

<p>Date of Issue: 21 Jan 2000</p> <p>Date of Revision:</p> <p>WVI Board Reference: BD/00/20</p>	<p>Title of Policy / Decision: <i>Child Protection Standards</i></p>	<p>Section: <i>Ministry</i></p> <p>Group: Transformational Development</p>
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Purpose

World Vision continually examines itself to ensure that everything reasonably possible is done to reduce the risk to sponsored and non-sponsored children in World Vision projects from any form of abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse.

These standards are the measures that the World Vision Partnership requires for developing, implementing, and monitoring child protection policies within all World Vision offices. The term all World Vision Offices throughout this document refers to National Offices, Programme Offices, Project Offices, Regional Offices, International Liaison Offices and Partnership Offices. These required standards seek to reduce risk to children in World Vision Programmes.

Local Implementation

World Vision office (“national” or “programme/project” office) directors, with the support, where applicable, of World Vision International regional directors and vice-presidents, are responsible for ensuring that child protection policies and standards are developed and implemented. These policies are to be consistent with the required standards set forth in this document, and developed with the assistance of local legal counsel in accordance with the laws of the country in which each World Vision entity operates. In the absence of local laws or legal counsel, the Partnership Offices Legal Department or the Child Protection Co-ordinator should be contacted for assistance.

What needs to be included in child protection policies and standards?

Child protection policies and standards need to include plans and/or procedures to address the following issues taking into consideration the local context:

1. Awareness Raising

- 1.1. The majority of sexual abuse takes place within the family and community. However, organizations like World Vision are increasingly exposed to persons outside the community who seek access to children for sexual purposes. Awareness raising provides education for staff, board members and volunteers in the definition of exploitation and abuse and neglect, and includes indicators of pedophilia (defined as a preference for sexual activity with a child) and sexual abuse in the local context.
- 1.2. Child protection policies and procedures are included in staff and board manuals. All staff, board/advisory council members and other personnel are required to acknowledge in writing receipt and understanding of World Vision Child Protection Policies and Required Standards. They are to be kept informed of policy changes as they arise.

2. Programme Planning

- 2.1. An assessment of the circumstances of children is incorporated into all surveys conducted prior to the initiation of any program. Where relevant, such assessments include plans to work with communities to reduce risks facing vulnerable children and to address the needs of children who are in situations of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

- 2.2. Through collaboration with local childcare professionals and others, World Vision enhances awareness of abuse and exploitation, offers information on community resources and support services, and provides training and skills enhancement for project staff.
- 2.3. Programme plans promote the prevention of child abuse, exploitation and neglect (refer to Child Protection Resource Manual for definitions) [Version 1 of The Child Protection Resource Manual is available for all offices. Contact the Regional Child Advisors for assistance as needed and, if not available, contact the WVI Child Protection Director.] by exploring the causes and implementing responses to support family and community responsibility for the well being of children. Plans for rehabilitation of children who have been abused and exploited are developed in the best interests of the child by enhancing and maintaining safety and security, and reducing the risk of further harm.
- 2.4. Children are considered active participants whose hopes and aspirations are respected, whose welfare is of paramount importance, and whose value emphasizes their God-given uniqueness. They are involved in programs designed to protect them through mechanisms that give them a voice and provide them with skills for protecting themselves. However, the responsibility for protection of children lies with adults. Children should not be expected to make adult decisions.

3. Personnel - Recruiting and Screening

- 3.1 Prospective employees, board of director/advisory council candidates, volunteers/interns or others is informed of World Vision's child protection policies at the start of any recruiting process. Policies and standards are reviewed during orientation.
- 3.2 Basic screening of applicants for employment includes a written application, personal interviews and reference checks. During the interview process, applicants should be asked about previous work with children.
- 3.3 Where possible and permissible by local law, applicants for positions as a World Vision staff member, board/advisory council member or volunteer/intern are requested to give permission for a criminal record or police background check for any conviction related to abuse of children. Permission can be obtained through a standard Waiver and Consent Form (see Manual). If such checks are instituted, candidates are informed at the time of interview that hiring will be contingent on a record check.
- 3.4 The same requirement for background checks, where possible and permissible by local law, also applies to existing World Vision staff members, board members and volunteers/interns.
- 3.5 Individuals who are hired as independent contractors are notified of World Vision's Policy and Required Standards for Child Protection and are made aware that they are expected to follow behaviour protocols set out below.
- 3.6 In the best interests of children, national offices should not hire anyone with a prior conviction for child abuse, pedophilia or related offences. In the event that local law prohibits this broad a hiring rule, no person with a conviction for child abuse, pedophilia or related offences may be hired into any position which includes direct access to children, or information about sponsored children, including picture folders. World Vision reserves the right not to hire an applicant if the background check reveals that the person is not suitable to work with children.

