outcome of the assessment, the reported case will be either investigated immediately by the organization or referred to the relevant local authority.
- iii) **Confidentiality:** All investigations should be conducted in a manner designed to protect confidentiality of both victims and perpetrators. Information should be shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know the details of the case.
- iv) **Documentation:** All investigation procedures, findings and recommendations should be documented.
- v) **Communication with and support for the victim:** The organization should provide periodic updates on the progress of the investigation and appropriate support for the victim.
- vi) **Remediating actions:** Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the organization should take disciplinary actions against any person who was involved in misconduct. If a crime may have been committed, the organization will need to pursue legal recourse.

There should also be a clear framework or standard operation procedures in place for supporting victims of abuse or violence where this is perpetrated by a staff member or volunteer of the organization. Some organizations have protocols for survivor assistance, committing to support alleged victims of misconduct regardless of the status or outcome of an investigation. Forms of assistance include immediate material care (e.g., medical care, shelter), psychosocial support, and legal support.

### (3) Risk assessment

All organizations should take a proportionate approach in accordance with the level of child safeguarding risk to programmes and operations. A number of issues associated with child safety are not within the scope of PSEA, including, for instance, risks of accidents children may encounter in the classroom or playground.

As an example, categories of risk for child safety suggested by Save the Children are outlined below:

Category	Risk considerations
Staff, volunteers, partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>· Whether all people involved in projects and those who have contact with children have been recruited and vetted for safety and received the minimum required training in child safeguarding.</li><li>· Particular risks that might be presented to children by staff and others because of programme design and implementation. Examples: one to one contact between a child and staff, activities involving childcare arrangement.</li></ul>





Children involved in programme activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Age and gender of children</li><li>• Specific vulnerabilities including disability, children without parental care, displaced children, children who have experienced abuse or exploitation, out of school children.</li></ul>
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Where the activities are taking place and whether the location is safe. How children will travel there. Safety of building or room.</li></ul>
Thematic area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Specific risks associated with the theme of the programme being implemented (e.g., health, education, humanitarian).</li></ul>
Use of children's images and stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential risks of harm to children by the use of images and stories even with permissions given. Example: children from conflict-affected areas whose families are unwilling or uncomfortable to have their photographs published.</li></ul>
Use of social media and IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online risks and mechanisms to prevent and manage them.</li></ul>
Procedures for reporting and responding misconduct allegations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whether the procedures for reporting allegations were designed in consultation with children and families.</li><li>• Whether a clear procedure for responding to misconduct reports is in place.</li><li>• Whether these have been tried and tested.</li></ul>

From Save the Children (2017) p.16-17.

#### (4) Integration of child safeguarding into organizational process and systems

If the organization decides to integrate child safeguarding measures throughout its functions, a range of actions will be needed. A strategy of continuous improvement should be in place, as it will not be possible to introduce or adopt all the necessary changes overnight.

First, the organizational culture may need to be changed so that child safeguarding is considered important. Leadership will be key.

Second, some changes might be required to existing responsibilities of staff and associates with specific safeguarding roles. Child safeguarding should be reflected in the organization's human resource management. Those who are concerned with child safeguarding should have relevant responsibilities clearly written in their job descriptions. Staff's safeguarding-related activities should be included in performance review.

Third, existing policies and procedures will need to be adapted to integrate child safeguarding, including recruitment and selection policy, procedures, and code of conduct. New policies may need to be introduced such as a whistle-blowing policy to protect staff who raise child safeguarding concerns.

Management-level staff members should enable an overall work environment in which child safeguarding policy and procedures can be operated effectively. They need to listen and respond to concerns raised by





staff and volunteers, to provide regular opportunities for informal dialogue and discussions, to observe and respond to signs of worries or stress, and to take decisions and follow-up actions.

Various departments of an organization are involved in implementing development or humanitarian projects. Coordination among human resource, programmes, and procurement departments is vital. For example, car rental drivers, security guards, and other contractors hired by a project may need safeguarding orientation or training, depending on the length of their contracts and their levels of interaction with communities and children. Clear procedures as to who is in charge should be in place.

In addition to the focal points, a committee should be formed that not only helps with the reporting mechanisms regarding the child safeguarding incidents and conducts the coordination duties between departments, but also checks the continued validity and applicability of the documents that are constantly updated under child safeguarding improvement efforts such as procedural documents, materials for dissemination, referral pathway mappings and monitoring and evaluation reports of incidents.

