

### **4.2.3.3 Child Protection Policy**

#### *Commitment by UnitingWorld*

Protection is about improving the safety and dignity of individuals and communities. The need to protect children in particular is an issue for all communities. Children face a higher risk of being subjected to exploitation and abuse and experiencing sexual, physical and psychological violation. UnitingWorld considers the protection of children from exploitation and abuse of all kinds to be of critical importance in all of our activities and commits to work in an accountable, transparent and sensitive way to uphold the commitments outlined in this policy.

#### **Principle 1: Child rights**

UnitingWorld recognises the rights of all children to live safely without fear of abuse or exploitation as outlined in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

*1.1 UnitingWorld is committed to keeping children safe by all reasonable means.*

#### **Principle 2: Zero tolerance approach of child exploitation and abuse**

UnitingWorld will not tolerate any form of child abuse by anyone who is working within our programs or represents UnitingWorld in anyway.

*2.1 Under no circumstances will UnitingWorld permit a person to work with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children's safety and wellbeing.*

*2.2 UnitingWorld will act immediately on any complaint, grievance or reporting of misconduct according to UnitingWorld's complaint process (see 'Complaints Procedures'). During any investigation, the safety of the child will remain paramount and the best interests of the child will be kept in mind at all times.*

*2.3 UnitingWorld's employment contracts will contain provisions for dismissal, suspension or transfer to other duties for any employee who breaches the Code of Conduct including Child Protection.*

#### **Principle 3: Risk management approach**

Whilst it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child exploitation and abuse, careful management can reduce the risks to children who may be associated with activities of UnitingWorld

*3.1 UnitingWorld commits to identifying, monitoring and mitigating, where possible, risks of child abuse in all activities including updating UnitingWorld's risk register accordingly.*

*3.2 UnitingWorld commits to robust recruitment screening processes for all personnel as outlined by UnitingWorld's recruitment process (see 'Recruitment Processes' below).*

#### **Principle 4: Confidentiality, wellbeing and safety**

Confidentiality is an important facet to enable the safe reporting of child abuse and ensure the wellbeing and safety of those involved. Written and spoken information will be

protected from being shared with unauthorised persons, or used for a purpose other than that for which it was collected. More detail about this aspect of UnitingWorld's work is provided in the [Assembly's Privacy Policy](#).

*4.1 UnitingWorld commits to protecting written and spoken information from being shared with unauthorised persons or used for a purpose other than that for which it was collected. All information about child protection concerns and reports is to be kept confidential, discussed only with the Child Safeguarding Focal Point, and any other parties designated by them according to reporting requirements.*

#### **Principle 5: Shared responsibility for child protection**

UnitingWorld believes that child protection is a shared responsibility, meaning that successful implementation of child protection initiatives relies on all representatives committing to and upholding the principles of this policy. UnitingWorld will work with partners to ensure the fulfilment of at least minimum standards of child protection across our programs.

*5.1 UnitingWorld commits to ensuring that all representatives of UnitingWorld understand and sign the Code of Conduct including Child Protection.*

*5.2 UnitingWorld will provide regular training relating to Child Protection, this policy and the Child Protection Code of Conduct including Child Protection. The training will involve all representatives, both in Australia and in the countries where projects are implemented, who come into contact with children in the course of their work for any projects, both those funded by the Australian Government and those funded from other donor sources.*

*5.3 UnitingWorld commits to ensuring that all communications, especially those containing images of children, adhere to the child protection standards outlined in the Code of Conduct including Child Protection.*

*5.4 UnitingWorld commits to working with partners to achieve compliance with the Child Protection standards outlined in this policy. In particular these include:*

- developing a Child Protection Policy applying to all representatives of the organisation;
- ensuring robust recruitment screening processes (including verbal referee checks, interview plans with behavioural-based interview questions and, where appropriate, criminal record checks);
- developing a documented reporting procedure for child exploitation or child abuse and policy non-compliance which has clear procedures/guidelines for how staff and others should report a breach of the Code of Conduct by a staff member or other person associated with the partner organisation;
- appointing a Child Safeguarding Focal Point, for UnitingWorld this is the Manager, Learning Effectiveness and Compliance;
- implementing child protection training for all personnel;
- developing a child protection code of conduct that meets minimum standards as set out in UnitingWorld's Code of Conduct including Child Protection;

