



WORLD VISION CANADA SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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1. OVERVIEW

1.1. Purpose

1.1.1. Safeguarding is foundational to World Vision’s work

Safeguarding children and adults living in communities we serve is foundational to all World Vision activities, programs, and Lines of Ministry (relief, development and advocacy). Central to everything we do is our commitment to do no harm to any child anywhere nor to adults living where World Vision has a programming presence. We uphold the best interests of children as a primary consideration in all actions and decisions.¹

1.1.2. Preventing, reporting and responding to harm or abuse

Safeguarding includes preventing, reporting and responding to harm or abuse caused by World Vision employees and affiliates of children and of adults living where World Vision has a programming presence.

1.1.3. Commitment to continuous improvement

World Vision is committed to continuous improvement of safeguarding efforts which emphasizes prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and other forms of violence or harm. We abhor any misuse of power, status, or trusted position for any sexual or other exploitative purposes. We endeavour to tackle this root cause of abuse in our prevention and training efforts.

1.1.4. Zero tolerance of violence or abuse

World Vision has zero tolerance towards incidents of violence or abuse against children or adults, including sexual exploitation or abuse, committed either by employees or others affiliated with our work. World Vision takes necessary actions to respond to any suspected or known instances of abuse. Incident responses are centred on the child or adult survivor, prioritising their interests.

1.1.5. Vulnerabilities and protection of children

This Policy continues to emphasize the unique vulnerabilities and special protection requirements for children, along with the importance of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), in particular, among other forms of abuse of adults living where World Vision has a programming presence.

1.2. Scope

1.2.1. World Vision safeguarding policies

This WVC Safeguarding Policy applies to World Vision Canada (WVC), a registered charity in Canada and part of the global World Vision Partnership. References herein to “WVC” shall be understood to refer to World Vision Canada.

¹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “General comment No. 14 (2013),” CRC/C/GC/14, <https://undocs.org/CRC/C/GC/14>.

The global World Vision Partnership has issued the Partnership Management Policy on Child and Adult Safeguarding which applies to all WV entities, including but not limited to Field Offices, Support Offices, VisionFund International (VFI) and all of its affiliated microfinance institutions (MFIs), and World Vision International and its Global Centre, regional, programme, branch and project offices (hereinafter 'WV Entities') as well as Boards and Advisory Councils. References herein to "World Vision" shall be understood as including all of these WV Entities, unless the specific language or context clearly indicates otherwise. The World Vision Partnership Management Policy on Child and Adult Safeguarding will be referred within this document as the "WV Partnership Safeguarding Policy."

1.2.2. Protecting children and adults from harm

Although directly applicable to World Vision Canada, the WVC Safeguarding Policy is focussed on protecting all children anywhere from harm caused by any World Vision employees and affiliates and protecting adults from harm caused by any World Vision employees or affiliates wherever World Vision has programming presence.

1.2.3. All activities

This Policy applies equally in emergency relief and development aid programs, as well as advocacy and fundraising activities.

1.2.4. Further information

Further information regarding the WVC Safeguarding Policy may be found on the World Vision Canada website: www.worldvision.ca/safeguarding. Further explanation of the WV Partnership Safeguarding Policy is included in the document Guidelines for Implementation of the World Vision Child and Adult Safeguarding Standards.

1.3. Effective Date

This policy took effect on July 26, 2019. This revision was completed on March 15, 2022.

1.4. Retired/Related Policies

This WVC Safeguarding Policy expands upon World Vision's Child Protection Standards, in place since the year 2000, to cover all communities and populations with whom World Vision works, especially women and children, in one integrated policy.

1.5. Contextualization

1.5.1. Contextualized safeguarding policy

WVC is responsible for ensuring the development, implementation and periodic review of its own contextualized WVC Safeguarding Policy, which is consistent with the minimum standards outlined in the WV Partnership Safeguarding Policy and in accordance with local laws.

1.5.2. Most stringent policy applies

As required by Canadian law and context, WVC may set more strict requirements in its WVC Safeguarding Policy. In cases where safeguarding policies from multiple offices apply, the most stringent policy is followed.

2. POLICY

2.1. Safeguarding Policies and Responsibilities

2.1.1. Development of WVC Safeguarding Policy

World Vision Canada has adapted and contextualized the WV Partnership Safeguarding Policy and will review it annually according to the Canadian context.²

2.1.2. Relevant WVC employees, interns, volunteers, Board members and other affiliated people

WVC equips all employees, interns, volunteers and Board members to understand and perform their safeguarding responsibilities and obligations. WVC also applies appropriate standards to external parties, including visitors, community volunteers, contractors, partners and others affiliated with partners or contractors, to address safeguarding risks relating to their engagement with WVC's work. Hereafter, the full range of people for whom all or some of this Policy are relevant (either directly or through contractual arrangements) will be referred to as 'WVC employees and affiliates.'

2.1.3. Signed acknowledgement

All WVC employees, volunteers, interns, and Board members sign an acknowledgement that they know, understand and will follow this WVC Safeguarding Policy. Signed agreements are kept on file.

