

Child Safeguarding Policy

ADRA Network Policies and Procedures					
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Introduction

ADRA strives for a just world that advances children’s rights, as defined by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#). ADRA believes that every child and young person has the right to live a life free from any form of violence, and deserves to grow up in a safe, peaceful, nurturing and enabling environment where they can fully exercise their rights. This is one way that ADRA fulfills its purpose “to serve humanity so all may live as God intended.”

We take very seriously our responsibility and duty to ensure that we, as an agency, and anyone who represents us does not in any way harm, abuse, or commit any other act of violence against children or place them at risk of the same.

We promote child and youth safe practices, approaches, interventions and environments that respect, recognize and respond to the specific safeguarding needs and addresses the protection risks of their differing and intersecting identities. ADRA has a zero tolerance of deliberate harm towards children and enforces rigorous policies to prevent and respond to these issues.

Definitions

Term	Definitions and Examples
Child	In line with the UNCRC, for the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years (UNCRC Article 1).
Child Abuse (or Child Maltreatment)	<p>Child abuse (or child maltreatment) is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act, or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their wellbeing, dignity and prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Physical Abuse involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering (e.g. hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture). ▶ Emotional or Psychological Abuse includes humiliating and degrading treatment such as name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation. This also includes inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or consistent failure over time to provide a child with adequate, non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child’s self-esteem or social competence. ▶ Neglect is the failure to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and well-being.

Definitions, *con't*

Term	Definitions and Examples
Child Abuse (or Child Maltreatment) <i>con't</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Child Sexual Abuse Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities which may involve physical contact (penetrative acts, touching etc.) or non-contact activities, whether or not the child is aware of or consents to what is happening. This definition also holds whether or not there has been physical contact and whether or not the minor is said to have initiated or consented to, the behavior. ▶ Examples includes all forms of sexual violence including indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child, incest, early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography (including showering children pornographic material), the exploitative use of a child in prostitution, and sexual slavery.
Child Protection	<p>All appropriate measures and structures to protect children from and respond to all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. The goal of child protection is to promote, protect and fulfil children’s rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other human rights, humanitarian and refugee treaties and conventions, as well as national laws.</p> <p>For ADRA, child protection measures should, as appropriate, include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as for other forms or prevention and for identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of instances of child maltreatment.</p>
Child Protection Risk	<p>The potential for a situation to result in any form of abuse or harm to a child, no matter how minor.</p>
Child Safeguarding	<p>Child safeguarding is the process of preventing and protecting children from harm and enabling them to have the best outcomes, regardless of sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, gender reassignment or any other vulnerable characteristic. Under this Policy, child safeguarding is the responsibility of ADRA to make sure its Representatives and activities “do no harm” to children and that incidents are reported when they occur.</p>

Purpose

This Policy outlines ADRA's commitment to ensuring that we do not cause harm to children through our programs or representatives. It outlines the different responsibilities that ADRA Representatives have to protect children from harm and summarizes acceptable behavior when working with children. The Policy also provides a framework for a network-wide approach to safeguarding children by setting out principles for the effective safeguarding of children. In sum, this Policy helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that ADRA is taking its duty of care seriously.

This policy is not:

- ▶ A practical guide, approach, or strategy for prevention and response to violence against children programs.

Scope

As a network approved policy, the *Child Safeguarding Policy* applies to:

- a. ADRA International and all ADRA regional offices, country offices, field offices, and any project locations;
- b. All offices that wish to remain compliant with ADRA Accreditation and Licensing Standards;
- c. All other entities that agree to be bound by ADRA policies;
- d. All permanent, temporary, and part-time staff; board members; interns; volunteers; ADRA visitors (including media); contractors and consultants; and sub-grantees (local implementing partners and service providers) must also comply with the Safeguarding Policy. This group will be referred to as "ADRA Representatives" or "we" throughout the Policy.

Staff and those affiliated with ADRA represent the organization at all times. Poor behavior in and outside of office hours undermines ADRA's work and values. Thus, the *Child Safeguarding Policy* applies to all ADRA Representatives while in and outside of the workplace during working and non-working hours every day of the year. Associating with ADRA means that one must comply with ADRA's standards, even if the standards are higher than one's local context or governing laws.