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- ensuring the Child Protection Policy commits UnitingWorld to preventing a person from working with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children;
- employment contracts which contain provisions for dismissal, suspension or transfer to other duties for any employee who breaches the child protection code of conduct;
- implementing a regular review of the Child Protection Policy (at least every 3 years); and
- undertaking a risk assessment that identifies risks, classifies any high risk activities and documents steps being taken to reduce or remove these risks.
- ensuring that children, communities, partners, and others are informed of the policy and reporting procedures

These standards are regularly reviewed as part of ongoing project monitoring. Child protection is monitored through regular reporting from implementing partners and staff visits to projects where particular issues can be considered in detail. Child protection standards are also evaluated as part of the Partner Capacity Assessment and when broader project evaluations take place.

Expectations relating to these standards are outlined in formal partnership agreements between UnitingWorld and partners.

See [Summary table of principles and commitments](#) at the end of this section.

### *Scope*

This policy states UnitingWorld's commitment to the safety and protection of children and to ensure that in all areas of our work we do not perpetuate or reinforce systematic or structural abuse and discrimination of children. It outlines our guiding principles and approach towards implementation to ensure that this commitment is integrated in all areas of our work.

This policy sets out common commitments and principles for representatives of UnitingWorld, and outlines the steps that must be taken to meet their commitment to child protection in all areas of UnitingWorld's work. Therefore, principles outlined in this policy apply to all the work of UnitingWorld.

The representatives of UnitingWorld include:

- staff of UnitingWorld undertaking work on behalf of UnitingWorld;
- the relevant staff of our partners while they are undertaking tasks for either Unit;
- members of the two National Committees;
- volunteers of UnitingWorld including individuals and groups who visit overseas partners or projects funded by either of the Units or individuals who represent UnitingWorld within Australia;
- advisers/consultants and associated personnel engaged by either Unit; and
- personnel of organisations subcontracted by contractors or either Unit.

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This policy also applies to representatives of our partners. Representatives of our partners are defined as being personnel undertaking any tasks for our partners that are funded by UnitingWorld.

UnitingWorld understands that being a child is one of a number of factors including disability, ethnicity and gender that intersect and impact on one another to increase vulnerability. UnitingWorld views child protection as a cross-cutting issue and as such this policy should be understood in the context of our broader development approach and related policies including the Disability Inclusion Policy, Disease and HIV/AIDS Prevention and Support Policy and Gender Equality Policy.

### *Policy Context*

UnitingWorld believes that all persons are created equal in the image of God and we therefore act in ways that respect the dignity, uniqueness, intrinsic worth and human rights of every woman, man, girl and boy. Abuse of any nature, particularly child abuse, is contrary to the teaching of the Gospel.

In the course of UnitingWorld's activities, representatives, including staff and volunteers, may have contact with children and young people. This may occur in Australia or overseas. Accordingly, UnitingWorld is committed to policies and practices which promote a child-safe environment.

All Uniting World representatives must abide by Australian and local child protection and welfare legislation (including child labour laws) in all aspects of their work with Uniting World

### *Relevant Resources*

UnitingWorld is guided by and works in the context of the following national and international codes and conventions:

- [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#)
- [Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict](#)
- [Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#)
- [International Labour Organization Convention 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour](#)
- [Australian Aid Child Protection Policy](#)
- [ACT Alliance Code of Conduct: For the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power](#)
- [ACFID Code of Conduct B.3.4 Protection of Children](#)
- [The Uniting Church in Australia National Child Safe Policy Framework](#)
- UnitingWorld Code of Conduct Including Child Protection

### *Behavioural Guidelines*

These behavioural guidelines are included in the Code of Conduct, signed by all representatives of UnitingWorld.

Representatives, engaged by UnitingWorld, agree that while implementing any activities funded by UnitingWorld, they must:

- Treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
- Not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- Not engage children in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts;
- Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
- Not invite unaccompanied children into their place of residence, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger;
- Not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case they must obtain the supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present;
- Not use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media inappropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- Not use physical punishment on children;
- Not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury;
- Comply with all relevant Australian and local legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse and policy non-compliance in accordance with appropriate procedures (as per the Child Protection Policy, matters of a criminal nature will be immediately reported to local authorities);
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during their association with UnitingWorld that relate to child exploitation and abuse; and,
- Be familiar with and apply the letter and spirit of the Child Protection Policy in all circumstances.

When photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, representatives of UnitingWorld must:

- Assess and comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming anyone, but especially a child;

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- Obtain consent from the child or a parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming anyone, but especially a child. As part of this, representatives of UnitingWorld must explain how the photograph or film will be used;
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present people, especially children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts; and,
- Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically.
- Ensure that photographic images, film images including voice and text that portray children do not carry identifying place information including village names, school names etc.
- Ensure that they apply these standards to agency and personal social media portrayals of children.

As well as adhering to the above guidelines all communication and marketing will ensure that where stories of children are featured they will only be indicative in nature. Specific locations and actual names will not be used and verbal parental/guardian permission for use of the child's image will be obtained and attested to in the Photographer Declaration form that is kept as record alongside electronic images.

### *Child Protection Training*

All representatives of UnitingWorld will be trained in Child Protection. Awareness sessions will be conducted as soon as practicable (but within no longer than six months) after appointment for new staff, volunteers, board members and other representatives of UnitingWorld; it will be the responsibility of the management of UnitingWorld to ensure that this training is provided. Awareness sessions will be conducted at least annually for partners, existing staff, volunteers and other representatives of UnitingWorld.

### *Complaints Procedures*

In the event of any misconduct complaint against any representative of UnitingWorld (either in Australia or overseas), the procedures in the Complaints/Incident Handling Policy\_(found in this section of the Governance Manual) will be followed. **If the complaint concerns activity that is criminal, the complaint must be reported to the appropriate policing authority.** If a complaint is made against a person visiting Australia as a guest of UnitingWorld, the National Director has the responsibility of investigating the complaint as outlined above. A summary of the procedure for making a child protection related report can be found in Section 7.

In the event of a child protection related allegation involving any representative of UnitingWorld, DFAT must be notified by the National Director as soon as possible except in the case of partner personnel in non-DFAT funded projects. UnitingWorld is not obliged to disclose allegations or incidences of child exploitation and abuse in non-DFAT funded projects, unless DFAT-activities are likely to be impacted or in cases where UnitingWorld deems that disclosure is in the best interests of the broader aid community.

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If a representative of UnitingWorld is unsure whether an allegation amounts to child exploitation or abuse, rather than drawing their own conclusion, they should contact the Child Safeguarding focal point person, the Manager, Learning Effectiveness and Compliance or the National Director for confidential advice and further information.

Contact details are:

**Manager, Learning Effectiveness and Compliance**

Ellen Shipley

Phone: +61-451-466-949

Email: [ellens@unitingworld.org.au](mailto:ellens@unitingworld.org.au)

**National Director**

Sureka Goringe

Phone: +61 414 555 349

Email: [surekag@unitingworld.org.au](mailto:surekag@unitingworld.org.au)

***Recruitment Processes***

Recruitment of all UnitingWorld's staff follows the procedures as set out in the Assembly's Employment Policy and Procedures.

Recruitment will follow child-safe recruitment and screening processes, including relevant criminal record checks (in accordance with compliance standards) prior to engagement, targeted interview questions and verbal referee checks for all personnel (including volunteers) who will be working with children. The Australian Government provides a useful document "Guidance Note on Criminal Record Checks", which should be followed at all times.

***Visitors to field projects***

All visitors to field projects are considered representatives of UnitingWorld and are required to understand and adhere to the Code of Conduct which includes specific behavioural guidelines relating to Child Protection. All visitors to the field will also be briefed on Child Protection and the related behavioural guidelines (as outlined above).

***Glossary of Terms***

**Abuse** - Can be physical, emotional, maltreatment, neglect, exploitation and/or sexual abuse.

**Behavioural-based interview questions** - Interview questions that probe the applicant's past behaviour in specific situations relevant to the position. Behavioural-based questions give interviewers additional information as to the applicant's suitability to work with children.

**Child** - For the purposes of this policy, UnitingWorld considers a child to be a person under the age of 18 years.

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**Child exploitation and abuse** - One or more of the following:

- committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of **abuse** against a child
- possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting **child exploitation material**
- committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of **grooming** or **online grooming**.

Child exploitation material – Material, irrespective of its form, that is classified as child abuse material or child pornography material.

**Child abuse material** – Material that depicts (expressly or implicitly) a child under 18 years of age as a victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse.

