

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Approved by:	Executive Board
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Created by:	Legal & Compliance
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Next review:	2025
Point of contact:	Expert Safeguarding <a href="mailto:compliance@welthungerhilfe.de">compliance@welthungerhilfe.de</a>
Binding on:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Boards of Directors, Executive Management, and all employees of Welthungerhilfe (Association and Foundation)</li></ul>
To be agreed with:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ All partner organisations</li><li>■ All social businesses</li><li>■ All freelancers working for Welthungerhilfe</li><li>■ All persons and groups volunteering for Welthungerhilfe</li><li>■ All suppliers and service providers of Welthungerhilfe</li></ul>

The current applicable version of this document is available in the intranet at [www.welthungerhilfe.org/code-of-conduct](http://www.welthungerhilfe.org/code-of-conduct).

## Introduction

Children need special care and protection. They are particularly vulnerable in situations involving poverty, conflict, and/or humanitarian crises. For this reason, ensuring their wellbeing is of the highest priority for Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V. and Foundation Welthungerhilfe (jointly referred to as “**Welthungerhilfe**”) by following the six IASC Principles in all their projects and programmes:

“1. Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.

2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.

3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.

4. Any sexual relationship between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefitting from such humanitarian assistance and protection that involves improper use of rank or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.

5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.

6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.”

This Policy covers all Children who encounter Employees and Contributors, especially if they do so in the course of their work for Welthungerhilfe. Welthungerhilfe interacts with Children both directly (e.g., through house visits, family consultations, and school events during projects) and indirectly (e.g., by using Children's photographs and stories in reports).

Welthungerhilfe actively promotes the wellbeing of Children, with zero tolerance for any kind of child abuse or exploitation.

## 1. Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are:

- to protect Children from any kind of abuse or exploitation;
- to prevent Child abuse and exploitation by establishing clear rules of conduct for Employees and Contributors;
- to raise awareness of risks in order to help to identify misconduct;
- to protect Employees and Contributors from false or malicious accusations;

- to inform third parties and Project Participants<sup>1</sup> about the conduct they can expect from Employees and Contributors of Welthungerhilfe; and
- to express existing contractual obligations in clear terms.

## 2. Scope

The provisions of this Policy apply to the following:

- a) The Executive Board of Welthungerhilfe Association, General Management of Welthungerhilfe Foundation, and all employees of Welthungerhilfe (Association and Foundation), herein jointly referred to as “**Employees**,” regardless of the scope, place, and type of their employment (including permanent employees, temporary personnel, interns, and contractors);

The Code of Conduct standards must be acknowledged as binding on themselves, their board members, and employees by all of the following:

- b) Welthungerhilfe's Partner Organisations<sup>2</sup>;
- c) social-business undertakings in which Welthungerhilfe is involved;
- d) freelancers working for Welthungerhilfe on a contractual basis;
- e) people and groups volunteering for Welthungerhilfe (e.g., members of the Programme Advisory Committee or action groups); and
- f) suppliers and service providers for Welthungerhilfe.

Members of the Association’s General Assembly and Supervisory Board as well as of the Foundation’s Executive Board commit themselves to respecting the Code of Conduct. The persons listed from b) through f) are herein referred to as “**Contributors**.”

This Policy applies worldwide, serving as the minimum standard for each and every Employee and Contributor. It complements Welthungerhilfe's Code of Conduct<sup>3</sup> as well as the policies, international standards, and codices mentioned therein. Employees and Contributors must also observe the laws that prevail at their place of deployment. In the event of discrepancies, the stricter standard will prevail.

Welthungerhilfe is not liable for the conduct of Contributors, regardless of whether they have agreed to this Policy.

## 3. Definitions

### 3.1. Child

**Child** means, as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (“**UNCRC**”), a person under 18 years of age.

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<sup>1</sup> **Project Participants:** Target groups (beneficiaries) of programmes and projects implemented by Welthungerhilfe or its partner organisations; members of communities in which Welthungerhilfe and its partner organisations are active; and anyone who is actively participating in projects programmes or programmes projects of Welthungerhilfe or its partner organisations, and who is not categorised as either an Employee or a Contributor (as defined in § 3).

<sup>2</sup> **Partner Organisations:** This term refers to all local, national, and international cooperation partners who have signed a memorandum of understanding, a partnership agreement, or a comparable cooperation-based agreement with Welthungerhilfe. This includes community-based organisations, civil society groups, non-governmental organisations, and advocacy partners.

<sup>3</sup> The currently operative version of this document is available on the internet ([www.welthungerhilfe.de/code-of-conduct](http://www.welthungerhilfe.de/code-of-conduct)).

### 3.2. Child Protection

**Child Protection** means taking measures and creating structures to prevent and address incidents of child abuse or exploitation. The objective of child protection is to promote, protect, and fulfil children's rights as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other human-rights declarations, humanitarian agreements and conventions, and legislation at the national level.

