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Child Safeguarding Policy

Document History

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1	13/5/2024	Created and updated as per ACFID requirements	Before annual board meeting

Introduction

At FAIRACTION International, we understand the profound importance of safeguarding children, even though our direct interactions with children are limited in our water projects. Recognizing that children can be indirectly affected by our initiatives; we commit to adhering to the highest standards of child protection as outlined in the ACFID Code of Conduct. This policy outlines our approach to ensuring the safety and well-being of children in all aspects of our work. It defines the scope of our commitment and the measures we take to protect children, underlining the leadership's dedication to uphold these principles and practices. Our commitment extends beyond compliance; it reflects our fundamental belief in the rights and dignity of every child we might impact through our work.

Organizational Commitment to Child Safeguarding (ACFID Code 1.4.1)

FAIRACTION International's leadership is deeply committed to safeguarding children, a commitment that is central to our organizational ethos. This dedication is demonstrated through the development, endorsement, and implementation of comprehensive child safeguarding policies and procedures. Our leaders not only advocate for these practices but also ensure their integration into all aspects of our operations.

To communicate this commitment, we have established a multi-faceted strategy:

- **Regular Training and Workshops:** All staff, volunteers, and project participants receive thorough training on child safeguarding policies.
- **Clear Documentation:** Accessible, detailed policy documents are distributed organization-wide.
- **Continuous Updates:** Regular updates on child safeguarding issues and best practices are provided to keep everyone informed.
- **Open Communication Channels:** We maintain open channels for feedback and discussions about child safeguarding, ensuring it is a shared responsibility across the organization.

Through these measures, FAIRACTION International ensures that child safeguarding is a well-understood and actively practiced principle within the organization, supported by strong leadership and clear communication.

Recruitment and Screening Processes

FAIRACTION International's recruitment and screening for positions involving direct contact with children are thorough and focused on child safety:

1. **Criminal Record Checks:** For roles classified as 'child-related positions,' candidates are required to undergo criminal record checks. This ensures individuals with a history of offenses that pose a risk to children's safety are not employed in these roles.

2. **Statutory Declarations:** In regions where criminal record checks are not feasible or reliable, candidates provide statutory declarations or local legal equivalents, declaring any past criminal conduct.
3. **Verbal Referee Checks:** Irrespective of the position, all candidates undergo verbal referee checks. This process involves contacting previous employers or character references to verify the candidate's suitability and conduct, particularly focusing on their interaction with children.
4. **Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:** Candidates for child-related roles are assessed using behavioral-based questions. These questions aim to evaluate the candidate's understanding of, and attitudes towards, child safety and safeguarding principles.
5. **Role-Specific Screening Measures:** For positions with significant child contact, additional screening measures may include detailed background checks or psychological evaluations, to ensure the highest level of safety and care in our interactions with children.

These processes are part of FAIRACTION International's commitment to maintaining a safe environment for children, ensuring that staff in sensitive positions are thoroughly vetted and qualified.

Risk Assessment and Monitoring

FAIRACTION International's procedures for assessing and monitoring risks to children are as follows:

1. **Risk Assessment Procedures:**
 - Conduct regular risk assessments for each project to identify potential risks to children.
 - Implement risk mitigation strategies based on these assessments.
 - Regularly update risk assessments to reflect changes in project scope or environment.
2. **Monitoring:**

- Continuous monitoring of project activities to ensure child safety.
- Implementing feedback mechanisms to gather insights from children, families, and communities.

3. Guidelines for Use of Images and Personal Information:

- Strict guidelines for the use of images and personal information of children to ensure their safety and privacy.
- Consent procedures for the use of images, ensuring they are used ethically and in line with child safeguarding principles.
- Regular training for staff on these guidelines to ensure compliance.

These procedures and guidelines ensure that risks to children are effectively managed and mitigated in all FAIRACTION International projects.

Child Safeguarding in High-Risk Activities

FAIRACTION International's safeguarding processes in sponsorship and volunteer programs are designed to align with ACFID's guidelines and address the unique risks in these high-engagement activities:

1. Sponsorship Programs:

- Rigorous background checks and training for sponsors involved in child-related interactions.
- Clear guidelines and monitoring procedures to ensure child safety in sponsorship activities.
- Regular assessment of sponsorship programs to identify and mitigate any potential risks to children.

