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UNICEF POLICY ON SAFEGUARDING

Document number: POLICY/DAPM/2024/001 v. 6 June 2025
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RATIONALE

1. UNICEF is committed to Safeguarding. This means we work in ways that prevent and reduce the risk of Harm to all persons as a result of their contact with UNICEF or the work of the organization[1]. Safeguarding should be embedded in processes, plans and actions as an integral part of programmatic and operational excellence. This Policy sets out UNICEF's Safeguarding principles and standards, prohibited actions and expected practices. It aims to ensure a Safeguarding culture and a proactive approach towards preventing and managing risks of Harm, early intervention and responding to Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents.

2. As mandated by the United Nations General Assembly, and in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF is responsible for advocating for the advancement of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. This Policy recognizes that UNICEF cannot fulfil this mandate without Safeguarding.

3. This Policy defines Safeguarding as inclusive of, but not limited to, ensuring Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). It reaffirms UNICEF's commitments to PSEA under the Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/13)[2] and the Six Core Principles of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)[3]. One of the Policy's priorities is to support UNICEF in its continuing PSEA work.

4. Preventing and managing Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents in an appropriate way promotes a survivor-centred approach[4] and ensures high-quality programming. Failure to consider Safeguarding could have serious impacts on those who come in contact with UNICEF and could damage UNICEF's reputation, programmes and partnerships.

POLICY STATEMENTS

5. Everyone at UNICEF, regardless of role, has Safeguarding responsibilities. This Policy applies to all UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel[5]. Non-UNICEF United Nations personnel and those acting on behalf of United Nations partnerships and coalitions are also expected to adhere to this Policy when undertaking work on behalf of UNICEF. The Policy also applies to individuals who visit UNICEF programme locations and those who work with UNICEF through volunteer or similar arrangements.

6. UNICEF's Implementing Partners, Vendors and other parties associated with UNICEF are expected to apply the principles and requirements of this Policy through provisions included in relevant agreements and contracts. Implementing Partners, Vendors and other parties associated with UNICEF should have their own Safeguarding-related policies, standards and practices, which should be no less stringent than those set out in this Policy. This should include standards for the conduct of personnel, contractors and volunteers or other individuals acting on their behalf.

7. With regard to governments and local authorities, UNICEF will continue to promote and support the development and enforcement of laws, policies and standards related to Safeguarding including with regard to the conduct of government personnel.

8. National Committees for UNICEF, which are non-governmental organizations that promote the aims

[1] See Annex I for definitions of the various terms used in this Policy
[2] Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse ST/SGB/2003/13
[3] Six Core Principles of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)
[4] United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
[5] See definition in Annex I of this Policy

and objectives of UNICEF and advance children's rights and well-being globally through resource mobilization, advocacy and other activities in their territories in accordance with the Cooperation Agreement, are expected to have in place their own Safeguarding policies, with a requirement for child Safeguarding policies and procedures no less stringent than those set out in this Policy[6].

9. Safeguarding relates to all of UNICEF's work, comprising its programmatic, operational and administrative work – including in the digital environment.

10. This Policy focuses on safeguarding those who come into contact with UNICEF – that is, those who come into contact with our Staff and Affiliate Personnel, Implementing Partners, Vendors or other parties associated with UNICEF, including those undertaking work for UNICEF through volunteer arrangements. Issues of discrimination, harassment, Sexual Harassment and abuse of authority and other workplace-related issues among or between UNICEF Staff or Affiliate Personnel are regulated by other policies[7]. Similarly, fraud and corruption issues are regulated under a different Policy[8].

11. This Policy complements the UNICEF Policy on Environmental and Social Standards (ESS) in Programming which addresses environmental and social risk management areas and enhances programme stakeholder engagement across UNICEF programmes and related workplan activities not covered under this Policy. This Policy is aligned with the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) framework.

12. The UNICEF Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children (CF/EXD/2016-006), issued on 1 July 2016, and the UNICEF Procedure for a Child Safeguarding Framework (DFAM/PROCEDURE/2019/009) are hereby superseded by this Policy.

Definition of Safeguarding

13. This Policy defines Safeguarding as the actions taken to prevent and respond to Harm caused to any individual as a result of their contact with UNICEF or the work of the organization[9].

14. Enabling Safeguarding means:

    14.1. **Preventing and responding to 'prohibited actions**', as defined in paragraph 22[10];

    14.2. **Preventing and responding to conduct** that does not amount to prohibited actions but fails to meet the expected Safeguarding practices, as outlined in paragraphs 23 and 24 of this Policy.