This policy will automatically be applied in the same country and in all geographies where the ADRA Country Office is funding projects and must be used in conjunction with the ADRA Safeguarding Framework Implementation Standards.

Scope, *con't*

All ADRA entities shall enact their own procedures which must follow this and other network policies. ADRA will comply with laws and regulations prohibiting misconduct, but where this policy exceeds any legal requirements, ADRA will adhere to the standards in this policy to the extent allowed by applicable law. Where required by law or locally practiced, ADRA offices may enhance the standards and requirements set out in this policy but cannot change the Policy in itself.

Policy Statement

ADRA believes that all children, regardless of age, gender, disability, ethnic origin, or other diversities have a right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. ADRA will not tolerate the abuse of children (defined as under the age of 18) in any form.

We endeavor to not cause harm to children through ADRA's programs, activities, and representatives. Children who come into contact with ADRA's programs and activities must therefore be safeguarded to the maximum possible extent from deliberate or inadvertent actions and failings that place them at risk.¹

All ADRA Representatives must use a safeguarding approach when planning, implementing, and monitoring programs or other forms of engagement (e.g. fundraising, campaigns, et cetera) with children to help be effective in mitigating and removing these risks.

ADRA recognizes that inadvertent actions, the lack of preventative actions, and other failings on our part can and do sometimes have the unintended consequence of causing harm. All concerns about child abuse or poorly implemented child safeguarding must be brought to ADRA's attention and will be taken seriously.

ADRA will conduct rigorous and fair investigations of complaints that indicate a possible violation of this Policy. Responses to child abuse allegations will be survivor-centered, consider the comprehensive needs and safety of all those involved, and actions will be in the best interest of the child. Substantiated allegations of child abuse will result in appropriate disciplinary action.

In part of its commitment to promoting the rights of children, ADRA Representatives are required to raise any concern about children's safety within the communities in which ADRA work and, if in the best interest of the child, will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

¹ The risk mentioned here includes the risk of child abuse, sexual exploitation, injury and any other harm.

Commitments to Child Safeguarding

This Policy requires that every ADRA office and its Representatives:

- ▶ Recruit individuals and organizations (all who work with and engage with ADRA) who are suited to work with children while using strict child safe recruitment practices. This should include use of background and criminal reference checks.²
- ▶ Provide ongoing trainings in child protection, child safeguarding, and on other relevant topics to ensure ADRA Representatives can properly uphold their responsibilities.
- ▶ Ensure that all ADRA Representatives are aware of their child safeguarding responsibilities and respond appropriately to child protection and safeguarding concerns.
- ▶ Behave appropriately towards children and never abuse the position of trust that comes with being a member of the ADRA network.
- ▶ Identify, mitigate, and attempt to avoid potential situations of risk for children by actively creating a child-safe environment for ADRA activities.
- ▶ Establish and maintain systems which promote awareness of child safeguarding, enable prevention of harm, and facilitate the reporting of and responding to child safeguarding concerns.
- ▶ Take action immediately if you identify or suspect that a child is at risk or may be being abused or neglected.

Through these commitments, ADRA makes the network safe for children and by creating a child safe organization, we honor their rights, our aspirations, and God's intentions.

Guiding Principles to Safeguard Children

One of ADRA's Operating Principles is to "advocate for the basic rights of the people with whom it works, empowering them to speak for themselves." To realize this Operating Principle of ADRA, this Policy sets forth an additional set of principles to inform our child safeguarding efforts.

These include:

1. **Rights of the child:** All children aged under 18 years have equal rights to protection from all forms of violence as declared in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.³
2. **Equality:** Each child has a fundamental right to life, survival and development. ADRA's processes and programs should provide a basis for ensuring the realization of children's rights to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation.

² These requirements are listed in Annex I of the PSHEA Policy.