- 3.7 Established World Vision office procedures for background checks and screening must be followed prior to hiring any expatriate employee of a World Vision office who directly applies for a field position with another World Vision entity.

4. Behaviour Protocols

- 4.1 All World Vision staff, board/advisory council members and volunteers/interns are required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of World Vision Behaviour Protocols, which are rules of appropriate and proper behaviour. Behaviour protocols are designed to protect children but are also intended to protect staff from false accusations of inappropriate behaviour or abuse. In addition to reflecting behaviour requirements based on local sensitivities, the following basic World Vision protocols should be included:
- 4.1.1 World Vision personnel (as referred to in 4.1 above) must not stay alone overnight with one or more children or minors, whether in the staff member's house, project premises or elsewhere;
- 4.1.2 World Vision personnel should not hire minors as 'house help' or provide shelter for minors in their homes. A minor for World Vision purposes is defined as a child under the age of 18 years. Even though providing employment for a minor may be culturally acceptable and provide benefits not otherwise available to the child, the hiring of minors may lead to misunderstandings and is inconsistent with World Vision's efforts to ban exploitative child labour.
- 4.1.3 World Vision personnel must not fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch minors in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way. To avoid misunderstanding, it is recommended that a child be asked for permission before touching or holding hands.
- 4.1.4 Where possible and practical, the 'two-adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where minors or children are involved and are present at all times, should be followed. If this is not possible, World Vision staff members are encouraged to look for alternatives such as being accompanied by community members on visits to children.
- 4.1.5 World Vision personnel need to be aware that they may work with children who, because of the circumstances and abuses they have experienced, may use a relationship to obtain 'special attention'. The adult is always considered responsible even if a child behaves seductively. Adults should avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position.
- 4.1.6 Inappropriate behaviour toward children, including failure to follow World Vision Behaviour Protocols or sexual abuse of a child is grounds for discipline, up to and including dismissal from employment, volunteer/internship or board/advisory council membership.
- 4.1.7 World Vision personnel must be concerned about perception and appearance in their language, actions and relationships with minors and children. World Vision personnel should seek to live up to the World Vision *Mission Statement* and *Core Values* in all relationships with others.

5. Allegation/Incident Management Plan

5.1 *Reporting and Response*

Development of an effective reporting procedure and response plan for handling any allegation or suspicion of alleged misconduct toward children enhances efforts to protect children from sexual abuse. Child abusers are not likely to remain in an environment where workers are trained to report suspicious behaviour. Child abusers thrive on secrecy and are more likely to commit an abusive act when they are unnoticed, or when they are in an environment in which others are naïve and insensitive to the possibility of child abuse. A reporting plan is not limited to but must include the following:

- 5.1.1 Clearly identified procedures for reporting any knowledge or suspicion that a child has been molested or that inappropriate behaviour is occurring.
- 5.1.2 Procedures for reporting according to locally mandated laws. In some instances, local police may carry out an investigation. Any interference with this process could have legal implications for staff and for World Vision.
- 5.1.3 A plan for conducting an in-house investigation which ensures that a child is not held responsible, unless the facts indicate otherwise. The investigation must be treated with care and concern, particularly as a child may fear retribution and punishment while a staff member accused of child abuse will be concerned for his or her privacy and legal rights.
- 5.1.4 A plan for responding to the results of an investigation that includes consideration for the welfare of the child. The corrective action policy of the office concerned should be taken into consideration with regard to the person accused.
- 5.1.5 A plan for dealing with media inquiries that includes a designated spokesperson.
- 5.1.6 On being informed of an incident, the national/country director or regional vice-president immediately informs the Partnership Child Protection Coordinator (with a copy to the Partnership Legal department). The Child Protection Coordinator confidentially monitors and reviews the response and outcome for the purpose of revising and refining child protection measures. *(NOTE: Incidents involving a World Vision employee may result in an internal investigation by World Vision and corrective action per the corrective action process. Incidents involving child sponsors may necessitate involvement by the President's Crisis Management Team.)*