Individual employees or subcontractors of Contractors and Partners as defined below also acknowledge the WVC Safeguarding Behaviour Protocols, and these signatures are held by the Contractor or Partner.

2.1.4. Agreements with Contractors

All contracts (excluding WVC employees and Board members) will include a copy of the WVC Safeguarding Behaviour Protocols (Section 2.2.2), and where applicable, the following provision:

In the course of delivering the Services, the <Contractor/Supplier> and those representing the <Contractor/Supplier> will ensure that:

1. Any of their interactions with adults living where World Vision has a programming presence, with children, or with identifiable personal data about such persons, will comply with the attached WVC Safeguarding Behaviour Protocols, and with any other reasonable safeguarding measures that WVC may specify;
2. Any incidents of harm or risk of harm to any child or to adults living where World Vision has a programming presence will be reported immediately to WVC;
3. Any individuals with access to adult program participants, to children, or to identifiable personal data about such persons, will have a current clean criminal background check for

² World Vision Canada has intentionally aligned the sections and numbering in the WVC Safeguarding Policy to match the WV Partnership Management Policy on Child and Adult Safeguarding (Version 2.0.0, September 2021).

- offenses against children or abuse of adults, to the extent permitted by law (evidence of which will be provided to WVC upon request);
4. They do not use children for labour; and
 5. These safeguarding obligations will be clearly communicated to, and acknowledged by, all employees of the <Contractor/Supplier> who may have access to children or to adults living where World Vision has a programming presence, or to identifiable personal data about such persons, and will be extended in identical form to any subcontractors (if any are authorized) engaged to perform this contract.

2.1.5. Agreements with Partners

When engaging a Partner for a WVC project or program activity, WVC must assess the capability of the Partner to fulfil safeguarding responsibilities, including the Partner's safeguarding policy, procedures, and implementation. WVC must then either (a) approve or (b) develop a capacity building plan and support the Partner to develop stronger safeguarding controls.

- (a) The agreement (whether referred to as an 'agreement', 'subgrant', 'Memorandum Of Understanding', or any other term) must specify that before the Partner begins any work on the project, WVC will conduct this assessment and approve or support the Partner as appropriate.
- (b) The Partner can agree to follow the Safeguarding Policy of the local WV Office in carrying out the program activities.
- (c) The agreement must ensure that any of the Partner's personnel working in the WVC project or program activity will have a current clean criminal background check for offenses against children or abuse of adults, to the extent permitted by law (evidence of which will be provided to WVC upon request).

2.1.6. Safeguarding training

All WVC employees, volunteers, interns, and Board members, as well as Partner employees or Partner volunteers working within a WVC project, must complete safeguarding training within 90 days from the start of employment or affiliation with WVC.

All WVC employees, volunteers, interns, and Board members will receive periodic refresher training or other safeguarding training at least once every two years thereafter.

2.1.7. Safeguarding staffing

The WVC Safeguarding Focal Point and the WVC Chief People Officer jointly provide leadership to the implementation of this Policy. Together, this team provides advice and support for the implementation of the WVC Safeguarding Policy.

The WVC Safeguarding team has a mandate for direct access to the WVC CEO and to the WVI Safeguarding Director, should he/she feel that safeguarding issues are not being addressed adequately within WVC.

2.2. WVC Safeguarding Behaviour Protocols

2.2.1. Behaviour that safeguards

World Vision employees and affiliates, including WVC employees and affiliates, must behave in ways that safeguard all children everywhere and adults living where World Vision has a programming presence, to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, and prevent any other intentional or unintentional harm to the people World Vision serves or works amongst.

2.2.2. Safeguarding behaviour protocols

Rules of behaviour are based on local and culturally appropriate interactions with all children and any adults living in the programming area, and are included in each contextualised Safeguarding Policy. The rules in the WVC Safeguarding Behaviour Protocols meet or exceed the minimum protocols provided within the WV Partnership Safeguarding Policy.

Acceptable behaviour – WVC employees and affiliates will:

- (a) create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of these Behaviour Protocols;
- (b) be careful about perception and appearance in their language, actions and relationships with children and with adults living where World Vision has a programming presence. Their behaviour—including in person and on digital platforms, both online and offline—demonstrates a respect for children and adults and their rights;
- (c) ensure that all physical and online contact with children and adult program participants is appropriate in the local culture;
- (d) use positive, non-violent methods to manage children’s behaviour;
- (e) accept responsibility for personal behaviour and actions as a representative of WVC;
- (f) be always accountable for their response to a child’s behaviour, even if a child behaves in a sexually inappropriate manner. WVC employees and affiliates will avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position with children and will remove themselves in such circumstances;
- (g) where possible and practical, follow the ‘two-adult’ rule while conducting WVC work, meaning that two or more adults supervise all activities that involve children, and are visible and present at all times;
- (h) comply with safeguarding-related investigations (internal and external) and make available any documentary or other information necessary for the completion of the investigation;
- (i) comply with applicable data privacy laws and with relevant WVC data privacy and information security policies, including World Vision digital child safeguarding protocols, when handling any personal data about individual children or adult program participants, and that such data must be maintained and transferred in a secure, confidential manner;
- (j) immediately report through established reporting mechanisms any known or suspected safeguarding incident or breach of this Policy by a WVC employee or affiliate, any other

World Vision employee, or a humanitarian aid worker from any other agency.³ (See Section 2.6.5 on how to report.).