Policy Elements
General Principles

15. UNICEF takes action in a manner consistent with the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular, the **best interests of the child** are a primary consideration in all matters concerning children. If this Policy conflicts with another UNICEF regulation in any way, **the safeguarding of vulnerable individuals should be prioritized.**

16. The **'do no Harm**[11]' principle is paramount for Safeguarding. UNICEF makes every effort to ensure that

[6] In accordance with the Cooperation Agreement between UNICEF and each National Committee, National Committees have committed to supporting and upholding UNICEF policy
[7] This is addressed through the UNICEF Policy on the Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority (POLICY/DHR/2020/002), as may be amended or superseded by other issuances.
[8] This is covered by the UNICEF Policy on Anti-Fraud and Corruption
[9] See definition in Annex I. of this Policy
[10] For further definitions relevant to the listed prohibited actions, see Annex I. Reference is also made to United Nations Staff Regulation 1.2(a) (e) and (f) in relation to the basic rights and obligations of Staff; and the Six Core Principles of the IASC
[11] See definition in Annex I of this Policy

no one is Harmed because of UNICEF[12].

17. In all of our Safeguarding actions, the **inherent dignity, individual autonomy and rights of those concerned will be respected** in line with international law, with due weight given to the evolving capacities of all children and their right to express their views freely.

18. UNICEF **applies Safeguarding standards without discrimination** based on individual characteristics or personal circumstances. UNICEF recognizes that some individuals and groups – based on their gender, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, indigeneity, nationality and migration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and sex characteristics, in particular women and girls – are often at a higher risk of experiencing Safeguarding violations, and therefore that such risks should be mitigated accordingly and in partnership with those individuals or groups.

19. **A survivor-centred approach**[13], **confidentiality and the safety, security, privacy and the right of due process of all survivors, complainants or other involved parties** are key considerations for Safeguarding practice, especially in relation to reporting, investigation and providing assistance to survivors.

20. UNICEF actively promotes the participation and engagement of stakeholders, including those most at risk, to identify Safeguarding risks and solutions that are effective in the local context[14].

21. Safeguarding is an integral part of UNICEF's commitment to the core values of care, respect, integrity, trust, accountability and sustainability[15]. By embedding Safeguarding within every aspect of our work, this Policy supports the implementation of these values.

Prohibited actions

22. All UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel, in both their personal and professional lives, are prohibited from attempting, soliciting, encouraging, assisting or engaging in acts that may cause Harm to individuals. The following is a **non-exhaustive list of prohibited actions** that may amount to misconduct and/or wrongdoing, in accordance with UNICEF policies, procedures and any applicable contractual arrangements:

    22.1. **Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**, including exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex or sexual favours. The prohibition includes any form of Exploitation and Abuse that happens digitally and online, and acts associated with Child Sexual Abuse Materials (CSAM). Deliberately exposing a child to any sexual activity or material is prohibited.

    22.2. Any **sexual relationship between those providing assistance and protection and a person benefiting** from such assistance and protection that involves improper use of rank or position or exchange of anything for sex or sexual favours.

    22.3. **Sexual activity with children** (persons under the age of 18). This is prohibited regardless of whether it is legal locally and regardless of marital status. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.

    22.4. Entering into **marriage or a similar union with a child**.

    22.5. **Exploiting persons** through any form of human trafficking, forced or exploitative labour.

    22.6. **Engaging a child as a household servant** or otherwise **economically exploiting children** or

[12] This is in line with the Accountability to Affected Populations framework
[13] See United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2019;
[14] This is aligned with UNICEF's commitment to Accountability to Affected Populations
[15] UNICEF Core Values

engaging them in work that is likely to interfere with their education or otherwise negatively affect their development, including child household servants or the worst forms of child labour[16].

22.7. Engaging in **any form of violence**, including **physical violence** against any person or being **verbally abusive** towards persons or subjecting them to other degrading or humiliating language or treatment.

22.8. Neglecting or negligently treating individuals, including children, who may be under our care in our professional capacity in a manner that could cause significant Harm to said individuals[17].

22.9. Neglecting or negligently treating dependent individuals, including children, in our personal capacity as the parent, legal guardian or caregiver of the individual in a manner that could cause significant Harm to said individual. This includes exposing individuals under our care to domestic violence, deliberately exposing them to violence or cruelty, or encouraging dangerous or illegal activities.

22.10. Engaging in **practices Harmful to individuals, including female genital mutilation/cutting, amputations,**[18] **bindings, scarring, burning, branding and violent or degrading initiation rites.**

22.11. **Sexual Harassment:** any unwelcome and improper conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment[19].

Expected Safeguarding practices

23. In contrast to actions that are explicitly prohibited, expected practices help to prevent Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents and build a positive Safeguarding culture. **Everyone to whom this Policy applies** is, as **appropriate to their official role and function,** expected to:

23.1. **Inform themselves about UNICEF's Policy on Safeguarding** and its provisions, through training and resources available in their respective functional area;

23.2. **Identify and maintain age-appropriate and professional boundaries** in communication and interactions[20] (in-person and virtual) with children, young people, women and other people whom we serve;

23.3. **Identify themselves and their role clearly** during their professional work and maintain professional communication, including when using digital/social media;

23.4. Respond to and report Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents as per paragraphs 25–31 below;

23.5. **Collect, store, use and share personal data and images** of individuals whom we serve in line with the principles of this Policy and the specific requirements in the UNICEF Policy on the Protection of Personal Data which lays out the conditions to process personal data without

[16] See the Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, ILO Convention 182 and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973, ILO Convention 138

[17] This includes being responsible for children participating in a workshop/conference organized by or on behalf of UNICEF.