### 3.3. Child Abuse and Exploitation

**Child Abuse and Exploitation** exist if the actions of people or institutions directly or indirectly harm the health or dignity of Children, or their prospects of a safe and healthy development. Said actions may be intentional or unintentional. The primary categories of Child Abuse and Exploitation are:

- **Physical Abuse**, which means that a child is intentionally injured or threatened with physical harm. This may involve beating, shaking, kicking, or striking the child. Injuries can also present as bruises, lacerations, or fractures. Another form of physical abuse is to burden Children with tasks that exceed their physical abilities and can hinder their physical development.
- **Emotional Abuse**, which refers to any form of humiliating or degrading treatment. This may include insulting, threatening, mocking, intimidating, or isolating a Child either directly or indirectly (e.g., via social media).
- **Sexual Abuse**, which occurs if a Child is used by another person for that person's sexual stimulation or satisfaction. This includes rape. Sexual Abuse can also take non-physical forms, e.g., if someone exposes a Child to pornographic material or induces a Child to undress or change in his or her presence for purposes of providing sexual stimulation or satisfaction.
- **Sexual Exploitation**, which occurs if someone takes advantage of a Child's trust, vulnerability, or relative lack of power in sexual matters in order to gain financial, social, or political benefits. This includes participation in pornography and prostitution.
- **Neglect**, which means that a Child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, attention, supervision, or medical care (as applicable) are ignored, either wittingly or unwittingly.
- **Child Labour**, which refers to the practice of employing Children for labour in a way that deprives them of their childhoods, limits their ability to attend school, causes long-term damage, or is dangerous in social, ethical, physical, or psychological terms.
- **Military Recruitment**, which means that Children are actively or passively incorporated into military activities, including as soldiers or as human shields.
- **Child Trafficking**, which includes procuring, transporting, housing, delivering, or receiving children for purposes of exploitation.

## 4. Rules of Conduct

All Employees and Contributors are expressly prohibited from exploiting or abusing Children, and from participating in activities that could result in Child Abuse or Exploitation. In the activities and projects for which it is responsible, Welthungerhilfe therefore commits to:

- selecting its Employees and Contributors with great care in accordance with § 4.3;
- educating its Employees through appropriate measures (e.g., training sessions) and actively promoting Contributors' adherence to this Policy;
- offering various channels for Employees, Contributors, Project Participants, and third parties to report any suspicions;
- taking measures to protect survivors;
- following up on any reported suspicions of Child Abuse or Exploitation promptly and proportionately, using trained investigators; and
- protecting victims of Child Abuse and Exploitation by Employees and Contributors of Welthungerhilfe and offering them support. Said support may encompass an expert

psycho-social consultation and/or access to other professionals. The type and scope of support will be established on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the Executive Board.

#### 4.1. Creating a Low-Risk Environment

Employees and Contributors are obligated to create and maintain an environment in which Children are not exposed to any risks and which directly counteracts Child Abuse and Exploitation. This includes:

- educating Employees about the content of this Policy and obtaining confirmation from Contributors that they abide by the principles of this Policy in their work;
- educating project participants about the contents of this Policy, about their rights, and about channels available to them to report violations of this Policy;
- encouraging Children to voice concerns, always listening to Children, and taking them seriously. Naturally, this is particularly important when children are reporting an incident;
- ensuring, to the greatest extent possible, that at least two adults are present when working with Children; and
- ensuring Welthungerhilfe's project teams have a balanced gender composition and encouraging partner organisations to also take such measures.

#### 4.2. Keeping an Appropriate Distance

Employees and Contributors are prohibited from spending undue amounts of time alone with Children in the course of activities or projects for which Welthungerhilfe is responsible, and from bringing or inviting Children to their homes without supervision. By extension, Employees and Contributors are also prohibited from letting unaccompanied Children stay with them overnight or sleep in the same bed with them while travelling. As a matter of principle, Employees and Contributors should not sleep in close proximity to unaccompanied Children.

Under no circumstances may Employees and Contributors perform personal or intimate tasks for Children (e.g., bathing, dressing, going to the toilet), or accompany them in doing so, if the Children are already able to perform said tasks independently.

The aforementioned restrictions do not apply to the following:

- cases in which a contrary course of action is necessary to protect the Child (e.g., to avert a threat to the Child); or
- legal guardians, or first- or second-degree relatives.

#### 4.3. Carefully Selecting Employees and Contributors

Welthungerhilfe's central Human Resources team and its country/project offices must apply the following minimum standards for positions expected to involve contact with Children:

- i. Checking references<sup>4</sup>
- ii. Posing questions about standards of conduct in the hiring interview
- iii. Checking candidates' criminal history, as it relates to their history with Children and young people, during the hiring process, as permitted in accordance with applicable labour laws
- iv. All other qualifications being equal, the "balanced team" criterion (see § 4.3(iv)) will be applied when selecting candidates.