Unacceptable behaviour – WVC employees and affiliates will not:

- (a) behave in an inappropriate physical manner or develop a sexual relationship with any child (under 18 years old), regardless of the country specific legal age of consent or age of majority. This includes consenting or condoning the above behaviour (including fostering or condoning child marriage, i.e., under 18 years old). This also includes behaviour that could be seen as grooming a child for any future relationship;
- (b) develop or seek a sexual relationship with an adult living where World Vision has a programming presence. Such relationships, based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of World Vision’s humanitarian aid or development work;
- (c) sexually exploit or abuse an adult living where World Vision has a programming presence or any child;
- (d) exchange money, employment, goods, or services for sex (including sexual favours, other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behaviour, or hiring sex workers) or other exploitative demands. This includes exchange of assistance that is already due to program participants;
- (e) communicate with a child in World Vision’s program areas via digital platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), via mobile technology (e. g. texting, WhatsApp, Skype), or online without consent and knowledge of his/her parents. Further, WVC employees or affiliates never communicate on mobile, digital or online platforms with children or adult program participants in ways that are inappropriate or sexual;
- (f) fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch an adult living where World Vision has a programming presence, or any child, in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way;
- (g) use inappropriate or abusive language with an adult living where World Vision has a programming presence, or any child (for example, using language that causes shame or humiliation, or is belittling or degrading);
- (h) spend excessive or unnecessary time alone with an adult program participant, or any child, away from others or behind closed doors or in a secluded area;
- (i) condone or participate in behaviour which is illegal, unsafe or abusive; including harmful traditional practices, spiritual or ritualistic abuse;
- (j) hire children in any form of child labour (including as “house help”) unless it is within the best interest of the child and in alignment with local law and international standards. In Canada, the employment of persons under 17 years of age are regulated by the Canada

³ “Humanitarian aid worker” includes all paid employees, volunteers, contractors, and other affiliates of organizations providing emergency relief or development aid. Such organizations include UN agencies, international NGOs (INGOs), local NGOs (LNGOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs).

- Labour Standards Regulations.⁴ ('Child labour' is work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, or that interferes with their schooling. 'Child work' in contrast may be beneficial if it meets International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions and puts the child's interests ahead of any benefits gained by adults.⁵);
- (k) hit or use other corporal punishment against a child while the child is in the care of World Vision or when the WVC employee or affiliate is conducting World Vision work;⁶
 - (l) take a child alone in a vehicle for World Vision work, unless it is absolutely necessary, and only with parental/guardian and managerial consent;
 - (m) misuse or be careless with personal data about individual children or adult program participants;
 - (n) stay silent, cover up, or enable any known or suspected safeguarding incident or breach of the WVC Safeguarding Policy by a WVC employee or affiliate, or any other World Vision employee;
 - (o) exchange inclusion in World Vision programs or benefits for any kind of favour from a member of the community, as this is an abuse of power. WVC employees and affiliates also will not discriminate against or show preferential treatment to a member of the community to the exclusion of others;
 - (p) do things of a personal nature for a program participant, which they can do themselves;
 - (q) share personal contact details (home, work, hotel address, email address, contact number, or any social media identity) with any program participant;
 - (r) visit sponsored children or World Vision program areas without the approval of WVC.

The above list provides concrete examples but is not exhaustive of all behaviours that constitute a violation of this Policy.

2.2.3. Disciplinary action

The following are grounds for discipline, up to and including termination of the employment or other affiliation with WVC:

- (a) Failure to follow WVC Safeguarding Behaviour Protocols;
- (b) Failure to follow any other part of the WVC Safeguarding Policy;
- (c) Other inappropriate behaviour toward adults living where World Vision has a programming presence, or any children;

⁴ Canada Labour Standards Regulations (C.R.C., c. 986), Section 10, *Employees Under 17 Years of Age*. https://www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/C.R.C.%2C_c.986/FullText.html#h-602944

⁵ International Labour Organisation, "Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)," https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C138
International Labour Organisation, "Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)," https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C182

⁶ All WVC employees should be familiar with alternatives to corporal punishment, including positive parenting approaches, which they are expected to apply with all children, whether in Canada or in World Vision program areas.

- (d) Failure to report a known or suspected safeguarding incident committed by a WVC employee or affiliate, or any other World Vision employee; or
- (e) Interference with any investigation or inquiry into a possible policy violation.

Individuals who have been found to have breached this Policy may have “Do Not Rehire” placed on their personnel file. Partners and Contractors may have “Do Not Re-engage” placed on their file based on the nature of the case.

