



# ISSA Child Safeguarding Policy

Revised December 2024



## On the importance of Child Safeguarding Policy



“Child safeguarding is the responsibility that organizations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programs do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organization has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work are reported to the appropriate authorities.”

Source: Keeping Children Safe The International Child Safeguarding Standards

Available online: [The International Child Safeguarding Standards - Keeping Children Safe](#)



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## Definitions

Term	Definition/Explanation
Child	In line with the UN Convention on the rights of the child, every human being below the age of 18
Child Safeguarding Policy	This refers to the policy and practice that ISSA has in place to protect children from harm. This written policy aligned with the Keeping Children Safe standards, widely disseminated and also published online, documenting an overarching commitment to preventing harm to children and specifying the organisational procedures and principles to be observed in all areas of the organisation to support child safeguarding, including confidential reporting mechanisms for child safeguarding concerns
Child Safeguarding	Child safeguarding is the responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children, that is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children’s safety within the communities in which they work are reported to the appropriate authorities.
Harm	In relation to a child: “Harm” is any detrimental effect on a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional well-being. Harm may be caused by abuse or exploitation whether intended or unintended. Harm may also be caused due to inaction or failure to act.
Violence	[...] “Violence” is understood to mean “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” as listed in article 19, paragraph 1, of the UN Convention on the rights of the child. The term violence has been chosen here to represent all forms of harm to children as listed in article 19, paragraph 1, in conformity with the terminology used in the 2006 United Nations study on violence against children, although the other terms used to describe types of harm (injury, abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment and exploitation) carry equal weight. In common parlance the term violence is often understood to mean only physical harm and/or intentional harm. However, the Committee emphasizes most strongly that the choice of the term violence in the present general comment must not be interpreted in any way to minimize the impact of, and need to address, non-physical and/or non-intentional forms of harm (such as, inter alia, neglect and psychological maltreatment). Paragraph 4 of General Comment No 13 (2011) of the UN Committee on the rights of the child on

	<p>the child's right to freedom from all forms of violence  <a href="http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13_en.pdf">http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13_en.pdf</a></p>
Child Abuse	<p>From Tusla (Irish child protection agency) Guidance on definitions of child abuse and on how to recognise abuse: Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger. The abuser may be an adult or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser. The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the adult/parent/carer. The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised. See also: Guidance on potential indicators of abuse: <a href="https://www.childmatters.org.nz/insights/abuse-indicators/">https://www.childmatters.org.nz/insights/abuse-indicators/</a></p>
Neglect	<p>From paragraph 20, GC No 13 UN Committee on the rights of the child: Neglect or negligent treatment. Neglect means the failure to meet children's physical and psychological needs, protect them from danger, or obtain medical, birth registration or other services when those responsible for children's care have the means, knowledge and access to services to do so. It includes: (a) Physical neglect: failure to protect a child from harm, including through lack of supervision, or failure to provide the child with basic necessities including adequate food, shelter, clothing and basic medical care; (b) Psychological or emotional neglect: including lack of any emotional support and love, chronic inattention to the child, caregivers being "psychologically unavailable" by overlooking young children's cues and signals, and exposure to intimate partner violence, drug or alcohol abuse; (c) Neglect of children's physical or mental health: withholding essential medical care; (d) Educational neglect: failure to comply with laws requiring caregivers to secure their children's education through attendance at school or otherwise; and (e) Abandonment: a practice which is of great concern and which can disproportionately affect, inter alia, children out of wedlock and children with disabilities in some societies.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>From Tusla (Irish child protection agency) Guidance on definitions of child abuse and on how to recognise abuse: Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences. Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical</p>

care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment 1 In many countries children are abandoned because parents and caregivers living in poverty do not have the means to support them. According to the definition, neglect is a failure of care when parents have the means to meet their children's needs. The Committee has often urged States parties to "render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities" (art. 18, para. 2 of the Convention). 4 difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect. Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once. The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
- Lack of adequate clothing
- Inattention to basic hygiene
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age
- Persistent failure to attend school
- Abandonment or desertion

#### Emotional Abuse

From paragraph 21, GC No 13 UN Committee on the rights of the child:

21. Mental violence. "Mental violence", as referred to in the Convention, is often described as psychological maltreatment, mental abuse, verbal abuse and emotional abuse or neglect and this can include:

(a) All forms of persistent harmful interactions with the child, for example, conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved, unwanted, endangered or only of value in meeting another's needs;

(b) Scaring, terrorizing and threatening; exploiting and corrupting; spurning and rejecting; isolating, ignoring and favouritism;

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(c) Denying emotional responsiveness; neglecting mental health, medical and educational needs;

(d) Insults, name-calling, humiliation, belittling, ridiculing and hurting a child's feelings;

(e) Exposure to domestic violence;

(f) Placement in solitary confinement, isolation or humiliating or degrading conditions of detention; and

(g) Psychological bullying and hazing by adults or other children, including via information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as mobile phones and the Internet (known as "cyberbullying").

From Tusla (Irish child protection agency) Guidance on definitions of child abuse and on how to recognise abuse:

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered 2 "Hazing" refers to rituals and other activities involving harassment, violence or humiliation which are used as a way of initiating a person into a group. 5 emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs.

Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection
  - Lack of comfort and love
  - Lack of attachment
  - Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
  - Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
  - Continuous lack of praise and encouragement
  - Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child
  - Bullying
  - Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
  - Extreme overprotectiveness
  - Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing family conflicts and family violence</li> <li>• Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to his/her age and stage of development</li> </ul> <p>There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.</p> <p>It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors</p>
Physical Abuse	<p>From paragraphs 22, 23 and 24, GC No 13 UN Committee on the rights of the child:</p> <p>22. Physical violence. This includes fatal and non-fatal physical violence. The Committee is of the opinion that physical violence includes: (a) All corporal punishment and all other forms of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and (b) Physical bullying and hazing by adults and by other children. 23. Children with disabilities may be subject to particular forms of physical violence such as: (a) Forced sterilization, particularly girls; (b) Violence in the guise of treatment (for example electroconvulsive treatment (ECT) and electric shocks used as “aversion treatment” to control children’s behaviour); and (c) Deliberate infliction of disabilities on children for the purpose of exploiting them for begging in the streets or elsewhere. 24. Corporal punishment. In general comment No. 8 (para. 11), the Committee defined “corporal” or “physical” punishment as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting (“smacking”, “slapping”, “spanking”) children, with the hand or with an implement - a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, caning, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding, or forced ingestion. In the view of the Committee, corporal punishment is invariably degrading. Other specific forms of corporal punishment are listed in the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299, paras. 56, 60 and 62).</p> <p>From Tusla (Irish child protection agency) Guidance on definitions of child abuse and on how to recognise abuse:</p> <p>Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child’s health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse. Physical abuse can include the following: physical punishment, beating, slapping, hitting or kicking, pushing, shaking or throwing, pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling, use of excessive force in handling, deliberate poisoning, suffocation fabricated/induced illness, female genital mutilation</p>

## Sexual Abuse

From paragraph 25, GC No 13 UN Committee on the rights of the child:

Sexual abuse and exploitation. Sexual abuse and exploitation includes: (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful or psychologically harmful sexual activity<sup>3</sup>; (b) The use of children in commercial sexual exploitation; and (c) The use of children in audio or visual images of child sexual abuse; (d) Child prostitution, sexual slavery, sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, trafficking (within and between countries) and sale of children for sexual purposes and forced marriage. Many children experience sexual victimization which is not accompanied by physical force or restraint but which is nonetheless psychologically intrusive, exploitive and traumatic. <sup>3</sup> Sexual abuse comprises any sexual activities imposed by an adult on a child, against which the child is entitled to protection by criminal law. Sexual activities are also considered as abuse when committed against a child by another child, if the child offender is significantly older than the child victim or uses power, threat or other means of pressure. Sexual activities between children are not considered as sexual abuse if the children are older than the age limit defined by the State party for consensual sexual activities. <sup>7</sup>

From Tusla (Irish child protection agency) Guidance on definitions of child abuse and on how to recognise abuse: Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography. Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members. Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms. Examples of child sexual abuse include the following: any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child, an invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification, masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation, sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal, sexual exploitation of a child, which includes: » Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means] » , inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act », showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse, exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology, consensual sexual activity involving an adult and a child. It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a child may be sexual abuse even if the child concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive

Direct Contact	<p>Being in the physical presence of a child or children in the context of the organisation's work, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long term. Examples from the ISSA Network include, inter alia: in-person or online site visits to kindergartens, supporting refugee children and their families, events.</p>
Indirect Contact	<p>Examples from the ISSA Network operations include: different initiatives, capacity building activities, training of professionals, facilitating continuous professional learning communities of professionals, developing resources, advocacy on behalf of children and their families, or research targeting them.,Having access to information on children in the context of the organisation's work, such as children's names, photographs, or provide funding for other organisations that work 'directly' with children. ISSA as a network also advocates for the development and implementation of robust child safeguarding policies more broadly, e.g., in working to enhance child safeguarding by its partners, etc.</p>

# Introduction

This Child Safeguarding Policy underscores ISSA's commitment to the critical task of protecting children from abuse or violations of their rights, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Child safeguarding refers to the responsibility of organizations to ensure their staff, operations, and programs do not harm children, expose them to risks of abuse, or neglect their safety. It also entails promptly reporting any concerns about children's safety within the communities where the organization operates to the appropriate authorities.

## Purpose of this document

Although ISSA does not work directly with children, our activities have a significant impact on the early childhood of many children through advocacy, actions, initiatives, and collaborations with member and partner organizations. This Child Safeguarding Policy (CSP) has been developed to:

- a) Protect children from abuse in cases of their potential involvement in events hosted by ISSA or projects led by ISSA, and
- b) Ensure that ISSA's advocacy and collaborative efforts fully integrate child safeguarding principles into early childhood development systems, policies, and practices.

Everyone has a responsibility to keep children safe. Through the implementation of this policy, we commit to fostering a strong culture of child safeguarding in the field of early childhood development across Europe and Central Asia.

**Acknowledgements:** the information concerning child protection and safeguarding policies draws on inspiration from the following organizations' policies and related documents: Eurochild, OAK Foundation, UNICEF, Keeping Children Safe, Defense for Children International, Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE), Arab Resource Collective & Arab Network for Early Childhood and other organizations focusing on child development and education.

## About ISSA

ISSA is a leading international learning community and vibrant member association, powered by Europe's and Central Asia's foremost early childhood experts. Our shared, unwavering goal is to ensure that every child reaches their full potential. With a steadfast commitment to advancing early childhood development based on principles of inclusivity and equity, we champion holistic and integrated systems, policies, and high-quality services for all young children.