³ All children aged under 18 years have equal and fundamental rights to protection from all forms of violence and the right to life, survival, and development as declared in Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Guiding Principles to Safeguard Children, *cont*

3. **Inclusive and empowering:** Children should be empowered to understand their rights in this area, and made aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem or a concern. All children should be encouraged to fulfill their potential, and inequality and discrimination should be challenged. Moreover, ADRA should promote the active involvement of children in their own protection.
4. **Non-discrimination:** Children will be assured the right to express their views freely and this will be given ‘due weight’ in accordance with their age and level of maturity in a manner that is inclusive and empowering. We will not discriminate against the child. The child will be treated with respect irrespective of gender, nationality or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, physical or mental health, sexual preference and gender identity, family, socio-economic and cultural background, or any history of conflict with the law.
5. **Best interests of the child:** All decisions regarding the welfare, safeguarding and protection of children, and our decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns and breaches of this Policy will be guided by the principle of “the best interests of the child.” ADRA will strive to ensure their safety, health and well-being including meeting their emotional, psychological and physical needs.
6. **Shared responsibility:** ADRA Representatives have a responsibility to support the care and protection of children by demonstrating the highest standards of behavior in their private and personal lives. Everyone has a responsibility to understand and promote this Policy. ADRA Representatives must do all that they can to prevent, report, and respond appropriately to any concerns or potential breaches of the Policy.
7. **Do no harm:** ADRA has particular responsibilities to children who come into contact with us. No child must come to harm as a result of their engagement with a participant in an ADRA program or as part of any ADRA fundraising or advocacy campaign, intentionally or unintentionally. We also commit to a physical and online environment which promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and minimizes their risk of harm. In instances where a breach of the policy is reported, we will ensure that investigation, follow-up and support is focused upon the best interests and needs of the child.
8. **Open and accountable:** We are open and transparent and will hold ourselves to account for our commitment to safeguard children. Safeguarding concerns can be raised and discussed, poor practice and inappropriate behaviors can be challenged and addressed, and our safeguarding measures will be regularly reviewed and strengthened to ensure we remain accountable to children and their families.

Guiding Principles to Safeguard Children, *cont*

9. **Accountable to children and affected populations:** We have a responsibility to inform and empower children so that they learn about and are better able to exercise their rights to protection. We will work with children and their families, ensuring they understand the essence of this policy, our safeguarding commitment, and their rights, and the means via which they can report policy breaches. We will also involve them in the development of safeguarding measures within ADRA in accordance with their age, gender, abilities, and evolving capacities.
10. **Zero tolerance of child abuse:** ADRA believes that any form of child abuse is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. ADRA will act on safeguarding and child protection concerns, ensuring that our actions are timely, appropriate, and centered on the best interest of the child or young person, taking into account their age, gender and other specific safeguarding needs and vulnerabilities.
11. **Confidentiality:** All child safeguarding concerns/reports/investigations will be dealt with on a need to know basis and all records will be held securely. Likewise, communication will be confidential and secure to the extent practicable and appropriate under the circumstances and in accordance with applicable law.
12. **Timeliness:** Given the potential for increased or repeated abuse, timely responses are essential, and the accompanying procedures establish mandatory time limits on reporting and responding to concerns.
13. **Lasting impact:** This Policy aims to ensure that ADRA Representatives, especially external partners, are skilled, confident, understand, accept and are well supported in meeting their safeguarding responsibilities and engage positively with children and communities in ways that enhance the achievement of ADRA's Purpose Statement, and overall program goals and commitments.

Child Safeguarding Risk Assessments

To remain compliant with this Policy, every ADRA office must exercise due diligence to identify, mitigate, and monitor risks of child abuse through a proportional risk management approach will be implemented through this policy. Child safeguarding risk assessments and mitigation plans can be incorporated into pre-existing assessments, such as a security risk register or a gender analysis.⁴

- ▶ **Operational:** Each ADRA Country Office must conduct an annual risk assessment that identifies organizational risks that include administrative areas (e.g. staff, information and technology), which are not necessarily project-specific. In congruence, every country office

⁴ Tools for safeguarding risk management are located in the Safeguarding Implementation Toolkit on ENet: [Operational Risk Management](#), [Program Risk Management](#), and [Partner Risk Management](#).