2.3. Recruitment

2.3.1. Screening

WVC takes diligent measures to screen out all people who might seek to use World Vision to harm children or adult program participants, or whose past actions indicate an unacceptable risk of such harm.

- (a) These measures include but are not limited to addressing safeguarding in job advertisements (when feasible), applications, interviews and references. Safeguarding screening measures are applied to all candidates for employment, Board members, volunteers, interns and individual contractors who will have access to children or adult program participants or to their identifiable personal data.
- (b) During the interview process, applicants are asked about previous work with children.
- (c) For references supplied by applicants, questions are asked regarding the candidate and relevant incidents or behavioural examples related to work with vulnerable adults and children or for a child-focused agency. Documentation of references is kept on file.
- (d) Screening of internal candidates includes reference checks and review of their personnel file for any previous infractions while working with WVC or any other WV Entity.

Note that major grant donors may have specific screening requirements for work they fund, so relevant grant terms and regulations should be checked.

2.3.2. Identity and criminal background checks

Candidates for paid or unpaid positions within WVC (employment, Board members, volunteers, and interns), as well as relevant personnel of contractors and Partners, have an identification check and criminal record/police background check conducted prior to employment or engagement with WVC. These checks will be conducted periodically thereafter as required by law or appropriate for the context, at the discretion of WVC. Global Centre exemption approval is required for alternatives to police background checks in contexts where they are not feasible or trustworthy or lawful.

People with a prior conviction for any crime against a child or sexual exploitation or abuse against an adult are not hired or engaged by WVC, to the extent permitted by applicable law, and in any case will not be placed in a position with access to children or adult program participants, or to their personal data.

2.4. Visits to World Vision Program Areas

2.4.1. Visitors

Visitors travelling to any World Vision program area must follow and comply to this Policy.

- (a) “Visitors” include any WVC employees, interns, volunteers, Board members, contractors and Partners travelling to WV program areas. “Visitors” also include sponsors, donors, other delegations such as celebrity supporters or journalists travelling to WV program areas who are invited or facilitated by WVC.
- (b) Government officials or institutional donors (government, multilateral) based in the hosting country do NOT require Safeguarding clearance, but are accompanied by a WV employee

All visitors must always be accompanied by a World Vision employee from the hosting WV office when visiting World Vision program areas or when directly interacting with community members from World Vision program areas.

2.4.2. Visit preparation

Unannounced or unapproved visits to sponsored children or World Vision program areas are not permitted. Any visitor who does not comply with this process or fails to meet WVC screening standards may be prohibited from visiting any World Vision program area globally.

Prior to any visit to a World Vision program area, all visitors must fulfill the following process (visitors should provide eight weeks to complete this process)⁷:

- (a) Sign an acknowledgement that they have received, understood and will follow the WVC Safeguarding Behaviour Protocols (Section 2.2), guidelines on Consent (Section 2.5.2) and Prevention of harm in communications (Section 2.5.3) (this signed acknowledgement may be shared with the hosting office);
- (b) Complete a police background check;
- (c) Be pre-approved by both WVC and the hosting WV office.

2.4.3. Visitor orientation to safeguarding

Each WV Entity must ensure that visitors uphold the relevant safeguarding policies and protocols. The hosting WV office provides a brief orientation to any distinctive Safeguarding Behaviour Protocols that apply in their context, as well as local customs regarding adult interaction with children. Visitors must attend this orientation on arrival with the hosting WV office.

2.4.4. Exceptions

In exceptional circumstances when visitors are unable to comply with all visit preparation procedures detailed in Section 2.4.2, the WVC Chief People Officer may, with the approval of the National Director of the hosting WV office, authorize a visit. These visits must always be

⁷ WVC employees, interns, volunteers and Board members are required to complete (a) and (b) during recruitment screening and/or onboarding (see §2.1.3 and §2.3.2).

accompanied by a WVC employee in addition to the requirement for accompaniment of a WV employee from the hosting office (cf. Section 2.4.1).

2.5. Communications, Content, and Marketing

2.5.1. Dignity

WVC is committed to ensure cultural sensitivity and restrictions for reproducing personal images are adhered to before photographing or filming a subject, and WVC ensures images are honest representations of the context and the facts. In all forms of communication, children and adults are treated and portrayed with dignity and not as helpless victims or in sexually suggestive poses.

2.5.2. Consent

Children and adults who are primary subjects of text, photo, video, audio and/or data gathered on behalf of WVC must provide informed consent and have the right to withdraw their consent at any time for any reason. WVC must be able to demonstrate that informed consent has been given and have systems in place that allow WVC to show that a request to withdraw consent has been respected.

Informed consent means the subject has a general understanding of the purpose of the content and gives verbal or written permission thereof. If the primary subject is a child, informed consent is also collected from the parent, guardian, or other legally required entity or individual.