[18] This excludes medically required surgical amputations.

[19] As per paragraph 10, when the case involves a UNICEF Staff and/or Affiliate Personnel, Policy on the Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority applies; when it involves personnel from Implementing Partners or Vendors, the General Terms and Conditions of the relevant contracts or any other legal agreement apply

[20] This includes smoking and drinking in front of children in the context of UNICEF's programmatic work.

violating individuals' right to privacy and without doing any other Harm to individuals[21]

23.6. **Undertake risk assessments, including personal data protection impact assessments, and develop risk management plans** to ensure the safe design, planning and execution of programmatic, operational, administrative or logistical activities, and events, programme visits or other functions;

23.7. Adhere to **rules and support best practices in recruiting, vetting, training and managing personnel**;

23.8. Adhere to rules and support advancements in S**afeguarding standards in the contractual instruments and in the process of contracting Vendors**, through risk-based vetting, screening and capacity assessment including in relation to personal data;

23.9. **Advocate for and support all partners to develop their own Safeguarding-related policies and practices**, especially when implementing activities in partnership with UNICEF. Support **Implementing Partners** to undertake **risk assessments and develop risk management plans for Safeguarding,** including in relation to prohibited actions, such as Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, as well as personal data protection; support **capacity-building activities** of Implementing Partners **and monitor** compliance with partnership agreement provisions.

24. In addition to the practices detailed in paragraph 23 above, individuals with **managerial/supervisory** roles must:

24.1. **Be role models for adhering to Safeguarding** commitments by consistently applying Safeguarding practices in the work of their teams;

24.2. **Foster a safe culture** where Staff and Affiliate Personnel feel comfortable openly and regularly discussing Safeguarding risks and concerns while maintaining appropriate confidentiality;

24.3. **Build capacity** by supporting Staff and Affiliate Personnel, Implementing Partners, Vendors, National Committees and other parties associated with UNICEF (as relevant) to attend Safeguarding training sessions;

24.4. **Monitor Safeguarding behaviour and compliance** with Safeguarding expected practices in areas under the manager's supervision;

24.5. **Consider Safeguarding in performance planning** by ensuring performance appraisals include Safeguarding considerations and responsibilities as appropriate to the role;

24.6. **Seek any advice or support needed** to address Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents and escalate them as required.

Responding to and reporting Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents

25. Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents involving UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel, Implementing Partners, Vendors or other parties associated with UNICEF, or working in or associated with a National Committee, may be raised by anyone (Staff, Affiliate Personnel, community members, National Committees, etc.). They should be reported to UNICEF through established mechanisms to receive and manage feedback and complaints. Individuals from the communities we serve and those visiting and observing programme activities must be informed about UNICEF's Safeguarding standards and

[21] Policy on Personal Data Protection

how to report Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents, and will be provided with a safe, anonymous and accessible way to make such a report[22].

26. All Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents must be promptly, securely recorded and addressed.

27. Designated focal points may be formally appointed by the office to support actions required for preventing, reporting and managing Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents[23].

28. UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel who in good faith reports a Safeguarding Concern or Incident, including suspected prohibited actions, as described in this Policy, through recognized reporting channels will be protected against retaliation[24].

29. UNICEF Staff[25] and Affiliate Personnel[26] have an obligation to report suspected prohibited actions as defined in this Policy to the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI). This may be done by forwarding reports to the Head of Office[27], who will then send the report to OIAI and the designated focal points, or by sending reports directly to OIAI as soon as possible.

30. UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel who engage in prohibited actions may face administrative and/or disciplinary measures, which may include dismissal, termination of contract and referral to national authorities, as appropriate[28].

31. Safeguarding Concerns resulting from a failure to apply expected Safeguarding practices (see paragraphs 23 and 24 above), shall be addressed by the relevant UNICEF office and/or with the relevant Implementing Partner, Vendor or other parties associated with UNICEF, through corrective administrative, programmatic, or managerial actions. Actions may include changes managed at the local level with appropriate oversight, to programme design, partnerships or contracts, training, capacity-building activities, supervision, or personal development plans. Should information come to light that elevates the Safeguarding Concerns to a prohibited action that may amount to misconduct, it should immediately be reported as per paragraph 29.