In fostering purpose-driven collaborations among members, partners, and supporters, ISSA creates a collective synergy that significantly amplifies our impact on early childhood development in diverse, dynamic, and multi-faceted environments. Our expertise lies in devising and implementing evidence-based solutions customized to meet distinct localized needs, distinguishing us for our ability to foster trust and resilience. Moreover, we excel in generating and sharing new knowledge and fostering innovations focused on transforming early childhood systems, thereby ensuring improved outcomes for all.

Founded in 1999, the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) emerged from the transformative Step by Step program initiated by the Open Society Foundations. Focused on Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, among other countries that were integral at the time such as Haiti and Mongolia, Step by Step aimed to revolutionize early childhood education, championing child-centered approaches and democratic values.

As the program expanded to 29 countries, ISSA evolved into a platform for organizations and individuals committed to improving the lives of young children and families. Over the years, ISSA has grown into a preeminent early childhood network for Europe and Central Asia, advocating for quality, equity, and inclusivity in early childhood development.

Today, ISSA continues to build on its legacy, collaborating with ministries, civil society organizations, and donors to advance its vision of empowering every child's unique potential. From pioneering quality standards to supporting professional development across sectors, ISSA remains dedicated to driving systemic change and fostering brighter futures for all children.

## **Our Network Advantage**

ISSA is a powerful impact network that unites stakeholders to advance early childhood development. Through our efforts to connect and empower members and partners, we advance and amplify contributions to early childhood development across a range of initiatives. We align and advocate for policies and services that promote empowerment, diversity, and inclusivity in early childhood development, learning, and care.

## **Collaborative Impact**

With over 25 years of expertise in early childhood development, ISSA members collaborate together, as well as with partners and funders, to implement comprehensive initiatives that engage varied stakeholders—practitioners, researchers, academics, local governments, service providers, and more—to foster systemic transformation in early childhood development. These initiatives are designed to build inclusive and integrated systems that enhance the well-being and development of all children. Key components include capacity building, advocacy, and training.

## **Collective Learning**

As a network, we advance the ECD field by generating new knowledge and fostering a culture of continuous improvement and innovation that supports a wide variety of stakeholders including practitioners, policy makers, parents, and more.

- **Generating new knowledge:** Drawing on extensive research and an evidence-based approach, we develop frameworks, guidelines, and resources on a wide range of issues that support holistic, integrated, and inclusive approaches to quality early childhood development.
- **Knowledge exchanges:** We conduct robust capacity building programs and facilitate cross-border learning. We also manage several thematic knowledge hubs that offer many valuable resources across a variety of topics within ECD, as well as new insights and best practices across ECD worldwide.

## ECD Programmatic and Consultancy Work

Beyond the ISSA Secretariat's role for growing and maintaining the member association, we also advance early childhood development through strategic programmatic initiatives and expert consultancy services to create meaningful, systemic change across Europe and Central Asia.

## Vision, Mission and Shared Purpose

**ISSA's Vision:** A society where all stakeholders - families, communities and professionals - work together to ensure that each child reaches their unique potential and embraces values of social justice, equity and democracy.

**ISSA's Mission:** We are an international learning community powered by the leading early childhood experts in Europe and Central Asia. We unite and support professionals and partners to deliver equitable, high-quality early years services that promote the development of the whole child across all domains. We constructively challenge existing knowledge and practice and co-construct more effective approaches and models.

**Shared purpose:** ISSA is a network of 100 member organizations committed to sustaining and expanding a movement for inclusive, high-quality systems, services, and policies for children and their families to ensure that all children have the best start in life.

## Child Rights Approach

We adopt a child rights approach in our work, focusing on building the capacity of duty-bearers to fulfill their obligations to respect, protect, and uphold children's rights. At the same time, we aim to empower children to actively claim their rights. Our approach is holistic, emphasizing the strengths and resources of the child and the ecosystem to which they belong.

(Reference: General Comment No 13 / UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

[https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/crc.c.gc.13\\_en.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/crc.c.gc.13_en.pdf))

## Strategic Goals

**Goal 1:** Provide a strong collaborative infrastructure to empower members of our growing network in their work to strengthen early childhood systems with innovative approaches, noteworthy practice and cross-country learning.

**Goal 2:** Engage with or lead initiatives to advance the network's shared purpose around: holistic ECD, competent early childhood systems to provide quality, equitable and integrated services for all young children and their families, and a well-trained, motivated and diverse workforce to offer high quality services for children from birth to 10 years of age.

# ISSA and Child Safeguarding

## A Brief Overview of ISSA's Interactions with Children

While ISSA's Network Hub does not currently engage in direct interactions with children on a regular basis, the ISSA network occasionally has direct contact with children during specific projects. For example, ISSA Members are involved in the professional development of educators who directly work with children or during in-person or online site visits to educational institutions. Additionally, ISSA's advocacy for prioritizing early childhood development and ensuring equal opportunities for safe, healthy, and optimal development indirectly impacts children, influencing their safety and well-being.

ISSA Members are diverse in their roles and activities. Some have direct contact with children, such as supporting refugee children and families, providing services, coordinating networks of kindergartens and schools, organizing site visits, or implementing project activities and capacity-building initiatives. Others may not directly interact with children but have indirect involvement through various initiatives, including capacity building, training professionals, facilitating professional learning communities, developing resources, advocating on behalf of children and families, or conducting research that targets children.

An online dimension also exists within the ISSA Network's child safeguarding efforts, such as online interactions with Members, virtual events, or online site visits to kindergartens. Furthermore, the ISSA Network can play a crucial role in ensuring child safeguarding principles and policies are implemented beyond the Network—such as by direct partners of member organizations that engage with children.