Child Safeguarding Risk Assessments, *con't*

must maintain a context and referral map to track existing laws, cultural norms, reporting requirements around child protection and known service providers (e.g. child protection services) to refer abused children.

- ▶ **Project:** For programs that have direct and indirect contact with children, program teams must assess the level of risk for child abuse to occur and adapt the program design and implement prevention strategies accordingly. This is particularly crucial in humanitarian settings.
- ▶ **Partners (subgrantees and service providers):** In the partner selection process, the ability for the potential partner to comply with the ADRA Safeguarding Framework Policies should be considered. The level of this assessment should correspond with the degree of involvement (contact) the partner will have with children. Findings from this assessment should inform the eventual contract and work plan between ADRA and the partner to strengthen child safeguarding capacity for the partner.

Risk and decision-making processes and documents will reflect these assessments. Again, this does not need to be a standalone procedure, and should be incorporated into existing activity planning and risk management processes.

Reporting Child Safeguarding Concerns

Conduct and activities that undermine the “Guiding Principles to Safeguard Children” and ADRA’s commitment to maintain a child-safe environment are prohibited and should be addressed as soon as possible under this Policy.

Programmatic concerns may be identified through specific MEAL indicators and used to adapt activities. If ADRA Representatives receive or have a complaint or concern relating to a specific child safeguarding incident (does not need to involve an ADRA Representative), they should report it immediately and not investigate further. If the child is in imminent danger of harm, ADRA Representatives should immediately call emergency services, such as the police or child protective services, before reporting it to ADRA.⁵ Otherwise, ADRA Representatives must report to their Safeguarding Focal Point (or equivalent) within one working day (24 hours) or as soon as possible if security and technology do not allow this deadline to be met.

⁵ Local child protection procedures may differ here if reporting immediate danger would somehow impose more danger to the child and his or her family.

Reporting Child Safeguarding Concerns, *con't*

If the incidents involve an ADRA Representative, the Safeguarding Focal Point must inform their Country Director and the ADRA International Safeguarding Office, the Regional Office, local Board Chair, and any supporting ADRA office as required within the following 24 hours.

The Safeguarding Office and other relevant people will assess the situation for any potential health, safety, and security issues and mitigate serious risks or make referrals immediately. Confidentiality will be balanced with the need to act.

If you do not feel comfortable reporting to the Safeguarding Focal Point or Country Director (for example if you feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern) you may report outside of his or her office. Alternative options could include:

- ▶ Country Office's whistleblowing platform or local board chairperson
- ▶ ADRA Regional Office
- ▶ Safeguarding Office at ADRA International Protection@ADRA.org
- ▶ ADRA International's whistle blowing platform Adventist.Ethicspoint.com

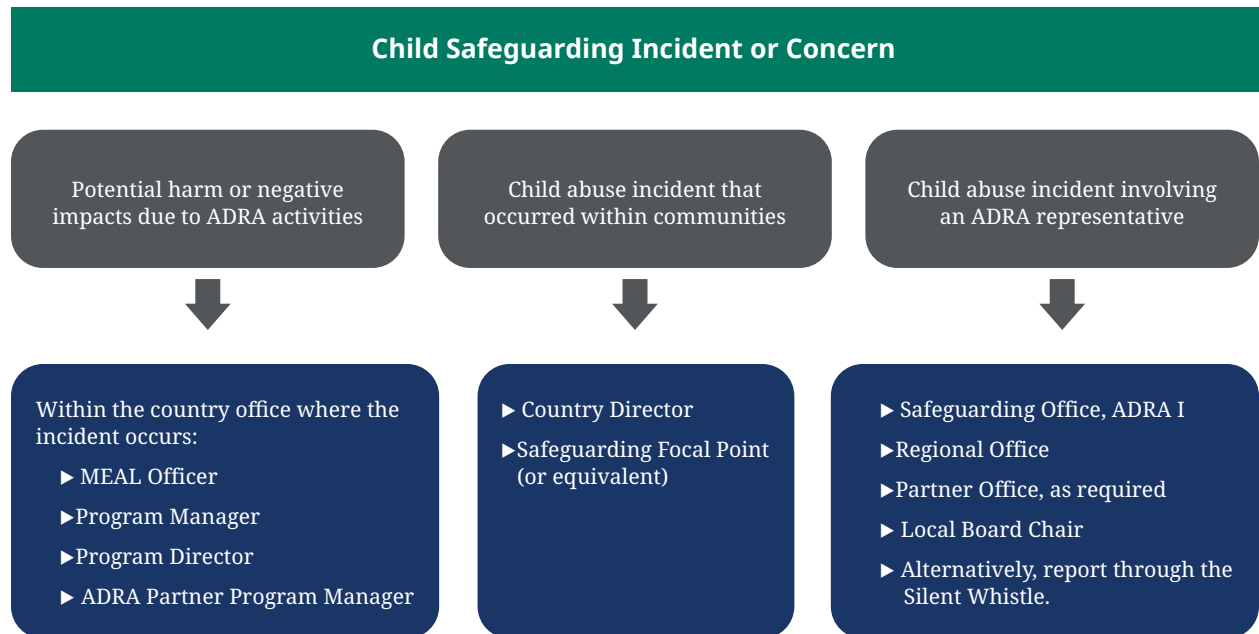
Confidentiality will be maintained to the highest extent possible while reporting, limiting information to the fewest people possible.

