Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy

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1. Mission and Need Statement

Worldreader is on a mission to create a world where everyone can be a reader. We believe that digital technology, when combined with relevant content, smart programming, and strong partnerships, has the potential to improve the lives of billions of people.

Worldreader works directly and through partners with children and vulnerable adults on a range of its projects and programs and has the responsibility to promote the wellbeing and safety of all people whilst enjoying opportunities to develop their full potential.

Worldreader is fully committed to practices that protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and recognizes its duty to ensure that appropriate action is taken where a child or vulnerable adult is experiencing harm or is at risk of harm.

Safeguarding in relation to children is defined by UNICEF as follows:

“Child safeguarding refers to all of the actions a company takes to keep all children they come into contact with safe – and includes the proactive measures put in place to ensure children do not come to harm as a result of any direct or indirect contact with the company. Child safeguarding encompasses the prevention of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and maltreatment of children by employees and other persons whom the company is responsible for, including contractors, business partners, visitors to premises and volunteers”

The Hague Protection of Adults Convention defines vulnerable adults as:

“adults who, by reason of an impairment or insufficiency of their personal faculties, are not in a position to protect their interests.”

In order to support Worldreader in identifying and managing potential risks of harm to people effectively, and for the purposes of this Policy only, a vulnerable adult should be identified as a person aged 18 or over who meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Has a learning or physical disability; or
- Has a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or
- Has a reduction in physical or mental capacity;
- Is detained in custody; or
• Is unable, for any other reason, to protect himself/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

2. Policy Purpose

This Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy sets out Worldreader’s approach to preventing and reducing harm to children and vulnerable adults

The Policy aims to:

• Promote and prioritize the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults in line with Worldreader’s commitment to responsibility and accountability, especially in the context of field visits;
• Provide assurance to parents, carers and other parties that Worldreader takes reasonable steps to manage risks and keep children and vulnerable adults safe;
• Ensure that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with the necessary information, training, and support on safeguarding matters;
• Ensure Worldreader does not employ or contract individuals that either are debarred by the relevant authorities from working with children and/or vulnerable adults or Worldreader otherwise considers pose a risk to children and/or vulnerable adults; and
• Ensure that appropriate action is taken in the event of any allegations or suspicions regarding harm to children or vulnerable adults arising from contact with Worldreader staff, volunteers, board members, donors, guests, and contractors.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to:

1. Interactions between Worldreader staff, volunteers, board members, donors and guests with children and vulnerable adults they come in contact with either in the course of Worldreader’s regular activities and/or an occasional or ad hoc field visit; and
2. Interactions between other persons whom Worldreader is responsible for, including contractors and partner organizations that come in contact with children or vulnerable adults in the course of activities conducted on behalf of Worldreader.
This Policy does not address the protection of Worldreader staff, workers and volunteers. Reasonable adjustments for disabilities and any capability/capacity matters in the workplace are managed outside of this Policy. Please contact the Director of Global Human Resources for further advice as required.

4. General Principles

Safeguarding relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and to protect them from harm.

All staff, volunteers, board members, donors, and contractors should have a basic awareness of safeguarding issues. This includes:

- Being alert to the possibility of abuse and neglect;
- Having enough knowledge to recognize an abusive or potentially abusive event or set of circumstances;
- Knowing who in the organization to raise concerns with; and
- Being competent to take the appropriate immediate or emergency action.

4.1 What Constitutes Abuse?

Abuse is a deliberate act of ill-treatment that can harm or is likely to harm a person’s safety, wellbeing and development. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. Abuse may not, however, fall easily into these categories and staff, volunteers, board members, donors, guests, and contractors are not expected to be experts in the field. Neglect also constitutes abuse but can be defined as failing to provide or secure a child or vulnerable adult with the basic needs required for physical safety and wellbeing.

Children and vulnerable adults can experience abuse in a number of ways. Forms of abuse that may affect children and vulnerable adults include:

- Abuse of trust
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child Trafficking
- Discriminatory abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Harmful sexual behavior
• Neglect
• Online abuse
• Organizational or institutional abuse
• Physical Abuse
• Psychological or emotional abuse
• The radicalization of children or vulnerable adults
• Self-neglect
• Sexual abuse

5. Procedures for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

To effectively manage the risks associated with activities and events involving children and vulnerable adults Worldreader shall:

1. Complete regular risk assessment processes which involve identifying risks and means of reducing or eliminating these;
2. Implement the required actions identified by the risk assessment processes and reviewing the effectiveness of these on a regular basis;
3. Ensure Worldreader’s staff, volunteers, board members, donors and guests entering into contact with children or vulnerable adults are familiar with the content of this Policy and the Safeguarding Code of Practice and that they receive training on safeguarding commensurate with the degree of their involvement with children or vulnerable adults;
4. Ensure that appropriate disclosure is requested or background checks are carried out, depending on eligibility, for any individuals who will work or enter into contact with children or vulnerable adults;
5. Establish clear and efficient procedures to report where an individual suspects or is informed that a child or vulnerable adult has been, is being or could be harmed; and
6. Require its partner organizations and contractors whose activities involve interacting with children or vulnerable adults to operate safeguarding policies and procedures equivalent to this Policy.