It is within this context that a child safeguarding policy for the ISSA Network has been developed.

## Commitment<sup>1</sup>

This Child Safeguarding Policy reflects ISSA's commitment to protecting children from harm. It clearly outlines the responsibilities and expectations regarding child safeguarding, creating a safe and positive environment for children. As an international association, ISSA demonstrates its dedication to its duty of care through this policy.

ISSA aligns with the European Commission's guiding principles and grounds its work in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In accordance with the Convention, every person under the age of 18 is recognized as a child and as a rights holder with non-negotiable rights to protection. Children are treated with dignity, valued as unique individuals with distinct needs, interests, and privacy, and respected as participants in decisions affecting them. ISSA recognizes the importance of empowering children to protect themselves and their peers, claim their rights, and participate in developing, monitoring, and evaluating child safeguarding strategies, policies, and programs.

By adhering to a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse, following non-discriminatory practices, and respecting confidentiality, safety, and the best interests of the child, ISSA ensures that:

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Deference for Children International Child Safeguarding Policy and Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) Network Child Safeguarding Policy and [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/10\\_principles\\_for\\_integrated\\_child\\_protection\\_systems\\_en.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/10_principles_for_integrated_child_protection_systems_en.pdf)

- The right of all children to be free from all forms of violence is respected and fulfilled.
- Everyone understands their responsibility to keep children safe.
- ISSA fulfills its duty of care to children involved in its initiatives or programs.
- ISSA integrates child safeguarding into its advocacy, capacity-building, and standard-setting objectives and actions.

ISSA encourages all Members and partners to adopt international child safeguarding principles.

## Why This Policy Was Developed

### **To Safeguard Children**

ISSA ensures all initiatives, programs, and advocacy embed strong child safeguarding practices. The policy minimizes risks of harm, abuse, and exploitation during ISSA-led events and initiatives and provides guidance on appropriate responses when harm or abuse occurs.

### **To Safeguard Staff**

While the primary aim of this policy is to protect children, it also supports staff by preventing ambiguous situations or behaviors that could conflict with ISSA's commitment to child safeguarding. Staff members must uphold the highest professional and ethical standards, as their actions reflect the principles of ISSA.

### **To Safeguard ISSA**

As an organization focused on early childhood, ISSA ensures that it helps to respect, protect, and fulfil children's rights in all its work.

## Our Commitments as a Network

### **Accountability**

We, as a network, hold ourselves accountable to ensure that no child is harmed or placed at risk of harm due to their association with us. We are committed to implementing clear measures for ISSA member organizations and ISSA partner organizations, including assessment, agreements, support, capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, and accountability mechanisms.

### **Training and Capacity-Building**

We recognize that all staff must be trained in child safeguarding and that child safeguarding focal points require additional training to effectively fulfill their roles.

### **Prioritizing Immediate Action**

We acknowledge the importance of prioritizing child safeguarding and understand that any concerns related to child safeguarding must be reported immediately to the designated, trained child safeguarding focal point. It is never appropriate to wait, reflect, or delay action when a child may be at risk of serious harm.

### **Risk Assessment and Mitigation**

We commit to integrating child safeguarding risk assessment and mitigation into our strategies, strategic documents, operations, and actions.

### **Children’s Participation Rights**

We are deeply committed to ensuring that children’s participation rights are upheld and recognize that children must be safe for those rights to be realized. We also understand the importance of ensuring that children, communities, and staff are informed—in child-accessible ways where appropriate—about child safeguarding and the processes for raising concerns. Supporting children in claiming their rights is a key priority for us.

### **Reporting Procedures**

We recognize the necessity of developing and implementing reporting procedures that align with national and/or regional laws, policies, and procedures.

## **ISSA Network Child Safeguarding Commitment**

### **Applicability to Member Organizations**

ISSA’s Child Safeguarding Policy applies to all ISSA member organizations. Adherence to this policy is a condition of full membership. Starting in January 2025, member organizations must:

- Submit their own child safeguarding policy, which should meet or exceed the requirements of ISSA’s policy.
- If an organization does not have its own policy, it must sign ISSA’s Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct by signing the Letter of Commitment. Organizations are urged to develop their own policies and procedures that meet or exceed ISSA’s standards while addressing their specific local contexts.

ISSA’s Child Safeguarding Policy complements, rather than replaces, the policies of its members. **Guidance is available in the sample Network Child Safeguarding Toolkit located in the ISSA Members Room.**

### **Requirement for Adherence**

All ISSA member organizations must adhere to ISSA’s Child Safeguarding Policy by signing a dated copy of the Letter of Commitment. Existing members will also be required to:

- Submit their own child safeguarding policy, or
- Sign ISSA’s Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.

### **Breach of Policy**

In the event of a breach of ISSA’s Child Safeguarding Policy by a member organization, the ISSA Board may recommend, and the Council may decide, to cease working with the member and to suspend or terminate their membership. However, whenever possible, the ISSA Network is committed to supporting members in improving their policies and implementation before taking such actions.

### **Minimum Standards**

This policy applies to all members and staff working on behalf of the ISSA Network in any country or context. It establishes minimum standards that must be upheld. Where local regulations, laws, or customs impose stricter

requirements (e.g., concerning behavior or dress), those should take precedence. In all contexts, regardless of national laws, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18.

### **Commitment to Child Safeguarding**

ISSA is committed to embedding child safeguarding within its network and encouraging its partners to do the same. External partners involved in projects or initiatives with children must either provide evidence of their own child safeguarding policy or sign ISSA's policy and Code of Conduct.