5.2 *Suspected child abuse*

In the event of an incident of suspected child abuse, World Vision management immediately puts into effect internal reporting steps, seeks instructions, where required, from World Vision management/legal staff, reports to local authorities as required and also gives due regard to the appropriateness of informing local law and judicial mechanisms where this is not a requirement. If an expatriate is suspected, due regard must be given to the potential for extraterritorial proceedings by the expatriate's country of origin. *(NOTE: Incidents involving sponsors/sponsored children must be reported immediately to the appropriate support office executive director who will work with the crisis management team.)*

5.3 *Other reporting situations*

Any person who has knowledge of a potential child protection issue involving World Vision should immediately contact the Child Protection Coordinator.

5.4 *Response to findings and concluding an investigation*

- 5.4.1 The welfare of a child is of prime importance to World Vision. If sexual abuse is proven or suspected, every effort is made to assist the child in coping with any trauma or guilt he or she may be experiencing. This may include psychological counselling or another form of assistance deemed necessary and appropriate.
- 5.4.2 There should be a review of the facts uncovered during the investigation to determine what actually happened, followed by a consultative decision-making process about the future of the employee involved. If the decision is to terminate employment, the employee will have the findings of the investigation shared with him or her.
- 5.4.3 Generally, an employee accused of sexual abuse of a child should be temporarily suspended during the course of the investigation. The employee should be informed that charges have been made against him or her and given an opportunity to respond. Furthermore, as a result of these charges, World Vision has an obligation to initiate an internal investigation. The employee is encouraged to participate in the investigation by providing information and the names of witnesses to be interviewed. At the conclusion of the investigation, the employee should be informed of the results of the investigation and what corrective action, if any, will be taken.
- 5.4.4 An effort is made to provide assistance to an employee accused of misconduct with children, including appropriate counselling and support.
- 5.4.5 In the event an allegation is proven to be untrue, or even fabricated, appropriate steps are taken for follow-up with the person who has been accused, the child, and the person who did the reporting.
- 5.4.6 All information concerning the incident and investigation is documented in writing. A copy of the confidential report of the investigation and conclusion should be provided to the Child Protection Coordinator and the WVI/PO Legal Department if it involves a WVI employee (e.g., expatriate, contract, secondment or national employee of a WVI branch office).
- 5.4.7 Child protection policies should include a statement that in the event an employee is discharged for suspected sexual abuse, World Vision may disclose such information if requested by a prospective employer. Such disclosures are made in accordance with applicable law and/or customs.

6. Protection of children in sponsorship programs

- 6.1 The Childcare Policy and Child Sponsorship Standards outlined in the Sponsorship Customer Service Handbook must be followed.
- 6.2 Staff members are requested to sign receipt and understanding of World Vision's Policy and Required Standards for Child Protection and acknowledge that they understand procedures related to sponsor visits, including the need to report unannounced/unaccompanied visitors.
- 6.3 Staff members directly relating to sponsors receive awareness raising and training about the need for child protection, strategies to protect children and the detection of possible irregularities in requests related to sponsorship.

- 6.4 A sponsored child's history, picture folders and photographs of children are stored in locked and secure facilities to which a limited number of people have access.
- 6.5 All sponsor correspondence with a sponsored child is reviewed for inappropriate or suggestive comments, requests or obscenities. In the event of inappropriate correspondence being discovered, World Vision reserves the right to decline sponsorship or sever the sponsorship relationship.
- 6.6 At the time of sponsorship, sponsors should be advised that World Vision's policy prohibits unannounced visits. Sponsors should be asked to sign a statement that they have received and understood World Vision's visit policy.
- 6.7 A World Vision sponsor and his or her sponsored child should not exchange home addresses.
- 6.8 Staff should be aware of World Vision's policy on the use of the World Wide Web. Sponsors are advised that information via the World Wide Web is provided as a service and is not to be downloaded or redistributed to another site. Any posting on the World Wide Web should have a clear warning that the information is not to be downloaded or redistributed for any reason. Such activity could subject the user to legal action by World Vision.
- 6.9 World Vision will not facilitate the visit of any child to a sponsor's country or facilitate the adoption of children. Any request for such assistance will be tactfully declined.

