



# Child Safeguarding Policy

Annex 2 of the Help a Child Integrity Policy

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 | About Help a Child

Since 1968 Help a Child has been involved in addressing the needs of vulnerable children in Asia and Africa. Initially this was mainly done in the context of residential homes, but later also in the family context. The past years the focus has been on the empowerment of children, their families and communities to provide for a safe and caring environment with opportunities for the future.

Based on its beliefs and world view, Help a Child has defined its vision as follows:

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“Inspired by the love of God, Help a Child desires vulnerable children, youngsters and their families, facing extreme poverty and other adverse circumstances, to live their lives in dignity and to the full.”

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The vision describes the structural change to be effected in the lives of the selected target group. It is an impact that is based on the biblical world view that Jesus came to the world to allow fullness of life for every human being. The mission has been defined as follows:

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“Help a Child is enabling families and communities, challenged by marginalization, discrimination and poverty, to be a good and safe place with love, dignity and opportunities for vulnerable children.”

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Help a Child believes that all forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children are unacceptable. Working for vulnerable children Help a Child considers child protection the heart of our mandate. We are motivated and inspired by the Biblical mandate shown through the life and ministry of Jesus regarding the value of children. He gave an example using the metaphor of the humility of the child as a requirement for adults to enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 18). And He clearly showed His disciples not to hinder the children from being brought to Him.

From a Biblical perspective Help a Child strives to make the signs of God’s coming Kingdom visible in this world, and recognizes that we live in a broken world full of poverty and injustice. This means that children need to be protected from harm and supported in an enabling environment in which children can develop holistically. We believe all children have equal rights to be protected including those who are disabled, who are from minority ethnic/faith groups, and regardless of gender, sexuality, culture.

Next to our biblical motivation, we acknowledge the protection of children is a human right issue. This policy is therefore based on the UN Convention on the rights of the child. To align with internationally recognized standards and good practice Help a Child has become an associate member of the Keeping Children Safe alliance and is committed to meet Keeping Children Safe standards for child protection ([www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk](http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk)).

## 1.2 | Goal of the policy

We believe that all organizations working with children, either directly or indirectly, are responsible for protecting children from harm and abuse. This Child Safeguarding Policy is the declaration of Help a Child's commitment to the protection of children from exploitation abuse. It explains what Help a Child means by 'exploitation' and 'abuse' and adds some specific means of prevention, rules, and response and monitoring aspects related to child safeguarding to the Integrity Policy as a whole.

This Child Safeguarding Policy constitutes annex 2 of the Help a Child Integrity Policy and it is designed to provide guidance to:

- understand the importance of child protection
- ensure a safe environment for children is created through preventative measures
- ensure compliance under legal and policy obligations
- provide guidance on child protection issues and good practice

This policy is not meant to be an answer for child protection concerns whereby the possible perpetrator nor a staff or representative of Help a Child is, nor a staff or volunteer from the partner organization. Although the impact for the child may still be very severe, and an adequate response will be required, this will not be part of this Child Safeguarding Policy. However, Help a Child will try all possible through its Community Child Protection program to ensure protection of all children in the communities it is working in.

## 1.3 | Definitions

In order to ensure safety for children, it is important to define exactly what we are talking about in this policy. Help a Child is following the definitions as being used globally, and as defined by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and the World Health Organization.

**A child** is every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable under the child majority is attained earlier.<sup>1</sup>

**Child abuse** or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.<sup>2</sup>

**Physical abuse** of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be a single or repeated incidents.<sup>3</sup>

Examples: punishing a child excessively; smacking, punching, beating, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, grabbing; hitting a child with an object; leaving a child in an undignified posture; leaving a child in an uncomfortable posture for an extended period of time or in a poor environment; harmful initiation ceremonies; bullying; threatening to harm someone;

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<sup>1</sup> UN Convention of the Rights of the Child

<sup>2</sup> WHO, 1999

<sup>3</sup> WHO, 1999

force a child to do labor which is too heavy and/or of which the labor hours are too long for the child according to his/her age.