Review of reports

32. The Head of Office, on receiving a report of a Safeguarding Incident, will relay the report within 24 hours to OIAI for assessment and review in accordance with the charter of the OIAI. If OIAI receives a report concerning a Safeguarding Incident directly, the report will be shared with the Head of Office concerned (only if the Head of Office is not among the involved parties) for the purpose of responding with actions, such as the provision of victim/survivor assistance and risk mitigation measures, ensuring confidentiality and the safety, security, privacy and right of due process of any persons concerned.

33. In relation to UNICEF Staff, decisions on whether or not to impose a disciplinary measure are taken by

[22] Relevant and current procedure and guidance documents provide additional details on responding to and reporting Safeguarding concerns, including ESS-related procedure documents

[23] Some UNICEF country offices have dedicated focal points for risk management and/or specialized focal points for Safeguarding and/or Protection from Sexual Exploitation or Abuse (PSEA). The need and possibilities for appointing risk management and/or specialized focal points will depend on country context, size of the country office and existing internal systems. For the purpose of this Policy, the term "designated focal point" will be used to avoid multiple terminologies such as risk management focal points and specialized focal points.

[24] See the UNICEF Policy on Whistle-Blower Protection Against Retaliation (DHR/POLICY/2018-001), as may be amended or superseded by other issuances.

[25] [24] In line with the UNICEF Policy on Disciplinary Process and Measures (POLICY/DHR/2020/001); and United Nations Staff Rules 1.2(c).

[26] In line with their contractual terms

[27] For definition of 'Head of Office' see Annex I of this Policy

[28] This is in line with the UNICEF Policy on Disciplinary Process and Measures (POLICY/DHR/2020/001), as may be amended or superseded by other issuances; see also the Six Core Principles of the IASC.

the delegated authority[29] in accordance with Policy on the disciplinary process and measures. For Affiliate Personnel, the head of the office or department managing the relevant contractual relationship makes decisions on the response actions and/or mitigating measures to be implemented, including termination of contract. The Executive Director of UNICEF will be notified of cases that involve UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel, and other cases expected to have a significant impact on the organization.

Implementing Partners and Vendors

34. This Policy requires that reporting obligations for Implementing Partners and Vendors be outlined in partnership agreements and terms and conditions[30]. Implementing Partners and Vendors are required to take immediate action and investigate any reports that their personnel or those contracted by them, have been involved in prohibited actions in the context of undertaking work on behalf of UNICEF and report such actions to UNICEF.

35. OIAI will receive and assess reports of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and other Safeguarding Incidents under their mandate causing, or likely to cause, significant Harm to children that implicate Implementing Partners or Vendors and that occur during the course of their partnership or contractual work with UNICEF. In such cases, OIAI may assess the investigative actions taken by the Implementing Partner or Vendor in accordance with its mandate, to ensure the integrity and due process of any investigation and share its findings with the relevant UNICEF office for partnership management and risk mitigation purposes.

36. Safeguarding Concerns that involve Implementing Partners or Vendors should be addressed as part of programme management and capacity building activities between UNICEF and the Implementing Partner, and as part of regular Vendor and/or contract management activities between UNICEF and the Vendor.

37. The office responsible for managing the partnership or Vendor contract will determine further actions depending on the outcome of any assessment and/or investigation.

National Committees

38. Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents involving a National Committee should be promptly reported as per the National Committee's own established reporting mechanisms. When UNICEF receives a report of Safeguarding Concerns or Incidents involving a National Committee, including in relation to an individual working in or associated with a National Committee[31], UNICEF will promptly refer the case to the relevant National Committee to be dealt with by the National Committee in accordance with their regulations and national legal requirements.

Investigation

39. OIAI is responsible for assessing and conducting investigations into possible misconduct or wrongdoing within and associated with UNICEF as it deems appropriate, including matters involving UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel, Implementing Partners, Vendors and other third parties[32]. Where appropriate, information regarding the outcomes of assessments and investigations conducted by OIAI, including

[29] At the time of issuance of this Policy, this was primarily the deputy executive director, Management, as per the UNICEF Policy on Disciplinary Process and Measures (POLICY/DHR/2020/001)
[30] Please refer to the latest version of the programme cooperation agreement documents for Implementing Partners and the general terms and conditions for Vendors.
[31] This applies, as appropriate, to all people working in or people or entities associated with the National Committee including Staff, volunteers, consultants, interns, ambassadors, contractors, Vendors, partners and visitors
[32] In line with the OIAI Charter and Investigations and noting that UNICEF Staff are subject to the UNICEF Policy on Disciplinary Process and Measures (POLICY/DHR/2020/001), as may be amended or superseded by other issuances, while Affiliate Personnel are governed by their contractual arrangement in place with UNICEF.

investigation reports, will be shared with the relevant offices within UNICEF to determine if any further action should be taken.