7. Visits to World Vision Projects

- 7.1 All visitors to World Vision projects should be advised of behaviour protocols that should reflect national and local sensitivities. Visitors should sign an acknowledgement of receipt and understanding of these protocols as part of their orientation process before they visit with the child.
- 7.2 National office rules for visits to sponsored children must be observed. This may require that a sponsor meet with a child in a central location such as a World Vision office.
- 7.3 World Vision supports the screening of sponsors prior to field visits through police background checks where permitted by local law. Individual office policies and procedures in this regard must be followed. In the event this screening leads to a denial of a sponsor's request to visit a child, the appropriate national office will be informed in case the sponsor attempts to arrange a visit directly.
- 7.4 A World Vision staff member must accompany all visitors to World Vision projects.
- 7.5 Approved procedures for unannounced sponsor visits must be followed. Assuming that both the sending (donor's country) and the receiving (child's country) offices have child protection policies, the more stringent of the two policies applies. Offices conducting background checks have the right to deny a visit but it may not always be possible for the reasons for the denial to be provided.
- 7.6 Communities and families participating in sponsorship programs are advised of World Vision procedures regarding sponsor visits. They are encouraged to report immediately any visit that has not been arranged by World Vision staff or any request from a sponsor that encourages withholding information from World Vision staff or other members of the community.

- 7.7 Operations personnel must be aware that if any visitor makes an unannounced or unescorted visit to a community, the visit is reported immediately to World Vision management. The World Vision director the director's designee will take the matter up with the visitor and alert the appropriate support office executive director.
- 7.8 Actual or suspected cases of abuse or inappropriate behaviour by a visiting sponsor are reported immediately to the sponsor relations manager (or equivalent) of the relevant support office and to the Child Protection Coordinator. Appropriate action will be taken in regards to the donor or sponsor that may include criminal investigation and potential severance of the relationship with World Vision.

8. Advocacy

- 8.1 National child protection policies should include plans to be involved in community, national and regional activities which promote the rights of children and seek their protection from various forms of exploitation and abuse. Advocacy efforts may include pressing for changes in public policies that have an adverse affect on children or do not address their needs.
- 8.2 National offices commit to raising awareness among World Vision sponsors and donors of issues related to exploitation of children and measures being taken to protect them.
- 8.3 National offices seek and initiate collaboration with childcare professionals and other agencies to keep current on child protection issues to ensure knowledge, policies and procedures are up to date.
- 8.4 Local and national best practices and lessons learned concerning child rights and child protection are disseminated throughout the World Vision Partnership to enhance knowledge, staff competence and ministry approaches.
- 8.5 All World Vision offices are encouraged to develop and support policy and research capacities that seek to change structures and systems that jeopardize the rights of children, especially girl children.

9. Communications about Children

- 9.1 Communications about children should use pictures that are decent and respectful, not presenting them as victims. Children should be adequately clothed and poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive should be avoided. Language that implies a relationship of power should also be avoided.
- 9.2 World Vision web sites should not use scanned images of children without formal permission of the World Vision office responsible for the project and the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child. This permission should be in writing and may be part of the packet of documents signed by the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) when the child joins the sponsorship program.
- 9.3 Child personal and physical information that could be used to identify the location of a child within a country should not be used on World Vision web sites or in any other form of communication about a child.
- 9.4 Individuals or organizations requesting the use of World Vision resources such as videos or photographs should be required to sign an agreement with the appropriate World Vision entity

as to the proper use of such materials. The agreement should include a statement that any use of such materials for purposes other than what is agreed upon could subject the borrowing individual or organization to legal action. Furthermore, failure to adhere to the agreed upon use of the material will result in the immediate termination of World Vision's permission to use the subject materials and/or require immediate return of all materials provided by World Vision as well as any copies of such materials.

10. General Confidentiality

10.1 *People*

Information about a child protection incident is shared with people on a 'right' and 'need to know' basis as deemed necessary by appropriate management or by the President's Crisis Management Team. Names and identities are not to be disclosed outside the group designated as 'need to know' unless cleared by appropriate management or by the Crisis Management Team.

10.2 *Communications*

Faxing of information is discouraged unless absolutely necessary. Generally titles on electronic mail messages should be innocuous and flagged as confidential. Any messages to people outside World Vision (e.g. press or police) should be handled according to the Communications and Marketing Crisis Management Plan.

11. Partner Organizations

- 11.1 World Vision offices entering into agreements with partner organizations which provide services to children should require assurance that child protection policies and procedures are in place, acknowledging that lack of such policies can place children and World Vision at risk.