



ONE OXFAM CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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1. POLICY PURPOSE

As Oxfam aims to eliminate the injustice of poverty, it knows that poverty affects people of all ages. Even when Oxfam's activities do not specifically target children, we know that this does not dissolve the effect of our work on them, whether directly or indirectly. Oxfam must proactively include a child safeguarding lens to its work to avoid potential harms caused to children through our presence and work in a way that focuses on child rights, child participation, and the best interest of the child, all while taking an intersectional approach.

This policy demonstrates Oxfam's commitment to safeguard children from all harm and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse, physical abuse, verbal or emotional abuse, and neglect, as laid out in its Code of Conduct and safeguarding policies. The aim of this policy is to ensure an open and aware environment where concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child can be raised and managed in a fair and just manner, prioritizing the best interests of the child.

2. SCOPE AND ELIGIBILITY

This policy applies globally to all Oxfam Employees and those associated with the delivery of Oxfam's work both during and outside normal working hours; including Oxfam International, Affiliate HQ, Regional platforms, and Country programs. In countries where this policy contravenes local legislation, local legislation must be followed with guidance from the [Affiliate equivalent to Safeguarding Team and the Head of HR]. Oxfam policy will apply in the event that it is more stringent than local legislation.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Oxfam believes in the inherent rights, freedom, dignity and equality of all people, including children.¹ Any form of any abuse of power towards children, including sexual violence and others forms of child abuse or harm, is a violation of their rights and prohibited behaviour within Oxfam. We will take a zero-tolerance to inaction approach to any such incidents within the organization. The One Oxfam Child Safeguarding Policy confirms that our commitments within the Code of Conduct and safeguarding policies include the protection of children from harms and abuses that are caused by Oxfam's representatives and activities.²

This policy additionally serves to clarify Oxfam's understanding of its commitment to safeguard children against behaviours, activities and actions (intended or unintended) that place them at risk of all forms of violence and harm.

- As stated in the PSEAH Policy and Core Safeguarding Standards:
 - Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of the majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defence. We will take positive action to prevent child abusers becoming involved with Oxfam in any way.

¹ Oxfam defines children as any individual under the age of eighteen. The rights of the child recognized by Oxfam are defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

² Other related policies include *One Oxfam Code of Conduct (2017)*, and *One Oxfam Youth Safeguarding Policy*, the *One Oxfam Safeguarding Case Management SOP* and *One Oxfam Digital Safeguarding Policy*. Oxfam's Safeguarding Policies can be found here: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/what-we-do/about/safeguarding> or on [Compass](#) as multi-language versions.

- It is the responsibility of all those working on behalf of Oxfam to raise any concerns they have or concerns which are reported to them according to this policy.
- All safeguarding standards and requirements, including safe recruitment and trainings, reflect this Child Safeguarding Policy and Oxfam's commitment to safeguarding children.
- When appropriate and applicable, Oxfam will consult with children to ensure our programs are delivered in a child safe environment, child safeguarding measures are put in place, and complaint and feedback mechanisms are child-friendly.
- As appropriate, ensure all those associated with the delivery of our work follow the Child Safeguarding Policy and adhere to the behaviour standards outlined in Annex 2 "Contact with Children" when working with or in contact with children.
- Ensure that case management procedures for reported safeguarding incidents are child-friendly.
- If a child is involved in a safeguarding incident, special precautions will be made to ensure the case is managed in the best interest of the child.
- Any violations of this policy will be treated as a serious issue and will result in disciplinary action being taken, including termination and any other available legal remedy.
- Oxfam will continue to learn from children, research, investigations, and others to incorporate best practices for child safeguarding in real time.

4. CHILD SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

Creating a safe working environment at Oxfam is **everyone's responsibility** and failure to act on concerns or disclosures relating to child abuse and exploitation is not an option. Specific responsibilities for ensuring the localization, implementation, and monitoring of this policy are consistent with the safeguarding responsibilities found in Section 4 of the [One Oxfam PSEAH Policy](#).

5. BREACHES OF THE CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Breaches of the Child Safeguarding Policy will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary procedures, including termination. Further information about the process of investigations and outcomes can be found in the [SG Case Management SOP](#).

Oxfam will take action against anyone, whether they are the subject of a complaint or not, who seek or carry out retaliatory action (such as but not limited to harassment, intimidation, unfair disciplinary action or victimisation) against complainants, survivors or other witnesses. Employees who are found to do this will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Others who work with Oxfam may have their relationship with Oxfam terminated.