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<sup>4</sup> Each country office must confirm whether this is permissible under applicable laws.

Partner Organisations must be carefully evaluated, including with regard to their Child-protection measures, before any cooperative relationship is entered into. Cooperative relationships may only be entered into, or continued, if it has been satisfactorily established that the Partner Organisations in question are committed to the standards of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and they apply protective measures to a level comparable with this Child Protection Policy. Exceptions to this rule require written approval from Welthungerhilfe's Executive Board.

#### 4.4. No Child Labour

Welthungerhilfe is against Child Labour. Employees and Contributors may not employ Children for activities that constitute child labour (see § 3.3).

#### 4.5. No Sexual Relationships with Children

Welthungerhilfe takes a clear stance against sexual relationships with Children. Welthungerhilfe Employees are strictly prohibited from engaging in sexual relationships with Children (defined by the UNCRC as under 18 years of age). This prohibition applies in the broadest employment context, and outside the immediate employment context without limitation to all Project Participants. Welthungerhilfe expects Contributors to also abide by this rule without limitation.

In addition, Welthungerhilfe does not tolerate any sexual relationship between an Employee and any individual who is younger than the highest age of consent prescribed by German law, local law, or any other law or regulation applicable to the Employee or the individual.<sup>5</sup> Welthungerhilfe expects Contributors to apply at least comparable principles within their respective organisations.

#### 4.6. Using Children's Photos and Information Responsibly

When gathering information about Children, recording them (through photos, video, audio, etc.), or reporting on them, it is vital to ensure that children are represented in a dignified, ethical, and respectful manner. They must be dressed appropriately and not posed in a way that could be perceived as sexually suggestive. Local traditions or restrictions must also be respected when taking photos or making videos. Pictures, videos, and information must be used only with the prior, informed consent of the child's parents or guardians; this requires them to be apprised of why such recordings and information are being gathered and how they will be used. For unaccompanied Children and young people, guardianship must be clarified first, and consent then sought from the legal guardian. Photos, videos, etc. may not be used without obtaining such consent.

Photos, videos, or other depictions of Children and/or of information regarding Children must not be publicised via communications media without appropriate protection and the documented, informed consent of the Children's legal guardian. Furthermore, pictures of Children must not contain information regarding their private addresses. Where applicable, Children's names must be replaced by a pseudonym.

Supplementary information is provided in the following document:

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<sup>5</sup> For example, if the laws of the child's nationality, Employee's nationality, the country of the act, and Germany all set forth different ages of consent, the highest age provided by any of these laws would apply. **Age of consent** describes the minimum age at which a person is legally able to consent to sexual activities. As a rule, sexual activities with persons under the age of consent will be prosecuted. Each country office is required to inform itself about the local age of consent and to share this information, and any changes thereto, with the contact person named in this Policy.

- [Social Media Policy](#)

## 5. Reporting Requirements and Consequences for Violations

Anyone with concerns, suspicions or knowledge of incidents regarding violations of this Policy is obligated to immediately report them to the Compliance department at Welthungerhilfe's Head Office via Welthungerhilfe's Reporting Portal ([www.welthungerhilfe.org/complaints](http://www.welthungerhilfe.org/complaints));



The Reporting Portal ensures adequate confidentiality and allows for anonymous reporting.

Any report submitted to management or via national complaint lines to Welthungerhilfe must be passed on by them to the Compliance department via Welthungerhilfe's Reporting Portal.

Nobody who reports suspected violations or submits information regarding such violations with honest intent, needs to fear any disadvantage or other consequences, even if the report later turns out to be unfounded. It is not the responsibility of Employees, Contributors, or reporters to conduct investigations, search for evidence, or determine whether a violation of this Policy took place.

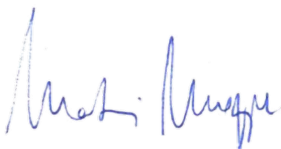
Deliberately false accusations will not be tolerated. The failure to report a suspected violation of this Policy constitutes a violation of Welthungerhilfe's Code of Conduct and of this Policy.

Violations of this Policy may result in disciplinary measures, up to and including immediate termination and/or the annulment of cooperation agreements. Welthungerhilfe reserves the right to report criminal offences in compliance with applicable laws.

Additional information is provided in the following documents:

- [Guideline for Reporting Code of Conduct Violations](#)
- [For Germany: Shop Agreement Whistleblowing System](#)

**Reporting Portal:** [www.welthungerhilfe.org/complaints](http://www.welthungerhilfe.org/complaints)



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