For cases that involve a representative of another organization, the Safeguarding Office or the local Safeguarding Focal Point or the Country Director will refer the allegations to the proper focal point within that organization, ideally following interagency protocol.

If the organization of the subject of the complainant is a partner of ADRA, pre-established partnership joint procedures should be followed. ADRA Representatives are encouraged to report directly to external organizations if the complaint does not involve in ADRA.

If a concern about child abuse arises within the communities in which ADRA works, meaning the allegation does not involve an ADRA Representative or an aid worker, the individual should work with the appropriate people in his/her office and refer the case to the appropriate organization and/or services preidentified in the context mapping, required as part of the risk assessment that offices should maintain.

Reporting Flowchart: Assessing and reporting a child safeguarding concern or incident.



Instructions on how to receive complaints from children and how to manage the wellbeing of the child involved once abuse is reported are located within the **ADRA Global Procedures to Receive and Report Sensitive Complaints**.

Responding to Child Safeguarding Concerns

When appropriate, an administrative safeguarding investigation will be conducted and possible referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under the law of the country in which they work; and/or by ADRA in accordance with disciplinary procedures.

ADRA Offices are obliged to support the administrative safeguarding investigation process and any reporting requirements. The Investigation Team and Committee involved in the investigation process along with the relevant ADRA Regional and Country Office will decide if and when the allegations are reported to statutory authorities with the best interest of the child as the primary deciding factor.

ADRA offices that do not comply with the administrative child safeguarding investigation process and/or do not comply with the findings and recommendations, ADRA International reserves the right to inform internal and external stakeholders (e.g. donors, Seventh-day Adventist Church in the respective region), and may result in removal of the office’s ADRA Accreditation License (AAL).

Disciplinary Consequences for Child abuse by an ADRA Representative

Any substantiated violation of the *Child Safeguarding Policy* will be considered an act of gross misconduct and cause for termination. Breaches of this policy will be managed in accordance with disciplinary procedures and contractual agreements. Breaches by individuals who are not ADRA staff may incur sanctions including disciplinary actions leading to possible dismissal, termination of all relations including contractual and partnership agreements, and where relevant, appropriate legal or other such actions.

ADRA employees can resign while an investigation is ongoing; however, the investigation will be carried out until completed. If an allegation about an employee is substantiated, ADRA will not accept the employee's resignation request and will instead respond with the disciplinary action recommended by the Investigation Committee.

All substantiated violations by an ADRA employee will result in termination and ineligibility for rehire or future receipt of contracts, grants, or other resources from ADRA. Child abuse is considered a crime in many of the jurisdictions where ADRA operates. ADRA will support victims or survivors in reporting sexual abuse to law enforcement and in some cases may report as an organization under legal obligations.