### **Policy Review**

This document will be reviewed within two years of its adoption by the Association, in consultation with the ISSA Network, and every two years thereafter.

## **Safeguarding Standards**

### **Scope of the policy<sup>2</sup>**

This policy applies to anyone representing the ISSA Network. This includes all management and staff—whether permanent, temporary, interim, contractors, consultants, trainees, interns—as well as full members, affiliates, volunteers, and governance bodies such as Council, Board, and committee members. All are required to implement and adhere to the policy's requirements.

**Member organizations are responsible for supervising and ensuring that participants, as well as their partners in projects, events, and activities, comply with this policy.**

### **Partners**

When working with partners, the ISSA Network emphasizes the importance of clearly establishing which organization is responsible for child safeguarding at all stages, from concept design and planning to implementation and follow-up. This includes responsibility for taking action if a concern is raised or an incident occurs. To address this, a joint agreement on child safeguarding procedures will be signed by all parties involved in joint activities or projects, clarifying roles and responsibilities.

This agreement does not prevent the ISSA Network or its partners from meeting their own reporting obligations. If disagreements arise regarding the appropriate course of action, either party retains the right to refer the matter to the relevant authorities.

## **Risk Assessments<sup>3</sup>**

Risk assessments are conducted during the design phase of projects and activities, and safety strategies are developed accordingly.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) Network Child Safeguarding Policy

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Eurochild's Child Safeguarding Policy

Risk mitigation strategies will continue to be refined to minimize risks to children. These strategies are integrated into the design, delivery, and evaluation of projects, initiatives, operations, and activities that have either a direct or indirect impact on children.

### **Procedures for Reporting**

All individuals to whom this policy applies (as listed above) must remain vigilant for signs that a child may need help.

In cases of direct contact with children, it is essential to inform children, in an age-appropriate and understandable way, about what to do if they feel uncomfortable or wish to report inappropriate behavior or abuse.

If anyone working for or on behalf of ISSA suspects potential abuse of a child—including concerns about the behavior of another person working for or on behalf of ISSA—they must report it immediately.

Suspicious must be reported without undue delay to the local police or relevant local authority, as well as to the Child Safeguarding Focal Person (CSF) at ISSA.

The guiding principle is that the child's safety is always the foremost consideration and highest **priority**.

## WHEN A CHILD-PROTECTION CONCERN DRAWS YOUR ATTENTION:

**Act on your concerns.** If in doubt, speak out.

**Child-centered.** The protection of children is the most crucial consideration.

**Time counts.** Ensure timely, effective, confidential, and appropriate responses to child safeguarding issues.

## Guidance on Responding to a Concern and Sanctions<sup>4</sup>

### Reporting a Concern

When a child safeguarding concern arises or an incident occurs, it is critical to act swiftly by reporting in accordance with the ISSA Child Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

All individuals working for or with ISSA receive the necessary information and training to identify the Child Safeguarding Focal Point (CSF). If a concern arises, it must be treated as a matter of urgency and reported immediately to the Focal Point.

Everyone covered under the scope of this policy understands that child safeguarding concerns require immediate action, as the safety and protection of children is always the highest priority. Individuals may become aware of a safeguarding concern through certain behaviors exhibited by either a child or an adult. Guidance on recognizing indicators of abuse—covering both child and adult behaviors—is provided in the [Indicators of Abuse](#). (Source: Keeping Children Safe – Understanding Child Safeguarding, page 49)

ISSA's Child Safeguarding Focal Person (CSF):

Éva Izsák, Membership Manager: email: [eizsak@issa.nl](mailto:eizsak@issa.nl) | Phone: +31 (0) 71 516 12 22

Second named person responsible for child safeguarding: Aljosa Rudas, Program Manager: email: [arudas@issa.nl](mailto:arudas@issa.nl) | Phone: +31 (0) 71 516 12 22

Board member directly responsible for child protection: Board Secretary.

### Whistle-Blowers

The ISSA Network places the utmost priority on keeping children safe from harm. Anyone representing or associated with the ISSA Network is required to report any child safeguarding concerns.

It is important to emphasize that individuals who report concerns in good faith, based on legitimate worries about a child's welfare, will not face reprisals or disciplinary actions. While the safety of children remains the paramount concern, representatives of the ISSA Network will adhere to Keeping Children Safe guidance when addressing unsubstantiated, unfounded, or malicious allegations.

### Responding to Concerns

If a child discloses abuse to someone covered under the scope of this policy, it is essential to handle the situation appropriately as outlined below in the acting on a concern section, and then report the disclosure following the reporting flowchart below.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from ARC-ANECD's Child Safeguarding Policy and Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) Network Child Safeguarding Policy

If a child discloses child abuse to you, it is critical to be prepared to handle the situation in the appropriate manner and then report it to the appropriate authorities. The guiding principle in responding to any concerns around child protection is that the safety and welfare of the child should always take precedence. No child should be put at more risk by any action you undertake. You should do all you can to remove the child from immediate danger and ensure she or he is comfortable. You should respect the two-adult rule (that two adults should be present) and you should do all you can to minimize delays.