**Emotional abuse** includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.<sup>4</sup>

Examples are: isolating or excluding a child; stigmatizing, treating a child who is a victim as a suspect (repeated questioning and investigation); failing to provide a supportive environment; failing to provide an appropriate sense of self (for instance, criticizing length); not responding to a child's emotional needs; treating or looking at a child with disdain, disrespect, denigration; blaming, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or blackmailing a child.

**Neglect** is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as inattention/omission of care and failing to ensure a safe environment (leaving dangerous things within reach of a child, such as medication, guns, knives, pornography etc.) much as is feasible.<sup>5</sup>

Examples include: failing to supervise and protect from harm; leaving a child at home for long period without supervision; failing to ensure suitable nutrition for a child (parent may give a child money for food but not monitor to ensure they eat healthily or a parent may deliberately withhold food from a child); failing to ensure a child attends school; failing to follow up or report repeated bruising or burns; failing to provide boundaries and structure to a child's life.

**Child sexual abuse** is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to:

- The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity.
- The exploitative use of child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices.
- The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> WHO, 1999

<sup>5</sup> WHO, 1999

<sup>6</sup> WHO, 1999

**Commercial or other exploitation** of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labor and child prostitution. Child labor is defined as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- interferes with their schooling by:
  - depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
  - obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
  - requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

In its most extreme forms, child labor involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities - often at a very early age.<sup>7</sup>

**Child trafficking** is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. It is a violation of their rights, their well-being and denies them the opportunity to reach their full potential.<sup>8</sup>

**Child Safeguarding** is the responsibility that organizations have to ensure their staff, operations and programs “do no harm” to children and that any concerns the organization has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work are reported to the appropriate authorities.<sup>9</sup>

**Child Protection** is the work being undertaken to strengthen laws, policies and systems, which are designed to protect children in a given country in his or her own family and community.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons , especially women and children <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html#Fulltext>

<sup>9</sup> Understanding Child Safeguarding, Keeping Children Safe, 2014

<sup>10</sup> Understanding Child Safeguarding, Keeping Children safe, 2014

## 2 PREVENTION AND PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 | Awareness raising

This chapter is an addition to the chapter 3 of the Integrity Policy, which already describes the general procedures Help a Child uses to prevent integrity Issues, including child protection issues (e.g. recruitment procedures).

It is important all staff members are oriented and understand the Child Safeguarding Policy well when they sign the aligned Code of Conduct (annex 1 of the Integrity Policy). During the induction training for new employees, the new employee need to gain knowledge and understanding of:

- Child abuse definitions
- How to identify **and respond to abuse**
- Where abuse can take place
- Security of child information and confidentiality
- Guidelines for child sponsorship including sponsor visits
- The procedure to adopt if abuse or suspected abuse comes to light

Line managers and the integrity focal persons should, in addition, also gain knowledge and understanding of:

- The child protection risks in the organization and how to develop a mitigation strategy

The Help a Child Code of Conduct includes the expectations the organization has of Help a Child's representatives when they come into contact with children. It describes a behavior protocol with rules of appropriate and inappropriate behavior, which are designed to protect children but are also intended to protect adults from false accusations of inappropriate behavior or abuse. This Code of Conduct is not intended to create an environment of suspicion. Signing to the Code of Conduct commits the signatory to actively participate in building and maintaining an environment which is safe for children and their vulnerable families. All Help a Child's representatives should be adequately informed about the risks of working with children, the aim of the Child Safeguarding Policy and the role of the Code of Conduct and its implications.

### 2.2 | Sponsorship guidelines

Regarding child and family sponsoring we are emphasizing the following principles:

- A sponsor sponsors in principle the program activities and corresponds with a child or family who is a representative of the target group. This means the sponsor is NOT the direct financial contributor of the individual child or family. Children, partner organizations and sponsors are being informed about this clearly.
- Help a Child sponsor programs are designed in such a way that after a period of support children and families become capable of providing for their own needs. Therefore sponsoring is temporary and focused on self-sufficiency of people. Ending a sponsorship is thus not a loss, but a gain.
- A sponsor-child has biological parents or caretakers. Sponsors do NOT take over the role of the parents or care takers and it is for the best interest of the child that the sponsor is presenting him or herself as such. Therefore we very much want to avoid terminology like "sponsor parent" or "foster child" or "adopted child".

