



Core
Standard

Child Safeguarding and Protection of Rights

WWF Core Standard

Version 1.1 – December 2025

Owners: Senior Director, Safeguards and Human Rights, WWF International
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This Standard is subject to review on a regular basis and at least every 3 years.

VERSION HISTORY:

Version	Title	Released
1	Child Safeguarding and Protection of Rights	June 2018. Re-endorsed Sept 2020 by WWF Network Executive Team and WWF International Board
1.1	Child Safeguarding and Protection of Rights Updates made to references, links and job titles. Minor rephrasing for consistency with other Core Standards.	December 2025

1. Purpose and Scope

Purpose

This WWF Core Standard (“Standard”) sets out the principles and minimum expectations to safeguard children across all WWF Offices.

WWF is committed to safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of children, and will take proactive steps to prevent, detect, respond to and report any form of harm, abuse, or exploitation of children, including but not limited to physical, mental, psychological, and sexual abuse. This commitment extends to all WWF activities, places of work, conservation actions, merchandising, social media engagement, and other interactions with children. WWF holds its contracting parties — including implementing partners, service providers, and third parties — to the same high standard.

This Standard is guided by internationally recognised principles on child protection and wellbeing. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18, unless local legislation sets a different age of majority. WWF places particular emphasis on safeguarding children from minority groups and those with disabilities, recognising that they may face heightened risks and vulnerabilities.

Scope

The Standard applies to all WWF Offices and Staff, subject to local laws. WWF Offices may adapt the Standard to local contexts, ensuring alignment with the commitments and minimum expectations as set out in the Standard.

2. Core Requirements for All WWF Offices

Every WWF Office **MUST**, at a minimum:

2.1 Establish Clear Local Requirements

- **Maintain policies, procedures, and/or codes of conduct** that clearly set out expected behaviours in interactions with children and uphold WWF’s safeguarding commitments to:
 - **Respect and support** children’s rights in relation to the environment, and reinforce community and government efforts to protect children’s rights.
 - **Safeguard children** in all activities and in our facilities and workplaces. The obligation is to ensure the delivery of projects and programmatic work that prevent harm and the associated policies, procedures, and practices are employed to appropriately address children's safety.
 - **Eliminate any exploitative child labour** in WWF’s activities, partnerships, supply chains, and merchandising. WWF follows the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of child labour (see definitions). According to the ILO, work that includes light activities, unpaid and paid, such as helping parents for short periods or activities for pocket money that do not interfere with the education and development of children are acceptable.
 - **Ensure WWF merchandise** is safe for children.

- **Avoid marketing and advertising** that violate children's rights, including their right to privacy.
- Conduct appropriate **background checks** for staff who have regular contact with children in their WWF duties
- **Respect** [WWF's Statements of Principles and E&S Safeguard Framework](#) by taking into account the impact on children's welfare and rights in the design and implementation of place-based activities, as well as in policy and advocacy.
- **Communicate** child safeguarding policies and complaints reporting mechanisms publicly and internally in accessible, culturally appropriate formats.

2.2 Build Awareness and Competence

- Provide **induction** on child safeguarding to all staff, volunteers, and board members, who must acknowledge their understanding and commitment to the policy.
- Staff and volunteers who have **regular contact with children** in their WWF duties should have the appropriate skills and receive ongoing training, including on acceptable conduct and disciplinary practices.

2.3 Partner and supplier commitment to ethical and safeguarding principles

- Conduct **due diligence** to identify child safeguarding risks within partnerships and suppliers.
- Require partners, suppliers, and service providers to **contractually commit** to child safeguarding in line with local legislation and WWF Standards
- **Support** partners and suppliers in building awareness and capacity where needed.

2.4 Manage Child Safeguarding Risks

- **Assess and address** risks to children as part of WWF's risk management and ESSF processes.
- This includes applying **specific safeguarding measures** to manage risks associated with activities that directly engage with, or impact, on children (e.g. education, camps, field trips, volunteer activities).

2.5 Encourage a "Speak Up" environment and Respond Fairly and Promptly to Concerns, in line with the [Speak Up Core Standard](#) and [Safeguard on Grievance Mechanisms](#)

(For the full requirements, refer to these Standards).

- Ensure that children, their caregivers and communities, as well as Staff, volunteers, partners, stakeholders, can **easily report concerns**, including through verbal reporting options where necessary.
- Allegations of child harm or safeguarding breaches **must be reported** to the Head of Office (unless the concern involves this person), the Chair of the Office's Board (if relevant), and WWF International's Chief Operating Officer or Director

General in a timely manner, generally within 72 hours of the concern becoming known.

- Ensure investigations are conducted with **care, confidentiality, and respect** for all involved, especially children, using appropriate child safe procedures.
- Take steps to **protect** victims, accused individuals, and witnesses from retaliation and harm.

2.6 Monitor and Continuously Improve

- **Monitor the implementation** of this Standard and provide updates on compliance to the WWF Network as requested.
- Regularly **review safeguarding practices** to ensure they remain effective and aligned with WWF's commitments and legal requirements.
- **Share good practices** and lessons learned across the Network to continuously strengthen child safeguarding efforts.

3. Responsibilities

- **WWF Office Leaders:** Accountable for the full implementation and compliance with this Standard. Must lead by example and foster a safeguarding culture.
- **WWF Staff:** Responsible for upholding WWF's child safeguarding commitments, reporting concerns, and cooperating with investigations.
- **WWF International** will monitor network-wide compliance and may request information to support global oversight.

4. References, Guidance and related policies:

For support, WWF Staff can contact their local Legal Counsel, Safeguarding Focal Point, or the owner of this Standard.

References:

- UNICEF's guidelines on [incorporating child rights in business codes of conduct](#)
- [International Labour Organization](#) on child labour
- [WWF Statements of Principles \(SoP\) and Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework \(ESSF\)](#)
- [WWF Safeguard on Grievance Mechanisms](#)
- [WWF Code of Ethical Labour](#)
- [WWF Speak Up Standard](#)

Annex: Definitions

Staff: all employees engaged by a WWF Office.

(Associated) Third-Parties: Individuals and entities that work with WWF, including grantees, consultants, vendors, suppliers, partners.

‘Offices’ include National Organisations and their affiliated offices, and WWF International and its reporting offices unless specified otherwise.

Office Leaders: The most senior leadership group in an office.

Safeguarding: Protecting people's wellbeing and rights by enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect

Child Labour: WWF follows the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of child labor. According to the ILO, work that includes light activities, unpaid and paid, such as helping parents for short periods or activities for pocket money that do not interfere with the education and development of children are acceptable. Labor is defined as unpaid and paid involving activities that may be mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their development and education. The ILO (Minimum Age Convention No.138) establishes 15 as the minimum age for work in general but recognizes that some countries set the minimum age at 14. The age of 18 is set as the minimum age for hazardous labour.

For other definitions, see [WWF Standard Terminology](#)