2. Volunteer Programs:

- Thorough screening of volunteers, especially those working directly with children.

- Comprehensive training for volunteers on child safeguarding policies and practices.
- Close supervision and regular evaluations of volunteer activities to ensure adherence to child safety protocols.

These processes ensure that children are protected in all FAIRACTION International's high-risk activities, maintaining a safe and nurturing environment.

Training and Development

FAIRACTION International's approach to training and development in child safeguarding is comprehensive and practical:

1. **Child Safeguarding Training Modules:**

- Training modules for child safeguarding are mandatory for all personnel. These modules are selected based on those made available by ACFID or through e-learning modules provided by accredited Australian organizations.
- The training covers key areas such as recognizing signs of abuse, appropriate behavior and conduct around children, and understanding reporting procedures.
- Regular refresher courses and updates are provided to ensure all personnel stay informed about the latest practices and policies.

2. **Integration into Employment Contracts:**

- Child safeguarding responsibilities and expectations are clearly outlined in employment contracts. This integration underscores the importance of adhering to child safety standards in all aspects of work.
- Contracts specify the mandatory completion of child safeguarding training and adherence to the policies and procedures set forth by FAIRACTION International.

- Provisions in the contracts detail the consequences for non-compliance with our child safeguarding policies, emphasizing the organization's commitment to maintaining a safe environment for children.

This detailed approach ensures that all FAIRACTION International team members are not only aware of but also skilled in child safeguarding practices, aligning with our commitment to creating a safe and protective environment for children.

Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (ACFID Code 1.4.2)

- **Appropriate Language and Communication:** Staff must engage with children using respectful, appropriate language and communication styles that foster a safe and supportive environment.
- **Prohibition of Alcohol and Drugs:** There is an absolute prohibition on the use and possession of alcohol and drugs during any activities where children are present to ensure their safety and well-being.
- **Gift Giving:** The policy on gift-giving is clear — any gifts must be given openly, appropriately, and with the intent to benefit the child's well-being or educational needs. Gifts must never be personal in nature or suggest a relationship beyond the professional.
- **Physical Contact:** Physical interactions with children must be minimal, appropriate, and only when absolutely necessary in the context of the activity. Such contact should always be in a public setting and with the child's consent.
- **Zero Tolerance for Sexual Relations with Children:** We enforce a stringent policy prohibiting any sexual relations with individuals under 18, treating any violations with the utmost severity and immediate action.
- **Child Labor:** We strictly oppose child labor and do not engage in or support activities that exploit children's labor.
- **Use of Images:** The use of children's images in promotional or development materials must be handled with care, ensuring respect for their dignity and privacy. Consent from the child and the guardian

is mandatory.

- **Reporting Mechanisms:** We have established rigorous reporting mechanisms for any child safeguarding concerns, ensuring incidents are addressed swiftly and effectively.

All FAIRACTION International personnel are required to acknowledge and commit to this Code of Conduct through signature, demonstrating their understanding and agreement to abide by these crucial standards. Training sessions are held to reinforce these guidelines, ensuring clarity and compliance.

Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (ACFID Code 1.4.3)

1. Incident Reporting Procedures:

- A formalized, confidential channel for reporting incidents is established, through which staff can report any child safeguarding concerns without fear of reprisal.
- Upon receiving a report, immediate action is taken to safeguard the child involved and an investigation is initiated in line with our safeguarding policy and local laws.
- We maintain a log of all reports, tracking the progress of investigations and outcomes to ensure accountability and transparency.

2. Complaints Handling Procedures:

- Our complaints handling procedure is designed to be easily accessible and user-friendly for children and their guardians, ensuring that they can report concerns safely and confidentially.
- Complaints received are treated with urgency and sensitivity. They are assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate response, with the child's safety as the top priority.
- The Child Protection Officer provides support throughout the process, ensuring that complainants are informed of their rights

and the progress of their case.