## 2.3 | Communication and ICT guidelines

With the on-going digitalization the privacy and protection of (vulnerable) children is at stake. Help a Child acknowledges this. Children are known by name by the sponsors as vulnerable and dependent children. In order to protect them as much as possible, the following rules and regulations have to be followed:

- Pictures of children on internet or in publications are never going together with the complete first and family name of the child. We also do not mention the village, only the country and possibly the district.
- The correspondence with the sponsor children and families will always take place via the address of the partner organization.
- The children /families are not allowed to mention their own address and email address in the letters, and they are also not allowed to ask their sponsor about their address and email. Sponsors are strongly advised not to provide their own address and own email address. We also advise against contacts via Facebook or other social media. This is included in the information package that new sponsors receive, including explanation for the reasons of this strict policy.
- Medical information about the children/families are never provided to sponsors or others by Help a Child or the partner organization without the consent of the child/family.
- The ICT system of Help a Child has been protected with strong antivirus software and firewall against hacking.
- If pictures will be used in Communications about children they need to be decent and respectful, not presenting them as victims. Children should be adequately clothed and poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive should be avoided. Language that implies a relationship of power should also be avoided. However, we also recognize there are times when children are in reality victims, for example, of famine. In such cases the child's dignity should still be preserved whilst presenting the reality.

## 2.4 | Visitors

Own staff but also others can visit the programs supported by Help a Child. For example, sponsors /donors (individual or in groups), press, interns and consultants. All visitors have to act and behave conform a code of conduct which they sign before their trip. All people working/visiting the community on behalf of Help a Child are introduced to the communities by appropriate staff of Help a Child or partner organizations.

### VISITING A SPONSOR CHILD

As Help a Child we are not stimulating individual visits of sponsors to 'their' sponsor child or family. Although there are very positive sides to these visits, the security and privacy of the children and their families outweighs these benefits for Help a Child. If in exceptional cases a visit is permitted, the following conditions must be followed:

- Before departure Help a Child has a conversation with the visitors, explaining the conditions and required conduct of the visitors.
- The Help a Child country office (if present) and the partner organization has to be aware of the rules and regulations for visitors. It also has to be aware of the particular visit and needs to consent with the visit and the time. If a visitor turns up, without informing the hosting organization (Help a Child (if present in country) and the partner organization), the hosting organization has to report this to Help a Child International and should not cooperate with this visit.



- The child, the parents/caretakers, the Help a Child country office (if present) and the partner organization will have to consent with the visit. If not, the visit will not take place.
- The visit is never longer than half a day.
- The visitor is not allowed to be alone with the child. Another trusted person has to be present.

A child that is no longer participating in the program is no longer part of the responsibility of Help a Child or the partner organization. However, we still feel responsible and we do not encourage or facilitate visits of the sponsors to their former sponsor child.

### GROUP TRAVEL

Travel of groups is always being prepared carefully by Help a Child and partner organization. Travelers are obliged to participate in the preparatory days organized by Help a Child. The Child Safeguarding Policy is an important component of these days: it is being explained why Help a Child has this policy and how important it is for the organization. This category of travelers has to sign the security declaration with the short version of the Code of Conduct (in the language they are most familiar with, Dutch or English).

The travel guides have been instructed and have the responsibility to check if all participants are following the Child Safeguarding Policy and they have to act in case a breach of the policy comes to light.

Before any travel with under-aged visitors (teenager, youth-groups etc.) - in fact any activity with children - there should be a risk analysis carried out to ensure that there is no potential of harm to children.

## 2.5 | Partner organization selection and assessment

Any agreement between Help a Child and partner organizations that provide services to children will require assurance that child protection policies and procedures are in place, acknowledging that lack of such policies can place children and the agency at risk.