## Steps to Take When a Child Reports Discomfort or Concern



If a child informs you about feeling uncomfortable or concerned with someone's behavior (whether an adult or another child), the following steps must be followed:

- **Reassure the child:** Let them know they did the right thing by reporting the behavior.
- **Listen attentively and calmly:** Ask clarifying questions only as needed to ensure you fully understand the allegation and can report it accurately later.
- **Avoid repeated questioning:** Do not ask the same questions multiple times, as this may make the child feel as though their initial account was incorrect or that they are not fully believed.
- **Do not promise secrecy:** Explain to the child that you are obligated to report the incident or inappropriate behavior for their safety and well-being.
- **Ensure the child's safety and well-being:** Take immediate steps to protect their physical safety and psychological well-being. This may include referring them for medical care or counseling as necessary.
- **Focus on accuracy:** Clearly distinguish between what the child has directly said and any inferences or assumptions you may have made. Precision is critical at this stage.
- **Report without hesitation:** Do not let personal doubt prevent you from reporting the allegation to the appropriate supervisor or authority.
- **Keep the child informed:** Let the child know what steps you will take next and assure them they will be updated on what happens.

## Acting on a concern

All individuals covered by this policy must immediately report any safeguarding concerns to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point (CSF) or the designated next most appropriate person. The designated person will then implement the appropriate procedure and decide on the necessary course of action. If the concern directly involves the CSF, the matter must instead be reported to the designated next most appropriate person.

A written record of all complaints or concerns must be completed using the provided template and filed by the CSF. Once a complaint or report is made and the CSF is notified, the principle of confidentiality must be strictly upheld to protect the child's privacy and dignity. Information about the complaint should only be shared on a need-to-know basis, typically limited to the CSF and/or individuals at the management or director level.

All incident reporting forms must be securely stored in compliance with confidentiality rules. The transfer of information—whether via email, mail, or verbal communication—must be handled with the highest level of confidentiality.

If an ISSA Network representative or a member organization has a concern that a child is in immediate danger, they must urgently contact the police or the appropriate child protection authorities, as specified in the reporting flowchart. After taking this action, the Child Safeguarding Focal Point must be informed promptly.

The ISSA Network representative, whether the Child Safeguarding Focal Point or the director, must immediately notify the ISSA Board of any cases reported to the relevant national, regional, or local authorities where an ISSA Network representative is suspected of causing harm to a child during their events or activities.

After a complaint is made, the Focal Point may need to consult or directly alert the local authorities:

### **Raad voor de Kinderbescherming Den Haag**

Phone number of Veilig Thuis (always available): 0800-2000

**Contact of Raad voor de Kinderbescherming Den Haag:**

Phone number: 070 - 374 23 00

Available from Monday until Friday 08:30 - 17:00

E-mail: [ao.west@rvdk.nl](mailto:ao.west@rvdk.nl)

If a concern is not reported to the authorities or the child protection services, by the Focal Point, the following steps must be taken:

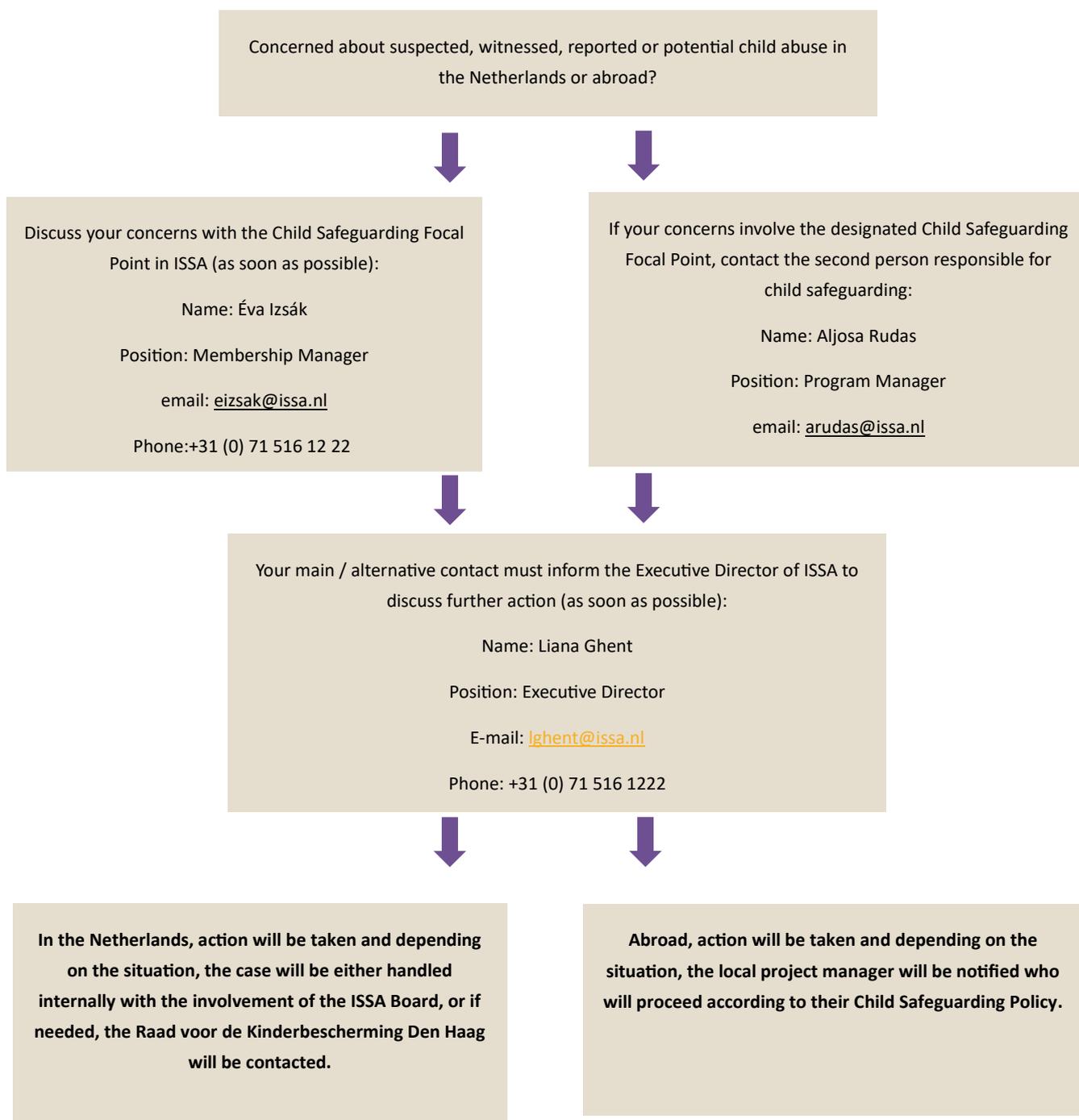
- The reasons for not reporting are logged within the template for reporting a concern;
- If any other actions are taken as a result of the concern, these must be logged;
- The person who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported further;
- The person should also be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to the Raad voor de Kinderbescherming Den Haag.