3. Role of the Child Protection Officer:

- The appointed Child Protection Officer acts as the primary point of contact for all child safeguarding concerns within FAIRACTION International.
- They are responsible for managing the response to reports and complaints, coordinating with local authorities where necessary, and providing ongoing support to affected individuals.
- The officer also plays a key role in developing and delivering child safeguarding training to staff, ensuring that everyone is equipped to recognize and respond to child protection issues.

Through these detailed procedures, FAIRACTION International ensures that every safeguarding concern is addressed promptly and effectively, maintaining the highest standards of child protection.

Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review)

FAIRACTION International is dedicated to maintaining a dynamic Child Safeguarding Policy that reflects best practices, legal standards, and the evolving nature of our work. To this end, we have established the following processes:

1. Regular Policy Reviews:

- We conduct annual reviews of our Child Safeguarding Policy to assess its effectiveness and ensure it remains current with the latest child protection research, legal changes, and global standards.
- These reviews involve consultations with experts, feedback from staff and partners, and reflections on any incidents that have occurred.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Continuous monitoring mechanisms are in place to evaluate the adherence to and efficacy of the policy in real-time, including spot-checks, staff interviews, and feedback sessions.
- Evaluation reports are generated to track performance, identify areas for improvement, and inform the policy update process.

3. Stakeholder Engagement:

- We engage with stakeholders, including children, communities, and local authorities, to gather diverse perspectives on our safeguarding practices.
- This stakeholder feedback is crucial in shaping policy revisions and ensuring the policy's relevance and responsiveness to the needs of those we serve.

4. Policy Update Process:

- Upon identifying the need for changes, the Child Safeguarding Policy is updated to incorporate new insights and address any gaps or weaknesses.
- Updated policies are then communicated across the organization and to all partners to ensure widespread understanding and implementation.

Through rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and regular reviews, FAIRACTION International ensures that our Child Safeguarding Policy is not only robust but also adaptive to the changing environments in which we operate.

Leadership Role in Child Safeguarding

The step-by-step process outlined below demonstrates how our leaders at FAIRACTION International must actively exemplify and enforce child safeguarding measures across all our projects. This approach highlights our unwavering commitment to embedding these critical practices into our operational framework, ensuring that our leadership not only sets a strong example in safeguarding children but also upholds our values and meets the expectations of our stakeholders. By detailing the specific actions and responsibilities of our leaders, we reinforce our commitment to protecting

children and ensuring that our organizational environment supports the highest standards of safety and care.

Step 1: Policy Development and Endorsement

- **Leadership Involvement:** Senior leaders including board members and management committee will actively participate in the development and regular updates of the Child Safeguarding Policy.
- **Public Endorsement:** Fairaction's top executives will publicly endorse the policy, emphasizing its critical importance to the organization's mission and projects.

Step 2: Training and Personal Involvement

- **Participation in Training:** Leaders attend the same safeguarding training as staff, demonstrating their commitment and understanding of the issues.
- **Training Leadership:** Senior members lead by example by hosting or speaking at training sessions, reinforcing the importance of the policy.

Step 3: Visibility and Communication

- **Regular Communication:** Leaders consistently communicate about child safeguarding in internal meetings, and public forums.
- **Visibility in Materials:** Include messages from leadership in all child safeguarding materials distributed to staff and community stakeholders.

Step 4: Direct Involvement in Projects

- **Site Visits:** Leaders regularly visit project sites to review safeguarding practices and engage with the community, to understand their concerns and needs.
- **Feedback Implementation:** Leaders ensure that feedback from these visits influences policy and practice improvements.

Step 5: Accountability and Transparency

- **Transparent Reporting:** Leaders ensure transparency in reporting incidents and actions taken in response to safeguarding issues.
- **Review and Audit:** Participate in and promote regular audits of safeguarding practices to ensure compliance and effectiveness.

Step 6: Advocacy and External Engagement

- **Public Advocacy:** Leaders advocate for child safeguarding in external engagements, such as conferences and media appearances, to raise awareness and set industry standards.
- **Collaboration with NGOs:** Engage with other NGOs and stakeholders to share best practices and learn from external safeguarding efforts.

Step 7: Policy Enforcement and Updates

- **Enforcement:** Leaders are involved in enforcing the safeguarding policy, ensuring that breaches are dealt with seriously and systematically.
- **Policy Review:** Leaders actively participate in periodic reviews of the safeguarding policy to ensure it remains robust and reflective of the latest best practices.