Disciplinary measures and contractual remedies

40. Reasoned decisions about discipline or contractual consequences will be taken and recorded by the responsible party in all cases warranted by investigative findings. Sanctions may include dismissal (for UNICEF Staff) and contract termination (for Affiliate Personnel) in accordance with existing UNICEF policies and procedures. Administrative measures or managerial actions should be considered if appropriate[33].

Survivor assistance

41. Access to assistance and support will be made available to victim/survivors of Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, irrespective of any accountability procedure, when the victim/survivor is someone directly taking part in UNICEF programmes or activities, and in line with relevant international guidelines[34] and good practices.

Accountability and responsibilities

UNICEF responsibilities at the country, regional and headquarter levels

42. Safeguarding is a shared organizational commitment, with accountability at the individual, management and organizational levels, as set out in this Policy.

    42.1 In a country or area office, the responsibility for ensuring Safeguarding practices are implemented and accountability for compliance with this Policy rests with the Head of Office, with the Country Management Team advising on the expectations, resourcing and monitoring of this Policy. Detailed functions and responsibilities are included in Annex II.

    42.2 Regional directors exercise regional oversight and are responsible for providing technical guidance and support, including quality assurance, and coordinating country offices and area-based/multi-country programmes within their respective region in relation to implementing this Policy. Detailed functions and responsibilities are included in Annex II.

    42.3 Headquarter offices are responsible for global Policy setting, strategy, oversight, global-level coordination between agencies and monitoring overall resource allocation to support Policy implementation. The Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring (DAPM) is responsible for overall direction under this Policy and leads the overall coordination of its implementation, while different divisions have specific functions, as outlined in Annex II.

[33] As outlined in the UNICEF Policy on Disciplinary Process and Measures (POLICY/DHR/2020/001), examples are an oral or written reprimand and reassignment and/or change of duties. Managerial action means an oral or written caution, a warning or advisory communication, training, coaching and/or referral of the Staff member to the UNICEF Staff counsellor, the Office of the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes, the UNICEF Ethics Office, or any other resource available to UNICEF for support and development.

[34] See UN Victim Assistance Protocol and Technical Note.

Special Considerations in Emergency Contexts

43. Safeguarding risks are heightened in emergency contexts. UNICEF will take these additional risks into consideration, including those that have been identified in relation to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse as prescribed in the UNICEF emergency procedure documentation.

Transitional Measures

44. Not applicable.

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION PAGE

Document title	**UNICEF POLICY ON SAFEGUARDING**
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Document summary	UNICEF is committed to Safeguarding. This means we work in ways that prevent and reduce the risk of Harm to all individuals as a result of their contact with UNICEF or our work. Safeguarding should be embedded in processes, plans and actions as an integral part of programmatic and operational excellence. This Policy sets out UNICEF's Safeguarding principles and standards, prohibited actions and expected practices. It aims to ensure a Safeguarding culture and a proactive approach towards preventing and mitigating Harm, early intervention and responding to Safeguarding risks.
Regulatory content the document replaces	1. UNICEF Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children, CF/EXD/2016-006 2. UNICEF Procedure for a Child Safeguarding Framework, DFAM/PROCEDURE/2019/009
Topics covered	Safeguarding, including prohibited actions such as Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment
Corporate risk area	Organizational risk management
References/links to enabling legislation and background	1. Secretary-General's Bulletin - Special Measures for PSEA
Links to relevant Policies	1. UNICEF Policy on Whistle-Blower Protection Against Retaliation (DHR/POLICY/2018-001)
Links to relevant guidance and other resources	1. UNICEF Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) 2. Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA): A Practical Guide and Toolkit for UNICEF and Partners 3. UN Partner Portal Resources on PSEA
Links to relevant training materials	1. Child Safeguarding Training 2. Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse on Agora Safeguarding for Face-to-Face Fundraisers

ANNEXES
Annex I Definitions

Safeguarding

1. **Safeguarding**: refers to actions taken to prevent and respond to Harm caused to any individual as a result of their contact with UNICEF or the work of the organization.

In relation to scope

2. **Safeguarding Incidents:** refers to occurrences or events generated by acts or omissions that result in Harm as defined in this Policy (and other than those covered by the UNICEF Policy on ESS).

3. **Safeguarding Concerns:** refers to any act or omission by UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel, Implementing Partners and Vendors, including those contracted by them, or other parties associated with UNICEF that contravenes or poses a threat of contravening any of the expected Safeguarding practices, increasing the risk of Harm.

4. **Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents:** refers to Safeguarding Concerns and/or Safeguarding Incidents as defined in this Policy.

4. **Harm:** physical or psychological damage or impact caused to an individual, whether it is caused intentionally or accidentally, or by acts or omissions, as a result of their contact with UNICEF or the work of the organization as set out in this Policy. Harm is caused by a broad range of actions or failure to act, including forms of Abuse and Exploitation. This Policy is concerned with Harm that has an impact on individuals.

5. **Do No Harm:** means avoiding exposing people to additional risks through our actions.

