



NETWORK  
STANDARD

# Child Safeguarding and Protection of Rights

**WWF Network Standard**  
Final Version 1 – June 2018



## 1. WWF's Commitments to the Child

WWF will protect the **rights of children**, in line with the [UN Convention on the Rights on the Child](#) and/or national legislation in the country of operations, whichever standard is higher. We commit to **child safeguarding**: to prevent, deter, detect and respond to potential harm or abuse (physical, mental, psychological including but not limited to sexual relations) in all WWF activities and places of work, including but not limited to conservation actions, product merchandising, social media engagement, and staff interactions with children. WWF will hold our contracting parties (e.g., implementing partners, service providers, third parties) to the same standard. For this purpose we define "Child" in line with this UN convention to mean "a human being (boy or girl) below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the **child**, majority is attained earlier." Special attention should be made to children from minority groups and children with disabilities.

### Specifically the WWF Network leaders commit to:

1. **Respect, protect and support** children's rights in relation to the environment and to land acquisition and use, and reinforce community and government efforts to protect children's rights.
2. **Safeguard children** in all activities (e.g., education, camps, field trips, volunteer activities), and in our facilities and workplaces. This includes enhanced safeguarding measures in child-focused activities.
3. **Communicate** our commitments as an integral part of WWF's desired culture and values.
4. **Eliminate harmful child labour** in activities and relationships, including in our service providers, merchandisers and other third parties and partners (see [WWF Code of Ethical Labour](#).)
5. **Ensure WWF merchandise**, products and services are safe for children.
6. **Avoid marketing and advertising** that violate children's rights, including their rights to the privacy of their personal data.
7. **Enforce** this Standard.

## 2. Every WWF office MUST at a minimum:

1. **Have a policy, procedures and/or code of conduct** which defines the standards of personal conduct in interactions with children, and which respects *at a minimum*, the commitments and actions noted herein.
2. **Respect [WWF's Social Policies](#)** by taking into account the impact on children's welfare and rights in the design and implementation of field activities, and in policy and advocacy.

3. **Communicate** the Standard and relevant procedures including complaint reporting channels on internal and public websites, and in community outreach. Ensure stakeholders, children, and their caretakers understand our commitment and where to raise concerns.
4. **Build awareness and skills.** Provide mandatory induction and training to staff, volunteers, and board members, who all confirm they understand and commit to the policy/codes of conduct. Ensure all **staff with regular contact with children** in their WWF duties are appropriately skilled, and commit to their special obligations to safeguard children, including allowable forms of discipline (i.e., corporal punishment is never acceptable). WWF does background checks on these staff. Develop skills including how to detect, respond to, and report indicators of concern and allegations.
5. **Partner and supplier integrity.** Partners, suppliers, and service providers must contractually commit to preventing harm to children in respect of the *UN Convention on the Rights on the Child and/or local legislation, whichever sets the higher standard*. Due diligence should be performed on these parties to uncover related risks. Where needed WWF reinforces their awareness and capacity for example, through specific training.
6. **Manage risks.** As part of risk management and mitigation, analyze **risks to children**.
7. **Encourage a “Speak Up” environment.** Staff, volunteers, stakeholders, third parties, implementing partners and external beneficiaries must have easy access to the office’s Speak Up and/or whistleblower procedures and [Project Complaint Mechanisms](#), as well as contact details of those mandated to receive a report. A variety of reporting options should be available (e.g. verbal reporting for illiterate individuals). **Staff are responsible to speak up if they witness an event and to cooperate with investigations.**
8. **Escalate immediately.** Allegations and events should be reported to the head of the office (unless allegations relate to him/her) and the office’s Chair of Board (if relevant), as well as WWF International Executive Director, Operations or Director General within 24 hours of the issue becoming known. ***This is extremely important in order to manage global reputational risks and media events.***
9. **Respond** in a timely and appropriate manner to relevant events and allegations. Recommendations following investigations should be promptly implemented.
10. **Investigate impartially.** Those investigating issues provide a truthful and complete account of findings, are independent and not influenced by victims, accused parties, or management.

11. **Perform duty of care.** WWF has a moral and legal obligation to ensure appropriate treatment of alleged victims, accused parties and witnesses. This includes special care of child victims of misconduct or neglect, protecting against retaliation, maintaining confidentiality, respecting privacy regulations, and fair treatment in investigation and disciplinary procedures.
12. **Implement robust disciplinary measures.** Confirmed acts of misconduct shall result in firm discipline up to and including termination of employment, and, if appropriate, legal pursuit in accordance with local labour regulations.
13. **Monitor and document.** Maintain a secured, confidential repository of allegations, investigations, response and disciplinary measures.
14. **Keep it alive.** Offices are encouraged to do more than the above required actions, and share good practices with other offices in the Network.

### 3. Responsibilities

**WWF Office leaders** are accountable for the implementation and full compliance of this Standard.

**The WWF Network** will monitor the overall compliance with this Standard through the services of WWF International, who may request information to assure global conformity with this standard.

### 4. Guidance, Support and related policies:

- [UNICEF's guidelines on incorporating child rights in business codes of conduct](#)
- [UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child](#)
- [WWF Network Social Policies](#)
- WWF Code of Ethical Labour in partnerships - [sample](#)

If you have any questions or comments on this Standard, please contact Donna Lusti Manger, Governance, Ethics & Compliance, WWF International. [dlusti@wwfint.org](mailto:dlusti@wwfint.org).

**This Network Standard was endorsed by the WWF International Board of Trustees, June 2018**