Worldreader’s Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Implementing Procedures provide further guidance and templates for each of these procedures. Please contact your Regional Leader for assistance. Regional Leaders are encouraged to develop complementary tools and procedures to address any safeguarding matters of particular relevance to them.
6. Governance and Implementation of the Policy

The ultimate responsibility for this Policy rests with the Executive Leadership. Every 2 years, the Executive Leadership shall commission a review of, and seek recommendations on, potential updates to this Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy. This effort ensures that this Policy remains current and relevant, given the changing context in which Worldreader operates.

Policy implementation is the responsibility of the Worldreader’s Regional Leadership. Support for policy implementation will be provided by relevant global personnel and designated personnel in each region. Regional Leaders are also responsible for knowing what disclosure and background checks are available and required in the territories they operate in, as well as local safeguarding resources and procedures.

Additionally, each manager is accountable for the adoption and application of this Policy by their reports. They are required to promote the importance of safeguarding within their team and ensure that appropriate systems are in place for:

- All their staff to become familiar with the Children and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy during their orientation;
- Relevant staff to review the department’s activities and follow the Children and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding risk assessment process.

It is the responsibility of the member of staff leading the activity or event which involves working with children and vulnerable adults to:

- Identify that the Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy is applicable to a particular role, activity or event by completing/updating a risk assessment;
- Ensure that staff, volunteers, board members, donors, guests and contractors working or entering into contact with children and vulnerable adults are familiar with the contents of this Policy and its application before any new or changed activity/event;
- Set expectations of the standards of behavior required from participants in an activity/event and encourage them to accept responsibility for their own performance and behavior.

Staff, volunteers, board members, donors, guests and contractors working or entering in contact with children and vulnerable adults in the context of Worldreader activities should be familiar with this Policy. In addition, they
should conduct themselves in accordance with the Safeguarding Code of Practice set out in this Policy. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary measures.

7. Safeguarding Guidance
7.1 Code of Conduct

When working with children and/or vulnerable adults, Worldreader staff volunteers, board members, donors, guests and contractors are expected to take account of this guidance in the way that they conduct themselves.

Worldreader staff volunteers, board members, donors, guests and contractors should not:

- Meet or travel with the child or vulnerable adult on their own;
- Have unnecessary physical contact;
- Ask overly personal questions;
- Suggest or imply a personal relationship could develop;
- Take an aggressive or bullying tone;
- Offer or accept personal gifts;
- Exchange personal details such as personal phone numbers, addresses or other personal information unless strictly necessary for the fulfillment of Worldreader activities. Prior Permission from Worldreader Leadership should be requested to collect such information; and
- Take photographs or video images of children and vulnerable adults without written consent. Where it is necessary to take photographs or video images of children or vulnerable adults, written consent must be obtained (from parents/guardians in the case of children) before these images are taken, in order to comply with relevant Data Protection legislation. Personal details and photos which clearly identify an individual may only be published where he/she (or his/her parent/guardian in the case of minors aged under 18 years of age) has provided written consent.

Worldreader staff volunteers, board members, donors, guests, and contractors shall:

- Report incidents of alleged abuse to the regional leader and ensure that any allegations are recorded; and
- Participate in available training to support their work or interactions with children and vulnerable adults.
7.2 Online Safety

Remember that inappropriate behavior can also occur over the telephone, email, social media or the internet. Only official Worldreader social media should be used for engaging with the wider community. Inappropriate or abusive comments should be removed swiftly and abusive individuals blocked/reported to the social media concerned. Facebook, instant chat and other similar functions should not be used to interact with children or vulnerable adults. Wherever possible, communication should be only public pages and avoid colloquial language/abbreviations which may be misinterpreted (e.g. LOL).

7.3 Confidentiality and Sharing Information

In any work with children and/or vulnerable adults it is important to be clear about confidentiality. Confidentiality and safeguarding should be discussed with children and/or vulnerable adults at the beginning of any piece of work and reminders and information given from time to time, to ensure that they understand the processes and what responsibilities members of staff have.

It is absolutely essential to be clear about the limits of confidentiality well before any such matter arises. While personal information held by professionals and agencies is subject to a legal duty of confidence and should not normally be disclosed without the subject’s consent, it is essential that staff responds quickly where they have concerns or suspicions of abuse.

Any concerns about confidentiality should not override the rights of children and/or vulnerable adults at risk of, or suffering, harm.

8. Responsible Department

The Impact Department is responsible for maintaining this policy and resolving any doubts regarding its interpretation.

Any questions or concerns that arise as to this Policy should be directed to Worldreader’s Chief Impact Officer: rebecca@worldreader.org.