If an Oxfam employee is found to have made an allegation that they knew to be false they will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Others who work on behalf of Oxfam will be subject to action that may result in the termination of their relationship with Oxfam.

6. REPORTING

Policy and procedural requirements for reporting allegations of child safeguarding incidents are the same as reporting SEA within Oxfam. To learn more about these process, please read [the One Oxfam PSEAH Policy](#) and [Oxfam's Reporting Misconduct Standard Operating Procedures](#).

7. SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE SUFFERED HARM

Safeguarding Teams will offer support to children who have suffered harm abuse or exploitation, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Children can choose if and when they would like to take up the support options available to them. Oxfam will strive to provide support that is sensitive to the child's needs and seek it out wherever available elsewhere.

When available, appropriate, and in the best interest of the child, Oxfam's safeguarding teams will work closely with local child protection authorities, parents and guardians in offering support to children who have suffered harm at the hands of Oxfam staff and affiliated personnel.

ANNEX 1: DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Policy and Oxfam's approach to Child Safeguarding, these definitions apply:

- Best interests of the child** In all actions concerning children and when dealing with a concern for the safety or wellbeing of a child, the best interests of the child shall be our primary consideration. Oxfam believes children have the right to be active participants in all matters affecting their lives; that they can make choices and decisions; that they have the right to share the power adults hold and that they have a voice to influence people and events. Decisions made about children and young people will be made as far as possible with their participation and in their best interest giving full consideration to how such decisions will affect them. There may be times when adults have to make decisions for children in order to protect them from harm, but their best interest will be at the heart of those decisions at that time. In the event this policy is breached causing harm, Oxfam is committed to listening and acting according to the wishes of the child. Confidentiality may be breached through sharing information if following a risk analysis there is a requirement to do so in order to protect a child from any, or further, harm.
- **Child:** Any person under the age of eighteen (18) years as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
 - **Child Rights:** Children have the “right to life, survival and development” where development encompasses physical, emotional, cognitive, social and cultural development.
 - **Child Safeguarding:** The policies, procedures and practices employed to safeguard children who come into contact with Oxfam and all those associated with the delivery of our work from all forms of harm, abuse or exploitation and the responsibility of all personnel to embed these at the activity level to ensure Oxfam is a child safe organisation.
 - **Child Protection:** The prevention of and response to significant harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. Child Protection programming is an activity or initiative designed to protect children from all forms of violence. This includes the integration of child protection into all thematic areas of programming to enhance the protective environments for children in the community
 - **Child Abuse:** Child abuse involves the abuse of children's rights and includes all forms of violence against children: physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect, family violence, sexual exploitation, abduction and trafficking, including for sexual purposes, involvement of a child in online child sexual exploitation and child labour as defined below.
 - **Physical Abuse:** When a person purposefully injures, or threatens to injure, a child. Physically abusive behaviour includes shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. It also includes cultural practices which can alter physicality in ways that cause distress, harm and/or cause lasting health ramifications such as Female Genital Mutilation.
 - **Neglect:** The persistent failure, where there are means, or the deliberate denial to provide the child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the child's health and development is placed at risk.
 - **Emotional Abuse:** A persistent attack on a child's self-esteem. Examples include, but are not limited to – name-calling, threatening, ridiculing, shaming, intimidating or isolating the child
 - **Sexual Relationship:** Includes but is not limited to a staff member or related personnel having a physically intimate relationship, or an online sexually related relationship via social media, text or telephone with a child.
 - **Child Sexual Abuse:** When a child is used by another child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual abuse involves contact and non-contact activities which encompasses all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing a child to online child sexual exploitation material, or taking sexually exploitative images of children.