**Child pornography material** – Material which depicts a person, or is a representation of a person, who is, or appears to be, under 18 years of age and is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or sexual activity, or is in the presence of a person who is engaged in, or appears to be engaged in, a sexual pose or activity, and does this in a way that a reasonable person would regard as being, in all the circumstances, offensive.

**Emotional abuse:** A persistent attack on a child’s self-esteem, and can take the form of name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child.

**Neglect:** Failure to provide the child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision.

**Physical abuse:** Can take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures, arising from slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing.

**Protection** - Ensuring that individual basic human rights, welfare and physical security are recognised, safeguarded and protected in accordance with international standards.

**Sexual abuse** - The use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or significantly older child or adolescent.

*Summary table of principles and commitments*

Principle		Commitments	
1	Child rights	1.1	UnitingWorld is committed to keeping children safe by all reasonable means.
2	Zero tolerance approach of child exploitation and abuse	2.1	Under no circumstances will UnitingWorld permit a person to work with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children’s safety and wellbeing.
		2.2	UnitingWorld will act immediately on any complaint, grievance or reporting of misconduct according to the outlined complaint process (see ‘Complaints Procedures’). During any investigation, the safety of the child will remain paramount and the best interests of

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			the child will be kept in mind at all times.
		2.3	UnitingWorld's employment contracts will contain provisions for dismissal, suspension or transfer to other duties for any employee who breaches the Code of Conduct including Child Protection.
3	Risk management approach	3.1	UnitingWorld commits to identifying, monitoring and mitigating, where possible, risks of child abuse in all activities including updating the risk register accordingly.
		3.2	UnitingWorld commits to robust recruitment screening processes for all personnel as outlined by the recruitment process (see 'Recruitment Processes').
4	Confidentiality, wellbeing and safety	4.1	UnitingWorld commits to protecting written and spoken information from being shared with unauthorised persons, or used for a purpose other than that for which it was collected. All information about child protection concerns and reports is to be kept confidential, discussed only with the Child Safeguarding Focal Point, and any other parties designated by them according to reporting requirements.
5	Shared responsibility for child protection	5.1	UnitingWorld commits to ensuring that all representatives of UnitingWorld understand and sign the Code of Conduct including Child Protection
		5.2	UnitingWorld will provide regular training relating to Child Protection, this policy and the Child Protection Code of Conduct including Child Protection. The training will involve all representatives, both in Australia and in the countries where projects are implemented, who come into contact with children in the course of their work for any projects, both those funded by the Australian Government and those funded from other donor sources.
		5.3	UnitingWorld commits to ensuring that all communications, especially those containing images of children, adhere to the child protection standards outlined in the Code of Conduct including Child Protection.
		5.4	UnitingWorld commits to working with partners to achieve compliance with the Child Protection standards outlined in this policy. In particular these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a Child Protection Policy applying to all representatives of the organisation;</li> <li>• ensuring robust recruitment screening processes</li> </ul>

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		<p>(including verbal referee checks, interview plans with behavioural-based interview questions and, where appropriate, criminal record checks);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a documented reporting procedure for child exploitation and policy non-compliance which has clear procedures/guidelines for how staff and others should report a breach of the Code of Conduct by a staff member or other person associated with the partner organisation;</li> <li>• appointing a Child Safeguarding Focal Point, for UnitingWorld this is currently the Associate Director, Relief and Development;</li> <li>• implementing child protection training for all personnel;</li> <li>• developing a child protection code of conduct that meets minimum standards as set out in UnitingWorld’s Code of Conduct including Child Protection;</li> <li>• ensuring the Child Protection Policy commits it to preventing a person from working with children if they pose an unacceptable risk to children;</li> <li>• employment contracts which contain provisions for dismissal, suspension or transfer to other duties for any employee who breaches the child protection code of conduct;</li> <li>• implementing a regular review of the Child Protection Policy (at least every 3 years);</li> <li>• undertaking a risk assessment that identifies risks, classifies any high risk activities and documents steps being taken to reduce or remove these risks; and</li> <li>• ensuring that children, communities, partners, and others are informed of the policy and reporting procedures.</li> </ul> <p>These standards are regularly reviewed as part of ongoing project monitoring. Child protection is monitored through regular reporting from implementing partners and staff visits to projects where particular issues can be considered in detail. Child protection standards are also evaluated as part of the Partner Capacity Assessment and when broader project evaluations take place.</p> <p>Expectations relating to these standards are outlined in formal partnership agreements between UnitingWorld and partners.</p>
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