This structured approach ensures that leadership at FAIRACTION International and our subsidiary entities are deeply engaged in and accountable for the safeguarding of children, setting a strong example for all staff and positively influencing the culture and practices of the organization within the context of water projects.

Points of Contact for Reporting Child Safeguarding Issues

Ensuring that everyone within our organization and our broader community can easily report concerns about child safety is a critical aspect of FAIRACTION International's safeguarding strategy. This section outlines the specific points of contact designated for reporting child safeguarding issues, detailing the accessible, clearly defined reporting channels for staff, primary stakeholders, and children. By establishing reliable and confidential contact points, we aim to foster a safe environment where all concerns regarding

child welfare are addressed promptly and effectively. This process is crucial for maintaining transparency, building trust within our communities, and upholding our commitment to the protection and well-being of every child involved in our projects.

Step 1: Designation of Child Protection Officers (CPOs)

- **Identify and Designate:** Select qualified individuals to act as Child Protection Officers based on their training, experience, and ability to handle sensitive issues.
- **Multiple Officers:** Appoint multiple CPOs to ensure accessibility and to cover various geographic locations where projects are undertaken.

Step 2: Communication of Contact Details

- **Internal Communication:** Ensure that all staff members are aware of who the CPOs are, their roles, and how to contact them. This information should be included in the employee handbook, on the intranet, and displayed in common areas.
- **External Communication:** Communicate this information to primary stakeholders and communities through meetings, project materials, and visible postings in project areas.

Step 3: Establishing Reporting Channels

- **Multiple Channels:** Establish multiple channels for reporting issues, such as dedicated email addresses, phone lines, and a confidential online reporting form.
- **Child-Friendly Methods:** For children, provide age-appropriate reporting mechanisms, such as help lines manned by child-friendly staff or simple, secure online forms.

Step 4: Training and Awareness

- **Regular Training:** Conduct regular training sessions for CPOs to keep them updated on best practices in handling reports.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Run awareness campaigns for staff, stakeholders, and community members about the importance of

reporting and the channels available.

Step 5: Confidentiality and Accessibility

- **Ensuring Confidentiality:** Make sure all reporting channels maintain high confidentiality to protect the identities and details of those reporting issues.
- **Accessibility:** Ensure that reporting mechanisms are physically and culturally accessible to all members of the community, including those with disabilities.

Step 6: Feedback and Follow-Up

- **Acknowledgment of Reports:** Ensure that every report received by a CPO is acknowledged promptly.
- **Follow-Up Procedures:** Establish clear procedures for follow-up on reports, including investigation and response protocols.

Step 7: Regular Review and Updates

- **Review Contact Points:** Regularly review the effectiveness of the contact points and the reporting process to identify and implement improvements.
- **Update Contact Information:** Regularly update and verify the contact details of CPOs and ensure that these updates are well-communicated.

This structured approach ensures that everyone within the reach of FAIRACTION International's projects, from staff to the most vulnerable stakeholders, knows exactly who to turn to and how to report any child safeguarding concerns, with the assurance that their concerns will be handled professionally and sensitively.

Distributing Safeguarding Information to Primary Stakeholders and Children

FAIRACTION International prioritizes the effective communication of our child safeguarding policies to ensure that every child and stakeholder involved in our water projects is well-informed about their rights and the mechanisms available for reporting concerns. This step-by-step process describes practical

and accessible methods for distributing this vital information across our operational areas.

Step-by-Step Process for Distributing Safeguarding Information

Step 1: Simplified Materials

- **Development of Clear, Concise Materials:** Create straightforward, easy-to-understand materials such as leaflets, posters, and FAQs that outline our safeguarding policies and how to report issues.
- **Language and Accessibility:** Ensure materials are available in the local languages and include visual aids to accommodate various literacy levels.

Step 2: Community Meetings

- **Regular Meetings:** Hold meetings in community to present safeguarding information
- **Use of Trusted Figures:** Involve community leaders and teachers in these meetings to help communicate the messages effectively and build trust.

Step 3: Direct Distribution

- **Handouts and Notices:** Distribute informational materials directly to families and children during community events or through schools, ensuring wide accessibility.
- **Visual Posters:** Place informative posters at our smart water kiosks within the community.