6. international development and collaboration as defined by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

7. **Abuse:** is defined as anything that individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do that directly or indirectly Harms an individual. The following categories of Abuse are covered within the scope of this Policy:

    7.1. **Sexual Abuse:** according to the United Nations Secretary-General's Bulletin, is actual or threatened intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions[35]. Under this Policy, UNICEF includes any sexual activities where the survivor could not, did not or did not have the capacity to freely consent. These activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching through clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

    7.2. **Physical Abuse:** is the non-accidental and non-defensive use of physical force towards a person, including children, that deliberately or inadvertently causes injury. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing non-accidental physical Harm. It includes the corporal punishment of children.

    7.3. **Emotional Abuse:** involves words or acts that Harm a person's emotional, intellectual, mental or psychological well-being or development. This may occur as an isolated event or repeatedly.

    7.4. Emotional Abuse includes, but is not limited to, any humiliating or degrading treatment (e.g., bad

[35] From ST/SGB/2013/3.

name calling, threats, yelling/screaming/cursing, belittling, persistent shaming); failing to meet a person's emotional needs; and rejecting, ignoring, terrorizing, isolating or confining a person.

7.5. **Neglect:** is an ongoing failure to meet a dependent individual's basic needs. A child may be left hungry or dirty, without adequate clothing, shelter, supervision or medical or health care, or may be put in danger or not protected. **A child or a dependent individual may suffer any of the other types of Harm listed in the scope of this Policy as a result of Neglect.**

8. **Exploitation:** is the unfair use of someone for one's own benefit when they cannot bargain for themselves. It often involves force, trickery, coercion or trafficking. Grooming a child or adult in preparation for any form of Exploitation and Abuse also falls within this category. In relation to children, Exploitation includes the worst forms of child labour, which are defined as slavery, debt bondage, commercial Sexual Exploitation, pornography, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, use of children in drug trafficking and other illicit activities, and all other work Harmful or hazardous to the health, safety or morals of girls and boys aged under 18[36].

8. **Sexual Exploitation:** is any actual or attempted Abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the Sexual Exploitation of another[37]. Under this Policy, this includes a person giving or receiving any kind of benefit in exchange for sex with them or another person. Sexual Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur online.

9. **Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:** refers to Sexual Exploitation and/or Sexual Abuse as defined in this Policy.

10. **Sexual Harassment**: refers to any unwelcome and improper conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

11. **Survivor/victim:** refers to a person who is, or has been, exploited or abused, including through Sexual Exploitation or Abuse. 'Victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors, while the term 'survivor' is generally preferred in the psychological and social support sectors because it implies resiliency.

In relation to the applicability of this Policy

12. **UNICEF or the work of the organization:** refers to all of our programmes and operations, and actions in support of our programmes and operations including communication, advocacy and fundraising activities and work with data, and includes reference to Staff and Affiliate Personnel, Implementing Partners, Vendors, and other parties associated with UNICEF.

13. **Child:** refers to a person under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally.

14. **Affiliate Personnel:** refers to individuals with a contract with UNICEF who perform work or produce deliverables for UNICEF and who are not Staff.

15. **Implementing Partner:** refers to an entity to which UNICEF has entrusted the implementation of a programme specified in a signed partnership document, along with the assumption of responsibility and accountability for the effective use of resources and the delivery of results. Implementing Partners are categorized as one of the following partner types: Government, United Nations agency, non-United

[36] See the Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, ILO Convention 182

[37] From ST/SGB/2013/3.

Nations intergovernmental organization and civil society organization (CSO).

16. **Vendor:** refers to an entity (vendor or supplier) that potentially or actually provides goods or other products (including intellectual property), services and/or works to the organization. A Vendor may take various forms, including an individual person, a company (whether privately or publicly held), a partnership, a government agency or a non-governmental organization. For the purpose of this Policy, employees, officers, advisers or representatives of a Vendor will be considered agents for which the Vendor is responsible.

17. **National Committee for UNICEF (or National Committee):** means a national non-governmental organization which has concluded a Recognition and Cooperation Agreement with UNICEF for the purpose of promoting the aims and objectives of UNICEF, advancing children's rights and well-being globally through resource mobilization, advocacy, and other activities in its territory in accordance with the Cooperation Agreement.

18. **Person, people** and **individuals:** under this Policy, includes both adults and children.

19. **Staff:** refers to any persons holding a UNICEF Letter of Appointment on the basis of the United Nations Staff regulations and rules and signed under the authority of the UNICEF Executive Director.

20. **Head of Office:** means (i) for Headquarter divisions/offices and global offices, the Head of Divisions and Offices, (ii) for Regional Offices, the Regional Director, and (iii) for Country Offices (including multi-country and area offices) and the field and other offices under its oversight, the Representative. Heads of Office are responsible for the management and oversight of all activities within their offices/divisions.