#### Check items to meet this standard

- 1) The organization requires local mapping exercises to be carried out that analyze the legal, social welfare, and child protection arrangements in the contexts in which it works.
- 2) There is an appropriate process for reporting and responding to child protection incidents and concerns that fits with the local systems for dealing with incidents of child abuse (as identified in the mapping exercise).
- 3) The identification and mitigation of child safeguarding risks is incorporated into risk assessment processes at all levels (i.e., from identification of risks through to planning activities involving or impacting on children).
- 4) Adequate human and financial resources are made available to support development and implementation of child safeguarding measures.
- 5) There are clear procedures in place that provide step-by-step guidance on how to report safely which are linked to the organization's disciplinary policy and procedures.
- 6) Child safeguarding is integrated with existing business processes and systems (e.g., strategic planning, budgeting, recruitment, programme cycle management, performance management, procurement, and so on) to ensure that safeguarding is a feature of all key aspects of operations.



## Standard 4: Accountability

### Standard: The organization monitors and reviews its safeguarding measures.

- a. Implementation of child safeguarding policies and procedures needs to be monitored. Simply introducing a policy is by itself unlikely to enhance child safeguarding practice; nor is the policy itself a measure of accountability. Learning from actual case experience should inform policy review and lead to subsequent necessary changes. Understanding the organization's progress towards a safe organization is vital to strengthen child safeguarding practice, even if it is not required by funding donors.
- b. The extent to which the organization's safeguarding practice aligns with the International Standards should be regularly checked. This can be carried out by self-assessment or by an external auditor. The self-audit tool of the International Child Safeguarding Standards is the most effective instrument available for this purpose<sup>11</sup>.

### About this Standard

#### (1) Active monitoring of child safeguarding concerns and cases

If the organization has integrated child safeguarding into its systems and processes, it will be relatively straightforward to report on whether the policy and procedures are working. The child safeguarding focal point has the role of registering and responding to concerns and cases as they arise<sup>12</sup>. The registered numbers and any other signs of change should be reported to top and senior management regularly. Child safeguarding should be an item of agenda in all board meetings or senior management meetings.

Internal reporting should not focus only the number of cases or concerns but include how the systems and procedures are working to reduce the risk of abuse. Analysis of actual case management or near-misses can provide valuable insights into why abuse or exploitation took place.

When the number of reported concerns or cases is low, some people might think that this is a sign that abuse is not taking place. However, it is more likely that suspected or actual cases are under-reported because reporting barriers exist, or because reporting procedures are not working effectively.

There are multiple factors which influence people's decision whether or not to report when they experience or witness abusive behaviour in their communities. The factors include preference for local community resolution, and negative socio-cultural attitudes towards survivors of sexual misconducts. Lack of awareness of what constitutes reportable misconduct, of community members' rights, or of what the process for reporting is can also be barriers to reporting<sup>13</sup>. Ineffectiveness of formal reporting systems put in place by aid

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<sup>11</sup> The tool is found in Keeping Children Safe (2019).

<sup>12</sup> As for the retention and storage of child safeguarding records, organisations need to comply with national laws concerning personal information and data protection. The organisation needs to make it clear as to why it keeps records about children and adults, how long the records need to be kept, and how and when the records will be destroyed.

<sup>13</sup> Oxfam's 2020 report on factors influencing people's decision-making behaviour towards misconduct reporting provides



organizations can similarly be an impediment. Organizations' reporting mechanisms should be designed in consultation with community members including children and their carers. All efforts should be made to uphold confidentiality and to mitigate safety concerns.

## (2) Internal and external audit

All organizations should undertake child safeguarding internal audit at regular intervals to check their progress towards child safe organizations. The self-audit tool of the International Child Safeguarding Standards is an effective instrument to assess how well the organization is integrating child safeguarding measures across all functions. This tool can be used at different stages during the implementation and monitoring of child safeguarding to check that the organization is making the necessary improvements.

Where feasible, external verification or audit will validate the information provided by the organization through a standard-based assessment process and test the robustness of the organization's existing child safeguarding measures. Such an audit process will involve a review of the child safeguarding policy, procedures and other documents, and interviews and group discussions with staff, volunteers, and partner organizations to evaluate how well the organization's safeguarding procedures are understood and implemented. Currently, Keeping Children Safe offers certification schemes, based on the International Standards.

### Check items to meet this standard

- 1) Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with child safeguarding policies and procedures through specific measures, or through integration into existing systems for quality assurance, risk management, audit, monitoring, and review.
- 2) There is a system of regular reporting to key management forums, including Director level, to track progress and performance on child safeguarding.
- 3) External or independent bodies, such as Boards of Trustees or oversight committees, are used to monitor performance in relation to child safeguarding, and to hold senior executives to account.
- 4) Opportunities exist for learning from practical case experience, and for this to be fed back into organizational development.
- 5) Policies and practices are reviewed at regular intervals, and formally evaluated every few years.
- 6) Progress, performance, and lessons learned are reported to key stakeholders (management forums and external or independent bodies where relevant) and included in organization's annual reports.

an in-depth analysis based on surveys conducted in three countries (Oxfam 2020).



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