Step 4: Digital Communication

- **Online Platforms:** Utilize FAIRACTION's website and social media channels to post safeguarding information, ensuring it is easily accessible to those who use these platforms.
- **Direct Emails and Messages:** Send direct communications to stakeholders' emails or phones where appropriate, especially for urgent updates.

Step 5: Continuous Improvement

- **Feedback Collection:** Use simple feedback forms during community meetings or via online platforms to gather input on the clarity and reach of the information provided.
- **Periodic Reviews:** Regularly review and update communication strategies based on stakeholder feedback and evolving community needs.

By following these practical steps, FAIRACTION International ensures that information about child safeguarding is distributed effectively and responsibly, reaching all stakeholders and empowering them to participate actively in safeguarding initiatives. This approach supports our ongoing commitment to safeguarding children and upholding their rights within every project we undertake.

Child-Friendly Reporting Mechanisms

Recognizing the importance of empowering children to voice their concerns, we have developed child-friendly reporting mechanisms tailored to the settings of our water kiosks and community engagement activities. This step-by-step process focuses on implementing practical and child-accessible reporting options within the community context.

Step 1: Visual Reporting Guides

- **Visual Aids:** Place easy-to-understand visual guides at Smart Water Kiosks, showing simple steps on how children can report issues. These guides will use minimal text and engaging illustrations to ensure comprehensibility for children of all ages.

Step 2: Child-Accessible Reporting Channels

- **Reporting Boxes:** Install child-friendly, secure reporting boxes at Smart Water Kiosks where children can anonymously drop written concerns if they are uncomfortable speaking about them.
- **Dedicated Phone Line:** Establish a child-friendly hotline with operators trained specifically to handle calls sensitively and anonymously, ensuring children feel safe and understood.

Step 3: Community Engagement Education

- **Awareness Sessions:** During community engagement activities, include specific sessions dedicated to educating children about their rights and how to use the reporting mechanisms effectively.
- **Interactive Demonstrations:** Conduct demonstrations using the reporting boxes and practice calls to the hotline during community visits, making these sessions interactive and reassuring.

Step 4: Staff Training for Child Interaction

- **Sensitive Communication Training:** Provide comprehensive training for all staff (Kiosk Attendants) managing the Smart Water Kiosks on child-sensitive communication and handling of reports.
- **Regular Refreshers:** Schedule ongoing training sessions to keep these skills updated with the latest child protection practices.

Step 5: Ensuring Support and Follow-Up

- **Immediate Assistance:** Link reporting mechanisms to immediate support options, such as a designated child support advisor available during kiosk operating hours.
- **Follow-Up Procedures:** Implement a clear procedure for following up on reports that ensures the child's concerns are addressed promptly and effectively while maintaining confidentiality.

Step 6: Feedback Mechanisms for Improvement

- **Child Feedback Collection:** Regularly gather feedback directly from children using simple, engaging methods like feedback forms designed as fun quizzes.
- **Continuous Improvements:** Use this feedback to refine and adapt the reporting mechanisms, ensuring they remain effective and friendly for children.

These steps are specifically designed to make reporting accessible and non-intimidating for children in the community we serve. By integrating these mechanisms into our daily operations and community interactions, we

reinforce our commitment to safeguarding children and ensuring they have a voice in their own protection and well-being.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, FAIRACTION International reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the protection and safeguarding of children. This Child Safeguarding Policy stands as a testament to our dedication, outlining the tangible actions we take to ensure a secure environment for every child we may impact.

Our organization understands the responsibility that comes with the trust placed in us by the communities we serve, our staff, volunteers, partners, and the children themselves. We pledge to continuously uphold the highest standards of child protection, integrating these principles into every facet of our work.

FAIRACTION International is resolute in its promise to foster a culture of vigilance, care, and respect for children's rights. We will persist in our efforts to review, refine, and enhance our safeguarding measures, ensuring that our commitment to child welfare is ever-present and actionable.

Through the collective adherence to this policy, we will maintain and strengthen a protective shield around the children within our reach, ensuring their safety, well-being, and the opportunity for every child to thrive in a safe and supportive environment.