Annex II Responsibilities of country offices, regional offices and headquarter offices and divisions

Every office and division is expected to implement this Policy, including allocating appropriate resources to ensure compliance across all activities in relation to Safeguarding. The responsibilities and functions of the various offices and divisions in relation to the implementation of this Policy are outlined below.[38]

Country or area offices	Expected functions and responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding
	• Manage assessment of Safeguarding risks in the country programme and ensure that appropriate measures to prevent Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents, including protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of women and children, are in place in overall risk assessment and planning processes • Help to prevent Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents by building a Safeguarding culture in the office by promoting expected Safeguarding practices in line with this Policy • Report prohibited actions as per this Policy and reporting guidance • Facilitate victim/survivor assistance and support in response to prohibited actions, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse when the victim/survivor is someone directly taking part in our programmes or activities • Support UNICEF Staff and Affiliate Personnel to gain the knowledge, means and tools to uphold UNICEF's Safeguarding commitment in line with this Policy. They must all have opportunities to access Safeguarding training • Support Implementing Partners, Vendors and those acting on UNICEF's behalf to become aware of this Policy, and to establish their own Safeguarding-related policies and practices that are no less stringent than the provisions in this Policy • Inform the communities we serve and individuals visiting and observing programme activities about UNICEF's Safeguarding standards and how to report Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents, and provide a safe and accessible way to report such concerns • Manage external partnerships and relations, including with both private and public partners and with the media, in relation to UNICEF's Safeguarding work by the country or area office in close collaboration and coordination with headquarter office- and regional offices • Allocate resources to support actions, including appointing suitably qualified and experienced people with appropriate allocated time in their role description, to fulfil the expectations and requirements under this Policy.
Regional offices	**Expected functions and responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding**
	• Ensure prevention of Safeguarding risks and an appropriate response to any Safeguarding Concern and Incident within their own office, in accordance with this Policy and its implementation guidelines • Support country offices to strengthen risk assessment capacity, awareness and sensitization of Safeguarding mitigation and help manage Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse cases, in line with this Policy.

[38] This includes any successor Regional and Headquarter Offices for those cases where there is a change to an existing UNICEF Regional or Headquarter Office (including Divisions) as a result of PBR processes (whether resulting in a name or structural change), whereby a successor office takes on the relevant functions of the predecessor.

Headquarter offices and divisions	Expected functions and responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding
Legal Office	• Provide advice to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations of the United Nations and UNICEF, as well as with relevant legal agreement templates and provisions in relation to this Policy and the application of Safeguarding practices.
Ethics Office	• Raise awareness among Staff of the values and expected standards of conduct and procedures of the United Nations, including standards related to Safeguarding, through training, education and outreach • Provide confidential advice and guidance to Staff and management, at their request, on ethical issues, to help them to maintain the highest ethical standards in carrying out their duties and to make decisions that balance the interests of children, Safeguarding and the interests of UNICEF.
Office of Internal Audit and Investigation (OIAI)	• Receive and assess and/or investigate allegations of possible misconduct and/or wrongdoing implicating Staff and Affiliate Personnel, including by gathering additional information, which may also require the cooperation of the office concerned, and issue reports documenting findings, as appropriate • In the case of third parties, including Implementing Partners and Vendors, receive reports of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and of Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents causing, or likely to cause, significant Harm to children, and assess the investigative actions taken by the third party, as necessary and appropriate and in accordance with the OIAI mandate, and share findings and observations with the UNICEF office concerned for partnership management and risk mitigation purposes.
Programme Cone	
Programme Group (PG)	Provide global programme leadership to achieve results for children everywhere, and when doing so: • Support that the design, planning and execution of programme activities include Safeguarding risk assessments and management, to identify and mitigate Safeguarding, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse risks. • In relation to Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents, including PSEA, ensure programmatic follow-up and coordination, including in relation to victim/survivor assistance and support. • Coordinate and drive UNICEF's actions in relation to PSEA under the IASC.

Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring Division (DAPM)	Lead strategic planning, monitoring and reporting and ensure programme effectiveness, and in doing so: • Ensure that the design, planning and execution of programme activities include Safeguarding risk assessments and management, to identify and mitigate Safeguarding, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse risks • Identify opportunities to advance Safeguarding as an integral part of UNICEF's partnership with Implementing Partners (civil society organizations and governments) • Ensure the assessment processes of potential Implementing Partners in relation to Safeguarding standards and practices as part of programme excellence • Lead the work on standards to guide UNICEF to appropriately manage personal data (and other sensitive data), including through technological security measures (in coordination with other relevant entities, including the Programme Group Information, Communication and Technology Division and Global Office of Research and Foresight (GORaF) at Innocenti). • Lead and help to advance UNICEF's commitment to Safeguarding across the organization through Policy development, global guidance, standard setting, and providing advice on systems design, and monitor progress in Policy implementation • Provide technical advice to UNICEF's offices and senior management in relation to Safeguarding • Develop specific guidance, tools and training packages in coordination with other relevant divisions and offices and partners • Ensure strategic coordination, including through creating cross-divisional groups and providing support for inter-agency work, and the alignment of Safeguarding with other organizational initiatives, policies, guidance documents and tools • Produce and contribute to reports on Safeguarding issues for executive management and others, including the UNICEF Executive Board.
Office of Innovation (OoI)	In its work to inspire, empower and provide guidance for all functions of UNICEF to identify, create and scale new or improved solutions that address the most pressing problems facing children and their families, ensure that the Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding standards are adhered to.
Global Office of Research and Foresight (GORaF) at Innocenti (GORaF)	Lead research and insights excellence on children and children's rights, and when doing so: • Provide research and analytical support for advancing Safeguarding and making it integral to programme and operational excellence • Establish and maintain Safeguarding standards for data collection, analysis, research and evaluation when working with child participants (in coordination with other relevant divisions, including the Programme Group and DAPM).
Partnership Cone	
Public Partnerships Division (PPD)	Lead and drive public sector fundraising, leveraging and advocacy, to increase income and influence from partnerships and engagement with the public sector. When doing so, manage Safeguarding-related conversations with and the expectations of public partners. Coordinate with and advise relevant internal stakeholders on public sector donor requirements to report Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse allegations that are connected with a particular donor's funding.

Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division (PFP)	• Ensure Safeguarding standards, principles and other considerations are reflected in the development and implementation of the global governance framework for National Committees, and provide strategic and specific Safeguarding training, guidance and technical support to National Committees • Ensure Safeguarding standards, principles and other considerations are reflected in the global strategy for UNICEF's private sector resource mobilization activities and provide strategic and specific Safeguarding training, guidance and technical support on the implementation of this strategy • Ensure Safeguarding standards, principles and other considerations are included in, and support the implementation of, private sector initiatives, activities and events, and advocate for private sector entities to have their own Safeguarding policies and practices • Ensure Safeguarding standards, principles and other considerations are included in due diligence assessments with regard to UNICEF partnership with the private sector. • Ensure Safeguarding standards, principles and other considerations are duly reflected in agreements with private sector partners • Contribute to the inclusion of Safeguarding standards, principles and other considerations in guidance for business.
Division of Global Communication and Advocacy (GCA)	• Support internal socialization and communication initiatives in relation to the values and standards of the organization • Work to implement and help country offices to interpret and apply existing Safeguarding communication and media-related standards, including STANDARD/DOC/2020/002 on media engagement and interaction; STANDARDS/DOC/2021/001 on websites; social media and digital applications; STANDARD/DOC/2020/001 on corporate partner image use; and STANDARD/DOC/2020/003 on Safeguarding in relation to multimedia content, including video and photo production and use.
Humanitarian Action and Supply Cone	
Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS)	• Strengthen UNICEF's capacity to deliver on its commitments for children in line with the Core Commitments for Children and Accountability for Affected populations, and, when doing so, help to advance Safeguarding in line with this Policy.
	• Ensure Safeguarding as an approach is included in emergency activation, preparedness and response procedures and actions.
Supply Division (SD)	Provide global supply leadership and when doing so: • Identify opportunities to advance Safeguarding in UNICEF's supply chain engagements. • Establish mechanisms for risk-based vetting and assessments of UNICEF Vendors. • Develop guidance to support implementation of Safeguarding considerations in the contracting and contract management processes
Management Cone	
Chief Risk Officer	• Ensure that Safeguarding, including PSEA are part of UNICEF's enterprise risk management system across offices • Support offices in identifying and mitigating these risks while tracking progress towards a safer organization.
Organizational Culture and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Office of the Executive Director	• Help to promote Safeguarding as a part of UNICEF's organizational culture and core values • Collaborate with the Risk Management Unit of DAPM in advancing effective ways to manage Safeguarding Concerns and Incidents.

Division of Human Resources (DHR)	• Review and amend as necessary the existing Safeguarding Personnel Standards (DHR/STANDARDS/2019/001) to comply with this Policy • Support good practices in relation to the vetting and screening of potential candidates and coordinate with others in keeping records of disciplinary actions • In coordination with the DAPM, make Safeguarding training and learning opportunities available for Staff and Affiliate Personnel, subject to resource allocation • Maintain performance management systems that enable effective Safeguarding performance management.
Information, Communication and Technology Division (ICTD)	• Lead work on integrating technology and innovation in programme and business processes. • When doing so, identify opportunities to position Safeguarding as integral to UNICEF as a safe organization, for example, make sure that UNICEF's information and communication technology is secure, designed based on "privacy by design and default" and is fit for purpose for managing children's data and for preventing prohibited actions in the online environment.