During selection of Partner organizations and regular organizational capacity assessments minimum requirements regarding child protection will be assessed. Child protection measures need to be shown by:

- A written Child Safeguarding Policy which is known by all staff members
- How staff are recruited and assessed, including child protection check
- The provision of staff training
- A code of conduct, signed by all staff
- Guidelines on communication with children
- Reporting procedures in case of a child protection concern
- Reporting procedures, known by community members, including children, youth and parents

If partner organizations do not have a Child Safeguarding Policy of their own, Help a Child Child Safeguarding Policy will apply until the organization develops its own within a period of maximum 2 years.

As said in chapter 3 of the Integrity Policy, monitoring on the implementation of the Help a Child Integrity Policy and procedures is also part of the program audit, and audit which takes place at least once every two years.

Partner organizations are required to report the following child protection concerns to Child Protection Expert immediately within 24 hours:

- Child protection concerns in which Help a Child staff, representatives or sponsors are involved.
- Child protection concerns in which staff or representatives of the partner organization are involved.
- Child protection concerns that have been given media attention in which the partner organization and/or Help a Child is mentioned/accused

Inadequate *response* to child abuse within the partner organization may lead to the decision of Help a Child to withhold funding and end the partnership.

In case of a child protection issues concerning children in the program area, caused by a community member in the program area, the partner organization is required to inform Help a Child too, but this is not part of this Policy. For example: a head-teacher from a primary school abused children in the primary school were the partner organization is doing a lot of activities.

## 3 RESPONSE

This chapter provides information on signs of child abuse and touches upon some Help a Child principles of response. Annex 4 of the Integrity Policy covers the reporting mechanisms the organization has in place for concerns around integrity issues.

### 3.1 | Signs of abuse

Recognizing abuse is not easy, since children react in different ways and many of the signs are very subtle and can mean different things (e.g. if a child says it has a headache it can mean that there is something it wants to tell you). In most cases the signs are more profound to staff who work with the child regularly and can observe a sudden change in behavior.

UNICEF in its Child Protection Manual includes a list with signs of the different types of child abuse. Signs which might be an indication for abuse are:<sup>11</sup>

Possible signs of physical abuse	Possible signs of neglect
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bruises, burns, sprains, dislocations, bites, cuts</li> <li>- Improbable excuses given to the injuries</li> <li>- Injuries which have not received medical treatment</li> <li>- Injuries which occur to the body in places that are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.</li> <li>- Repeated urinary infections and unexplained tummy pains</li> <li>- Refusal to discuss injuries</li> <li>- Withdrawal from physical contact</li> <li>- Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather</li> <li>- Fear of returning home or parents being contacted</li> <li>- Showing wariness or distrust of adults</li> <li>- Self-destructive tendencies</li> <li>- Being aggressive towards others</li> <li>- Being very passive and compliant</li> <li>- Chronic running away</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequent hunger</li> <li>- Failure to grow</li> <li>- Stealing or gorging food</li> <li>- Poor personal hygiene</li> <li>- Constant tiredness</li> <li>- Inappropriate clothes</li> <li>- Frequent lateness or non-attendance of school</li> <li>- Untreated medical problems</li> <li>- Low self-esteem</li> <li>- Poor social relationships</li> <li>- Compulsive stealing</li> <li>- Drug or alcohol abuse</li> </ul>

Signs of emotional abuse	Signs of sexual abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Physical, mental and emotional development is delayed</li> <li>- Highly anxious</li> <li>- Showing delayed speech or sudden speech disorder</li> <li>- Fear of new situations</li> <li>- Low self esteem</li> <li>- Inappropriate responses to painful situations</li> <li>- Extremes of passivity or aggressions</li> <li>- Alcohol or drugs abuse</li> <li>- Chronic running away</li> <li>- Compulsive stealing</li> <li>- Obsessions or phobia's</li> <li>- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration</li> <li>- Attention seeking behavior</li> <li>- Persistent tiredness</li> <li>- Lying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age inappropriate sexualized behavior</li> <li>- Physical indicators (general and in genital and anal area's)</li> <li>- Behavioral indicators (general and sexual) which must be interpreted with regard to the individual child's level of functioning and development stage.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Appendix 1 of Child protection manual of UNICEF, 2005

Possible signs regarding an adult's behavior, which are reasons for concern:<sup>12</sup>