In the following situations, verbal consent is insufficient and not acceptable and written consent is collected from the child's legal guardian or an adult authorized by law to provide such consent:

- (a) the sensitive nature of their personal disclosure or situation could possibly cause damage to their privacy, dignity, safety or reputation, or
- (b) where otherwise required by applicable law.

2.5.3. Prevention of harm in communications

World Vision is committed to storytelling that raises awareness of and promotes solutions to ending violence and abuse against children and adults. WVC takes the following steps to prevent harm through communications, content gathering and marketing (including digital or offline photographs/videos/audio clips, stories, articles, or any other communication materials):

- (a) Personal information on children and adults that is captured, stored or sent through electronic, on-line or mobile devices is password protected. In addition, data is handled in accordance with WVC's current information security standards for personal data, which may include encryption and other requirements.
- (b) WVC ensures that relevant requirements for safeguarding are clearly communicated to all staff, sponsors, vendors and partners at the point of access to photographs, videos or data, and that appropriate measure are taken for child-safe usage of the content once it has been shared.
- (c) Recognising the special vulnerability of children, material posted on social medial or digital channels mentions only the child's first name and country name, and does not contain a child's family name, sponsorship ID number, or child's personal

- location/address. In cases of sensitive subjects such as unaccompanied children or child sex workers among others, WVC conceals the child's identity in images and uses a pseudonym.
- (d) Material with a child or children is not geo-tagged to precise locations if it contains any part of the child's name. An acceptable alternative is to retag photos with the child's first name only to the Area Program or project office location.
 - (e) WVC discourages direct, unfacilitated, undocumented communication through social media without WVC's knowledge between a WVC employee or affiliate (including sponsors, donors, visitors, volunteers, Board members and contractors) and children in World Vision program areas.
 - (f) Where WVC facilitates communication between children and external parties, controls are put in place to protect children's safety and well-being.
 - (g) World Vision provides reporting and response options so that employees, sponsors, donors, visitors, and children or their caregivers can report any incident(s) where either party feels that children may be uncomfortable or threatened. WVC sponsorship welcome kits, websites, domains and social media platform profile pages contain reporting options for child protection concerns or safeguarding incidents.
 - (h) Use of platforms to share marketing or communications content with no ability to track back evidence of informed consent and/or platforms that lack the ability to withdraw consent is forbidden. Only platforms that have been vetted by global or local World Vision IT departments are permitted for sharing content between offices or with donors/external parties. (e.g., Horizon, RMT, StoryHub, etc.).

2.6. Safeguarding Incidents and Response Protocols

2.6.1. Responding to Safeguarding Incidents

WVC is required to investigate and respond to reports of violations of this Policy and harm of adult program participants, or any child, in ways which are consistent with local law. WVC has developed an abridged Safeguarding Incident Preparedness Plan (SIPP) which defines its response in line with Canadian law and available services across Canada.

World Vision uses three levels of Safeguarding Incidents to determine its response, which is based on the seriousness of the incident and the role of World Vision.

2.6.2. Level 1 Child Protection Community Incidents

Abuse of or harm to a child, in a community where World Vision has program operations and that is not committed by World Vision employees or affiliates, is a Level 1 Incident. WV Field Offices track and document Level 1 Incidents and respond according to their SIPP in cases of serious harm that threaten the child's survival, safety or development.

2.6.3. Level 2 Safeguarding Incidents

Level 2 Incidents are defined as any violation of this Policy which puts any child anywhere or adults living where World Vision has a programming presence in direct risk of potential harm, but

where no actual harm is believed to have occurred. WV Entities report Level 2 Incidents to WVI Safeguarding within 24 hours of first notice. Response is implemented by the national entity with oversight by and accountability to the WVI Safeguarding Unit and support from the Regional Safeguarding focal point.

2.6.4. Level 3 Safeguarding Incidents

A Level 3 Incident is an allegation or accusation of harm or abuse to any child anywhere or adults living where World Vision has a programming presence by a World Vision employee or affiliate. If a child is involved, two additional types of incidents qualify: death or serious injury of a child while participating in or at a World Vision activity or caused directly by a person related to World Vision, and/or a road traffic accident involving a World Vision vehicle or driver affiliated with World Vision in which a child is injured or killed. WV Entities report actual or alleged Level 3 Incidents to WVI Safeguarding within 24 hours of first notice. Response is implemented by the national entity with oversight by and accountability to the WVI Safeguarding Unit and support from the Regional Safeguarding focal point.

2.6.5. Reporting incidents

All WVC employees and affiliates are responsible and obligated to report any suspicion of Level 2 or Level 3 incidents as soon as it is discovered.

Reports can be made by WVC employees and affiliates in the following ways:

- (a) Report to line manager or P&C manager
- (b) Contact the WVC Safeguarding Focal Point by email at: safeguarding@worldvision.ca (who then reports on IIM system);
- (c) Contact the hosting WV office Safeguarding Focal Point, when visiting or travelling (who then reports on IIM system);
- (d) Contact WVI Safeguarding Unit by email at: safeguarding@wvi.org;
- (e) Staff can use the Incident Reporting Form in World Vision's Integrated Incident Management (IIM) system: www.worldvisionincidentreport.ethicspoint.com
- (f) If the above options are not available or appropriate for whatever reason: Use the World Vision Integrity and Protection Hotline (also known as Whistleblower Hotline): available online at worldvision.ethicspoint.com, or by phone at 1-888-291-7583 (toll-free).