**Sanctions**

Breaches of this policy will be investigated in accordance with the Code of Conduct and relevant contractual agreements. In some cases, a referral may also be made to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under the law of the Netherlands or the laws of the country where the respective ISSA member organization is based.

Sanctions for breaches of this policy may include disciplinary actions, up to and including dismissal, termination of all relationships such as contractual or partnership agreements, and, where applicable, legal or other appropriate actions.

### Flowchart for Reporting Suspected Abuse<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Adapted from ARC-ANECD's Child Safeguarding Policy and Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) Network Child Safeguarding Policy

## Accountability

This Child Safeguarding Policy is designed to uphold the highest standards of professional behavior and personal practice, ensuring that no harm comes to children during their involvement in ISSA activities, projects, or programs.

Accountability is central to ensuring effective child safeguarding within our network. It establishes clear responsibilities, promotes transparency, and ensures that our actions align with our commitment to protecting children's rights and well-being.

Before starting any activity, all staff members must conduct a child safeguarding risk assessment during the design phase of initiatives, projects, or events and consult the Child Safeguarding Focal Point (CSF). Upon completing an initiative, project, or event, the responsible person must, in coordination with the CSF, conduct a review to evaluate whether the risk assessment was effective and identify any gaps or lessons to inform future activities.

As a network, ISSA will conduct biennial reviews of its child safeguarding policy and practices. Member organizations are strongly encouraged to undertake similar biennial reviews of their safeguarding practices, share their findings with the Network Hub, and include updates in their annual reports.

The purpose of these reviews is to learn from practical case experiences and use those insights to improve safeguarding policies and practices further. These measures help ensure continuous improvement and alignment with international safeguarding standards.

## Prevention

### Child Safeguarding Focal Person (CSF)

A Child Safeguarding Focal Person (CSF) has been appointed and is responsible for:

- Promoting awareness and implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy across the organization.
- Organizing induction training and annual refresher training for all staff.
- Maintaining training logs and incident logs.
- Reporting safeguarding matters to management and the Board.
- Staying informed on best practices and statutory requirements.
- Acting as a source of support and information for staff on safeguarding issues.
- Liaising with national child protection authorities when necessary.

Project managers of initiatives and organizers of in-person or online events are responsible for conducting a child safeguarding risk assessment during the planning phase. They must also reflect on how the assessment was implemented throughout the process and upon completion of the activity.

The ISSA management and Board are responsible for conducting a biannual audit of the child safeguarding policy and its implementation.

The name and contact details of the Child Safeguarding Focal Point (CSF) must be clearly displayed in the ISSA office. Additionally, all new staff members are systematically trained on their child safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

**Everyone within ISSA has a responsibility to keep children safe, both in their work and in their private lives. Any concerns regarding child safeguarding must be reported promptly.**

## Child-Safe Recruitment

As of January 2025, recruitment processes for all employees will include systematic measures to ensure child safeguarding, including the following:

- **Interview Process:** Recruitment interviews will include specific questions on child safeguarding. These will assess the candidate's understanding, commitment to, and respect for child safeguarding policies and procedures, as well as their motivation for working in early childhood development. During the interviews, ISSA's commitment to child safeguarding will be clearly articulated, and the candidate will be informed about child safeguarding actions at both the Association and network levels.
- **References:** A minimum of two character references is required (excluding family members or individuals who have known the applicant personally for less than two years). References must be verified to ensure they are genuine, including confirmation by phone.
- **Employment History:** Recruitment processes will involve attentiveness to any suspicious gaps or inconsistencies in employment history, particularly from the perspective of child safeguarding.
- **Role Descriptions:** All job and role descriptions will include a statement outlining the position's responsibilities for meeting ISSA's child safeguarding policy requirements.
- **Policy Adherence:** Adherence to ISSA's Child Safeguarding Policy is mandatory for all individuals affiliated with ISSA, including staff, consultants, interns, and volunteers.

## Code of Conduct<sup>6</sup>

This Code of Conduct provides guidance on appropriate and ethical behavior by adults towards children and between children themselves. It is based on the principle of prioritizing the best interests of the child and should be interpreted with transparency and common sense. ISSA aims to create an environment where both children and adults can participate in its activities safely and positively.