- A person in whose presence a child or children becomes unusually distressed or agitated
- A member of staff, volunteer or parent asking a child to lie about anything (especially if it is about meeting that child)
- Any member of staff, volunteer or parent asking a child to lie about a situation involving a child, particularly if that child looks distressed
- Any person who persistently fails to follow the organization's Code of Conduct/behavioral protocols, especially when reasons are evasive
- Private (outside of work) meetings between a child and a member of staff or volunteer

## 3.2 | Responding to child protection concerns

All matters related to Child Protection are confidential. The report form (annex 4 of the Integrity Policy) is confidential, whereby details of the child, details of the accused person and details of the reporting person, are all protected. All records/reports are kept in a securely locked place with limited access. Disclosure of information can be made only to relevant parties on need to know basis.

Below some additional principles of response for the persons involved in analyzing and/or investigating the reported concern are mentioned.

What to do with the child?

- Involve an external agency knowledgeable about child protection. This means in each project area where partner organizations of Help a Child are working, it is advised that a network is established which can deal with child protection cases in the community.
- Involve the local authorities, if appropriate. It is important to inform the local authorities, but be aware that the local laws might not be the same as Help a Child believes in ('innocent till proven the opposite' is not always used in the real sense of it).
- Ensure the child gets the appropriate care.
- Make sure there is no negative publicity about the child.

What to do with the staff accused of abuse?

- The person concerned will be informed about the reported case and has the right to be heard.
- Make sure all people involved follow the rule: innocent till proven guilty.
- The case is confidential during the investigation, with only the directly involved people aware about the steps.
- Ensure the staff is informed about the ongoing investigation.
- Make sure the staff gets appropriate support, psychosocial and legal if needed.
- Appropriate action will be taken if staff is found guilty (termination of contract and legal action if required) as described in the employment conditions manual (Dutch: Handboek Arbeidsvoorwaarden).

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<sup>12</sup> From Appendix 1 of the Child Protection Manual of UNICEF, 2005

## 4 Implementation, monitoring and learning

Help a Child will take the following measures to support effective implementation of this policy:

- Appoint a Coordinator Integrity, country Integrity Focal Points, a (Child) Protection Expert and a Confidential Counsellor.
- All staff and representatives will be required to sign an acknowledgement and consent to agree on the terms of the Integrity Policy as a whole, including the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Recruitment procedures for high risk positions will include police and reference checks on suitability for working with children.
- Wide distribution of this policy and translation in Dutch and English within the organization, with partner organizations, alliance partners and on our website.
- Integrate child protection measures into all core processes and policies (incl. HR Policy, Partnership Policy, Safety and Security Policy, Communications Policy, child sponsorship documents).
- Training for Help a Child staff and partner organizations.

To keep children safe, policies, procedures and plans have to be implemented across all parts of the organization. Checks are needed to ensure this is happening consistently. The views of those involved inside and outside the organization can help to improve the effectiveness of any measures taken.

- All recorded child protection incidents will be registered and viewed by an Integrity Committee including the Child Protection Expert.
- All confidential information will be kept by the Coordinator Integrity in a safe and confidential place.
- The Integrity Policy as a whole, including the Child Safeguarding Policy, will be reviewed by the Integrity Team bi-annually or sooner if required by law on new practice.
- An annual report will be made by the Coordinator Integrity to the MT for information and progress on implementation of the Integrity Policy as a whole.

Help a Child is committed to raising awareness among her sponsors / donors of issues related to exploitation of children and measures being taken to protect them. Help a Child seeks and initiates collaboration with childcare professionals and other agencies to keep up with developments regarding child protection issues to ensure knowledge, policies and procedures are up to date.

Help a Child is involved in project activities which promote the rights of children and seek their protection from various forms of exploitation and abuse. Advocacy efforts may include pressing for changes in public policies that have an adverse effect on children or do not address their needs.

Local and national best practices and lessons learned concerning child rights and child protection are disseminated throughout the Help a Child Partnership network to enhance knowledge, staff competence and program approaches, and carry out interventions in the community to uphold child protection and child rights issues there.