Failure to report by one of the mechanisms below is breach of this Policy and is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, as stated in Section 2.2.3(d).

In addition, any credible concern or suspicion of sexual abuse or exploitation by a humanitarian worker outside WVC or World Vision is immediately reported.

2.6.6. Notification of Safeguarding Incidents

The WVI Safeguarding Unit informs Support Offices and Multilateral donors of safeguarding incidents according to contractual obligations and regulatory requirements. Additionally, Support Offices may be notified if an incident has potential reputational issues.

- (a) The WVI Safeguarding Unit can provide a copy to the WV Field Office for the purpose of notifying local donor offices if appropriate.
- (b) In line with the principle of “need to know”, no identifying information on survivors, witnesses or subjects of complaint are shared in these notifications.
- (c) Only basic information is provided in order to a) ensure the privacy and safety of those involved in the incident and b) provide assurances that World Vision is appropriately managing the case.
- (d) Support Offices notify their national donors (including Global Affairs Canada) and relevant legal authorities according to contractual/regulatory requirements using the information provided by the WVI Safeguarding Unit’s notification. This will include situations where WVC is funding programs or coordinating grant agreements.

2.6.7. Disclosure

Whilst WVC maintains appropriate confidentiality for individuals in Safeguarding Incidents, WVC may disclose information or data about incidents, when lawfully permitted, in order to support prosecution of suspected criminal activity, meet donor and regulatory requirements, support learning and accountability, enable appropriate due diligence, advocate to prevent future incidents, or as required by law.

- (a) Information in ongoing investigations of Safeguarding Incidents, and information about past incidents, is shared only with those on a ‘need-to-know’ basis, as deemed necessary by the WVC Safeguarding Focal Point, the WV Field Office or Regional Office or WVI Safeguarding Unit. If it is likely that sensitive information about survivors or about violence against children or adults will not be kept confidential and would put people at risk if accessed by unauthorized parties, such information is not collected.
- (b) Detailed personal information, in particular health information, is not obtained or maintained by World Vision, or WVC, in safeguarding incident management, except for the minimum necessary to ensure World Vision handles the matter appropriately. Such personal data is kept strictly confidential and protected in accordance with the applicable data protection and informational security standards.

2.6.8. Reporting to authorities

WVC will evaluate reporting safeguarding violations to appropriate legal authorities, assessing any legal (including contractual) obligations to report, as well as the interests of the survivor(s).⁸ Generally, reports of incidents or violations are provided to authorities, unless a report is judged likely to cause greater harm to existing survivors or potential future survivors.

⁸ For incidents in Canada, please contact the WVC Safeguarding Focal Point or WVC Legal Services for further guidance, as reporting requirements vary between Canadian provinces and territories.

2.6.9. No retaliation for reporting

World Vision does not tolerate any harassment, retaliation or adverse action whatsoever by any employee, director, contractor or other affiliate as a result of any safeguarding report provided in good faith to World Vision, law enforcement or other recognized reporting mechanism.

- (a) No employee shall be adversely affected because they refuse to carry out a directive that could reasonably be construed as likely to create abuse or neglect of a child or an adult program participant.
- (b) If an employee believes that they are being retaliated against, the employee should immediately contact People and Culture or report it through the Whistleblower hotline. Anyone who retaliates against an employee for making a good faith report will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. World Vision's commitment to anti-retaliation does not prevent a reporter from appropriate disciplinary action if they are found to have engaged in unethical behaviour or misconduct.

2.6.10. Safeguarding investigations

Safeguarding investigations meet minimum standards and follow the core principles of investigating allegations of harm, exploitation or abuse to any child or an adult living where World Vision has a programming presence: thoroughness, confidentiality, safety, competent investigators, impartiality, objectivity, timeliness, accuracy and documentation.

- (a) Investigations follow a survivor-centred approach and investigators conduct the process in accordance with sector best practice to prevent further harm to the survivor. World Vision prioritizes the safety, physical and psychological health and welfare of all survivors while upholding and promoting their rights of confidentiality, equality and access to justice.
- (b) World Vision may deploy internally trained investigators or retain the services of an external investigator to manage an incident. Oversight of investigations takes place according to the protocols of the incident level.
- (c) For incidents and allegations occurring outside Canada, WVC may support the WVI Safeguarding Unit to lead investigation efforts.

2.7. Programming Considerations for Safeguarding

2.7.1. Safeguarding essentials in programming

In all programs (including development, humanitarian response and advocacy), World Vision seeks to do no harm to children or adult program participants, to keep the interests of community members—especially children—at the centre of our activities, and to utilize opportunities to help children be safer within their families and communities. This includes consideration of local child protection threats and issues during the entire program life cycle and influencing local actors and groups to be safer organisations for children and adult program participants.