If a legitimate concern about the suspected abuse of a child or young person is raised but proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, appropriate sanctions will be applied in cases of knowingly false accusations.

If a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, appropriate sanctions will be applied in cases of knowingly false accusations of child abuse.

Anyone subject to this Policy who is found to have harassed, coerced, intimidated or retaliated against another in violation of this Policy will be subject to prompt and appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Implementation and Monitoring

Everyone who works with and engages with ADRA has a responsibility to ensure that children are safeguarded and protected. The responsibilities detailed below are mandatory for those who fall within the scope of the Policy.

Local boards are ultimately accountable for this Policy; while the President of ADRA International, Regional Directors, and Country Directors are responsible for its implementation. All ADRA

Implementation and Monitoring, *cont*

managers are also responsible to ensure the delivery of this policy and to promote it as relevant in all aspects of their work, to hold themselves and others to account and to help create a safe environment for all.

Adherence to this Policy should be guided by the **ADRA Safeguarding Framework (ASF) Implementation Standards**, where the minimum standards for child safeguarding are stated in this document under Commitments Two, Three and Four.

This network Policy will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Office and NetCom at a minimum every three years or earlier if significant changes are required. This review will ensure that this Policy is overseen and in accordance with the other ADRA Safeguarding Framework Policies, procedures and guidance.

Annex I: List of Unacceptable Behaviors

ADRA Representatives will treat all children with respect and not use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate. Therefore, ADRA Representatives must never:

1. Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
2. Engage in sexual activity or have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 years regardless of the age of majority/consent or custom locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
3. Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
4. Act in ways that may be abusive in any way or may place a child at risk of abuse.
5. Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive. Verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse of children is in violation of this policy.
6. Behave physically or verbally in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
7. Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from a line manager.
8. Sleep in the same bed as a child with whom they are working.
9. Sleep in the same room as a child with whom they are working with unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from a line manager.

Annex I: List of Unacceptable Behaviors, *con't*

10. Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves.
11. Condone, or participate in, behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
12. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
13. Discriminate against, show unfair differential treatment or favor to particular children to the exclusion of others.
14. Spend excessive time alone with children and away from others in a manner which could be interpreted as inappropriate.
15. Expose a child to inappropriate images, films and websites including pornography and extreme violence.
16. Place themselves in a position where they are made vulnerable to allegations of misconduct.
17. Hire children for domestic or other labor which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities or which places them at significant risk of injury

Annex II: Safeguarding Children in Communication, Marketing & Development Materials for ADRA

When photographing or filming a child for work-related purposes, ADRA Representatives will:

- ▶ Ensure that photographers/journalists/translators are properly vetted, and reference checked;
- ▶ Comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images;
- ▶ Obtain informed, written consent from the parent or guardian of the child, if they could be personally identified, as well as informed consent from the child, before photographing or filming a child, explaining how the photograph or film will be used;
- ▶ Ensure the image or file labels do not reveal identifying or potentially harmful information about a child:
 - ▶ Evaluate the risk of using images of children with easily identifiable characteristics (e.g. a wheelchair, school uniforms, etc)—which could make them a target;
 - ▶ Avoid taking identifiable photographs of children who are at risk of stigma, retaliation or abuse such as: children associated with armed groups, child survivors of trafficking, exploitation etc;
 - ▶ Details attached must not allow a child to be traced to its home / community
 - ▶ Distinctive buildings, street signs, landmarks not included in images.

Annex II: Safeguarding Children in Communication, Marketing & Development Materials for ADRA, *con't*

- ▶ Ensure all visual images present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner,
- ▶ Not show children undressed or in inappropriate poses,
- ▶ Ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts, and

ADRA Representatives are not allowed to post images of children who are direct or indirect beneficiaries of ADRA on their personal social media.

Acknowledgment

ADRA appreciates and acknowledges the support from other humanitarian organizations in the sector who have been transparent and supportive in shaping the landscape of safeguarding children. This Policy along with other ADRA Safeguarding Framework Policies have been created in a large part thanks to Mariama Deschamps, Director of Safeguarding Children and Young People at Plan International and their Global Policy on Safeguarding Children and Young People (2017).