- **Family violence:** Includes verbal, physical, sexual or emotional violence within the household or family, which the child witnesses, usually on a regular basis.
- **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:** Comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is targeted as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery.
- **Online Child Sexual Exploitation:** Includes all acts of a sexually exploitative nature carried out against a child that have, at some stage, 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
- **Child Marriage:** A formal marriage or informal union before age 18, is a reality for both boys and girls, although girls are disproportionately the most affected. Child marriage is widespread and can lead to a lifetime of disadvantage and deprivation.
- **Grooming:** Generally, refers to behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity. For example, an offender may build a relationship of trust with the child, and then seek to sexualise that relationship (for example favouring a child, isolating a child, giving excessive attention or gifts, using sexualised language or physical contact, or exposing the child to sexual concepts through online sexual exploitation material).
- **Online-Facilitated Child Sexual Abuse:** The act of sending an electronic message to a recipient who the sender believes to be under 18 years of age, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender; or of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient who the sender believes to be under 18 years of age.
- **Child Labour:** Often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling and recreation. In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families and exposed to serious hazards and illnesses. (See OAU Child Labour Guidelines).
- **Child Trafficking:** Relates to any role in the recruitment, transportation or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation, by means of threat, force or other forms of coercion. This includes abuse of power.
- **Military use of Children:** Where children are engaged in or exposed to military activity, including as soldiers or human shield.
- **Contact with Children:** Working on an activity or in a position that involves or may involve direct (including online contact with children) or indirect contact (such as use of children's images) with children. This can be either under the position description or as a result of performing the position such as coming into contact with children when working in communities.
- **Working with Children:** Working with children means being engaged in an activity with a child where the contact would reasonably be expected as a normal part of the activity and the contact is not incidental to the activity. Working includes volunteering or other unpaid works

ANNEX 2: ACCEPTED BEHAVIOURS

Those associated with the delivery of Oxfam's work must:

- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with Oxfam's values and the Child Safeguarding Policy
- Treat all children with respect regardless of their race, colour, gender (including gender diverse children), language, religion, opinions, nationality, ethnicity, social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation or other status
- Declaration of conflict of interest if a child is a program participant of Oxfam, much like we do with adult relationships.
- Immediately disclose all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence that I was/am subject to and relates to child exploitation and abuse, including those under traditional law, which occurred before or occurs during association with Oxfam
- Utilise Oxfam training and awareness sessions to increase their understanding of what constitutes various elements of child abuse
- Never use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, intended to humiliate or culturally inappropriate
- Never engage children in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity including paying for sexual services or engaging in other transactional forms of sexual services with any person under 18 years old (or under the local age of consent where higher than 18)
- Never engage in any sort of child abuse whether sexual, physical, emotional, neglect, grooming, harassment or exploitation via digital or other means
- Never engage in family violence which can include (but is not limited to) female genital mutilation, child marriage, trafficking and child labour
- Wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working near children
- Not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary however where necessary, immediately report this to your manager and if possible make sure another adult is present (noting that this does not apply to my own children or in cases when I am acting as a guardian)
- In the capacity of my engagement with Oxfam, not visit a child's home alone or invite unaccompanied children into my own home or accommodation, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger
- Comply with all relevant legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour
- Not use physical or humiliating punishment on children
- Not consume alcohol or illicit drugs when working with or in contact with children
- Not discriminate against or act in favour of particular children to the exclusion of others
- Not seek to make contact or spend time with any child connected with Oxfam programs or activities outside of the designated program or activity time
- Not abuse their position to withhold professional assistance, or give preferential treatment, gifts or payment of any kind to a child, or another person in relation to a child in order to solicit any form of advantage or sexual favour from a child.
- Not engage in physical contact with a child that is: unprofessional, abusive, unnecessary or excessive, that makes a child feel uncomfortable or unsafe, or in a culturally insensitive way (necessary physical contact would include attending to an injured child or removing a child from a dangerous situation).
- Not engage in child labour including hiring of 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
- Not do things for children involved in Oxfam programs, activities or events of a personal nature that they can do for themselves such as toileting, bathing or changing their clothes
- Not use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media to exploit or harass children, or access child sexual exploitation material through any medium

- Not condone or participate in behaviour with children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Immediately report concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child, or a possible breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Reporting Procedures
- Speak with Management about any concerns I have of my involvement in any situation where my words, actions or behaviour may be interpreted as a breach of this Policy
- Act professionally towards children with whom I interact, whilst at the same time showing genuine care and compassion
- To ensure the privacy and safeguarding of children when photographing or filming a child or using children’s images or stories for work-related purposes including promotion, fundraising and development education, I agree to:
 - Take care to ensure local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a child;
 - Obtain informed consent from the child and/or parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child or obtaining their story. An explanation of how the photograph, film or story will be used must be provided;
 - Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present 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 and stories are honest representations of the context and the facts;
 - Ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images or stories in any form

VERSION CONTROL

This policy will be reviewed and updated every 3 years or as earlier as required to comply with legislation or external and internal changes. Existing policies that need to be reviewed, must comply with this Policy on Organisational Policies

Version	Approved by	Approval date	What has changed
1	SG & Culture Task Force	December 2018	New Policy approved
2	SG & Culture Steering Group	July 2021	Policy reviewed. No substantive changes to the content itself, but edited changes to the presentation style.