2.7.2. Community feedback, complaints mechanisms and information provision

Children, parents, and other adults must be informed of established complaint mechanisms in World Vision programs and their right to be safe from abuse and exploitation in World Vision programs. As part of our World Vision's Program Accountability Framework, every community-level World Vision program:

- (a) ensures that there are community feedback and complaints mechanisms through which community members can report both general suggestions and any serious incidents of misconduct by employees or affiliates of any WV Entity, including WVC. These mechanisms should be safe and contextually appropriate (i.e., designed in consultation with the community and so child-friendly, gender-sensitive, inclusive of those with low levels of literacy, and inclusive of those with disabilities).
- (b) provides information to communities on what behaviour they can expect of WVC employees and affiliates, or any other World Vision employees and how to report any concerns about abuse, exploitation, or any other breaches of Behaviour Protocols by WVC employees or affiliates or any other World Vision employees.

2.7.3. Online safety in program activities

World Vision actively supports Registered Children (RCs) and their parents/caregivers—as well as any children participating in digital activities organized by World Vision—to understand how to utilize social media and digital technology safely and appropriately, while avoiding risks and appropriately responding to threats or incidents.

2.7.4. Institutionalisation and adoption

As a Christian organisation, World Vision values the family as the primary social unit and basis of civil society. Children grow and thrive best in a family-based environment, not in institutional care.

WVC does not support programming within long-term institutions in ways that perpetuate the institutionalisation of children. WVC does not facilitate the adoption of children.

2.7.5. Humanitarian responses

Because of the special vulnerability of children and adults during humanitarian responses, safeguarding measures take on additional importance.

Humanitarian protection and child protection are anticipated and planned for in program designs, ensuring that World Vision does not expose program participants to greater harm through participation.

2.8. Sponsorship

2.8.1. Prevention of harm in sponsorship

Sponsorship is implemented in a manner that keeps the safety of children as the top priority. This includes:

- (a) The facilitation and review of all sponsor correspondence and all other types of connection, such as videos, between the sponsor and child to ensure appropriate interaction and safety of all parties;
- (b) Training of staff and child monitors to recognize and respond to abuse, including linking child monitors to the local Child Protection Committee and/or Child Protection Reporting and Referral Mechanism;
- (c) Constructive and respectful interaction with parents and children;
- (d) The secure handling and storage of personal information; and
- (e) Gathering only the minimum elements of personal information necessary for the program.

As stated in Section 2.7.3, World Vision actively supports the online safety of children and their parents/caregivers participating in its digital activities.

2.9. Safe Child Participation

2.9.1. Prevention of harm in child participation

World Vision works to empower children as citizens and participants in their own well-being, and to minimize any risk of harm or negative consequence resulting from participation in activities promoted by World Vision.

Child participation programs and activities are based on context analysis with clearly identified needs and expected results, along with how the project will measure progress towards achievement while mitigating risks through risk assessments.

2.9.2. Ethics

Child participation activities are designed and implemented to adhere to principles and ethics which keep the best interests of children as the top priority.

2.9.3. Informed consent in child participation

Child participation activities are voluntary and inclusive (especially of the most vulnerable children), and both children and parents/caregivers make informed decisions regarding participation, including due consideration of the benefits and risks that could be associated with the activity. Consent forms must be kept on file.

2.9.4. Child travel

WVC sometimes helps children travel to domestic or international events, activities or other opportunities.

- (a) In such cases the child and the parents or guardian, or other legally required entity or individual, must give informed consent prior to the travel.
- (b) The child's health, safety, well-being, and meaningful participation are the most important priorities during travel supported by WVC.
- (c) WVC does not facilitate visits of children outside of their country to their sponsor.

- (d) For travel supported, arranged or facilitated by WVC, children must be accompanied by an adult, whether a parent, guardian or legally required individual, or a WV employee, when travelling outside their community.

2.10. Board Safeguarding Governance

2.10.1. Accountability

WVC's Board holds the organization, World Vision Canada, accountable to fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities as outlined in the Board-level Partnership Policy for Child and Adult Safeguarding as well as the WVC Safeguarding Policy.

2.10.2. Risk appetite

The WVC Board ensures that its local risk appetite statements for Child and Adult Safeguarding set the risk area/category as Risk Averse.

2.10.3. Committee oversight

The WVC Board mandates one of its committees to provide oversight to Safeguarding. Given the heightened level of importance of safeguarding oversight, the full WVC Board receives periodic reports and is informed as well as engaged on safeguarding issues.

2.10.4. Safeguarding reports provided to the full Board

The organization, led by the WVC Safeguarding Focal Point, provides a copy of its Annual Safeguarding Update Report to the WVC Board. The organization also provides the associated Safeguarding Action Plan, facilitated and coordinated by the WVC Safeguarding Focal Point, outlining how they will maintain and improve safeguarding controls as outlined in its Annual Safeguarding Update Report.

2.10.5. Training of Board members

- (a) Every new member to the WVC Board must complete Safeguarding training at orientation, and must sign an acknowledgement that they have read, understand and will follow this WVC Safeguarding Policy. This acknowledgement is kept on file by WVC.
- (b) WVC Board members must repeat Safeguarding training every two years to refresh their knowledge.

3. DEFINITIONS

Abuse: A form of maltreatment of a person(s). Somebody may abuse or neglect a person by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. A person may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. There are four main types of abuse: emotional, physical, sexual and neglect.

Child: In conformity with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), a child is defined as any person who is less than 18 years old. This WVC Safeguarding Policy covers interactions by WVC employees and affiliates, and any other World Vision employees, with all children anywhere (not only program participants).

Child labour: Work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, or that interferes with their schooling.

Child protection: All measures taken to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and all other forms of violence against children. A World Vision global sector, together with child participation.

“Community with whom World Vision works” or “living in a World Vision program area”: World Vision uses a broad working definition of these terms to ensure that any individuals who may be subject to power imbalance with World Vision staff, affiliates, or programming are protected through this Policy.

Corporal punishment: Defined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as “any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light”.⁹

Exploitation: Abuse of power or trust to use a person for the benefit of another. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and sexual exploitation.

Field Office: A World Vision office in a country where World Vision programs are implemented.

Harmful traditional practice: Harmful traditional practices are based on culture, custom, religion and/or superstition. They are often embedded within communities for many years and continue through communal pressure. These practices are conducted and actively condoned by parents and/or other significant and influential individuals within the community. They include rituals, traditions and other practices that have a detrimental effect on the physical, mental and emotional health of an individual, typically a child. Many practices involve bias against groups of individuals, particularly girls and children with disabilities. Some practices can involve physical abuse and pain, and sometimes leading intentionally to death or serious injury. Other practices involve mental abuse. Examples of these harmful practices include female genital cutting/mutilation (FGM), breast ironing or breast flattening, so-called ‘honour’ based violence and ‘honour’ killings, early child marriage or forced marriage, and abuse and violence linked to beliefs about spiritual possession.

Partner: A partner organisation, for safeguarding purposes, is a Non-Governmental Organisation, Community-Based Organisation, for-profit enterprise, or other entity that has a written agreement with WVC to implement a program or activity on WVC’s behalf or in collaboration with WVC. The partner may or may not receive funding from WVC.

Safeguarding: Preventing, reporting, and responding to harm or abuse caused by World Vision employees and affiliates, of any children anywhere and of adults living where World Vision has a programming presence.

Child safeguarding: Preventing, reporting, and responding to harm, abuse or exploitation of any child (a person who is less than 18 years old) by a WVC employee or affiliate, or any other World Vision employee.¹⁰ The WVC Safeguarding Policy also requires reporting/referring child abuse cases affecting any child in World Vision programs, even if not committed by WVC employees or affiliates, or any other World Vision employee.

⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “General comment No. 8 (2006),” CRC/C/GC/8, <https://undocs.org/CRC/C/GC/8>.

¹⁰ “Harm” includes injury or death of a child while participating in a World Vision activity or when involved in a road traffic accident with a World Vision driver or World Vision vehicle.

Adult safeguarding: Preventing, reporting, and responding to harm, abuse or exploitation of an adult living where World Vision has a programming presence by a WVC employee or affiliate, or any other World Vision employee. This includes the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), a frequently cited subset of safeguarding.

Safeguarding incident: Harm or risk of harm resulting from safeguarding misconduct or violations of this Policy to any adult living where World Vision has a programming presence, or to any child.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA): The term “sexual exploitation” means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. The term “sexual abuse” means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.¹¹

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA): A term used by the United Nations and the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) community to refer to measures taken to protect vulnerable people from sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian aid workers.

Violence: The use or threat of physical force or power that harms an individual. Although abuse, neglect and exploitation are forms of violence, “violence” is included as a separate category to address physical threats from which children and adults require protection, including gang violence, bullying, harassment and playground violence.

Visitors: Anyone visiting a World Vision project, including WVC employees and affiliates.

WVC employees and affiliates: Refers to the full range of people accountable to the WVC Safeguarding Policy, including all employees, interns, volunteers, and Board members, as well as external parties, including visitors, community volunteers, contractors, partners, and others affiliated with partners or contractors.

4. BACKGROUND

The WV Partnership Safeguarding Policy is authorized by the Partnership Policy on Children’s Well Being and Partnership Policy on Code of Conduct. The Policy is grounded in WV’s broader ministry mandates— particularly Child Protection, which builds community capacity and strengthens local and national systems that protect children.

The WV Partnership Safeguarding Policy replaces and subsumes the Partnership Child Protection Standards approved January 2000 (and updated 2012 and 2016), and the Provisional Standards on Child Protection in Social Media approved May 2011.

¹¹ UN Secretary-General, “Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse,” ST/SGB/2003/13, <https://undocs.org/ST/SGB/2003/13>.