### Keeping Children Safe Standards

**"A clear code of conduct ensures all staff understand their professional boundaries when working with children and what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior."**

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Deference for Children International Child Safeguarding Policy

## Guidelines for Staff Conduct

A Code of Conduct is a clear and concise guide outlining acceptable and unacceptable behavior when employed or engaged by the organization. It should specifically address behavior towards children. All staff and associates, including volunteers, must agree to the Code of Conduct upon employment or when starting their role.

The Code of Conduct is a fundamental part of the organization's child safeguarding policy. When properly implemented, it helps reduce or limit the risk of child abuse. The organization should also clearly outline the actions it will take if the Code is violated or not followed.

Staff members working for organizations with a child safeguarding policy and Code of Conduct are expected to adhere to the Code both **within and outside the workplace**. This includes adopting appropriate behavior themselves and reporting any concerns they may have regarding a child, whether the concern arises in the workplace or elsewhere.

While this may present challenges for staff, it is important to understand that the organization is creating an environment focused on keeping all children safe.

## ISSA's Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct

ISSA's **Child Safeguarding Policy** establishes a standard for safeguarding children with whom the organization has direct or indirect contact. This **Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct** provides guidance on appropriate and expected behavior for adults toward children. It is designed to give all representatives of the organization the confidence to perform their roles while ensuring positive, safe relationships with children.

The primary purpose of this Code of Conduct is to protect children from harm caused by our actions. The secondary purpose is to protect adults from false accusations of inappropriate behavior or abuse. This is not an exhaustive list but should be interpreted with common sense and in alignment with the holistic view of children outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Member organizations are free to adopt more rigorous codes of conduct tailored to their context but must not deviate below the standards set here.**

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### Our Organization's Commitments

1. **Child Rights:** Our organization recognizes every child as a rights holder.
2. **Commitment to Safeguarding:** Our organization is deeply committed to eradicating violence against children and takes our duty to safeguard all children seriously. Everyone should avoid actions or behaviors that may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behavior toward children, ensuring a culture of openness that empowers children. We do not tolerate any form of violence against children, even if a specific form is not (yet) explicitly sanctioned under national law.
3. **Responsibility for Protection:** All those affiliated with our organization (staff, contractors, interns, volunteers, board members, etc.) must take all possible precautions to protect children with whom they come into direct or indirect contact. This responsibility extends to both **work-related activities and personal life**. We are also responsible for ensuring that visitors to our premises, events, or activities comply with this policy, avoiding actions that may harm or exploit children.

4. **Safeguarding Policy:** Our organization has a clear child safeguarding policy aligned with the Keeping Children Safe standards, covering policy, people, procedures, and accountability, designed to prevent harm and outline responses when safeguarding concerns arise.
  5. **Risk Assessment:** We commit to embedding child safeguarding risk assessments and mitigation strategies in our strategy, programs, and operations.
  6. **Priority for Safeguarding:** We understand that child safeguarding must be prioritized. Any concerns regarding safeguarding should be reported to the designated, trained child safeguarding focal point immediately. It is never acceptable to wait or delay action when a child may be at risk of serious harm.
- 

#### **What Our Organization's Representatives MUST NEVER Do**

1. Act in ways, online or offline, that may be abusive or place children at risk of abuse.
  2. Hit, physically assault, or threaten physical harm to children.
  3. Use inappropriate, offensive, or abusive language, make suggestions, or offer advice that is harmful.
  4. Act in ways that shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate emotional abuse or discrimination.
  5. Engage in physically inappropriate or sexually provocative behavior.
  6. Engage in sexual activity or have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18, irrespective of local customs or age of consent.
  7. Never initiate or conduct a relationship or sexual contact with children or young people participating in ISSA's operations, programs, projects, or activities.
  8. Expose children to inappropriate images, films, music, websites, or mature content.
  9. Stay alone overnight with children who are not family members while benefiting from the organization's programs, projects, or activities.
  10. Have a child beneficiary who is not part of their family visit or stay overnight at their home.
  11. Condone, participate in, or ignore illegal, unsafe, or abusive behavior toward any child.
  12. Allow allegations or complaints made by a child or concerns about their welfare to go unrecorded.
  13. Fail to follow up on or act on any allegations or complaints made by a child or an adult on behalf of a child.
- 

#### **What Our Organization's Representatives MUST ALWAYS Do**

1. Recognize, respect, and protect every child as a rights holder with non-negotiable rights to protection.
2. Contribute to creating an environment where children feel empowered and respected as individuals.
3. Always respect and protect the dignity of each child, understanding their unique personality, needs, and privacy.
4. Foster a culture of support, respect, and tolerance.
5. Always be attentive to children's needs and respond positively.

6. Be a positive role model, treating everyone equitably and apologizing for mistakes.
  7. Respect children's agency and empower them to protect themselves and claim their rights.
  8. Involve children in decisions that concern them, including the development, monitoring, and evaluation of safeguarding strategies, policies, programs, and services.
  9. Plan activities that take into account the age, gender, needs, and abilities of all participants.
  10. Conduct child safeguarding risk assessments for all activities, operations, and programs, evaluating risks and implementing strategies to minimize harm. Identify and analyse the potential risks (there are three levels of risks: external, organization, linked to a specific event/activity/operation) of that impact or contact, evaluate the risks in terms of likelihood they could occur and the seriousness of the impact on children, implement strategies to minimise and prevent risk, consistently and rigorously review and revise risks and preventative measures including on completion of events/activities/operations, communicate and consult regarding risks.
  11. Avoid working alone or spending excessive time with a child or young person benefiting from the organization's programs, projects, or activities.
  12. Use the Two-Adult Rule to significantly reduce the risk of abuse, protect against false accusations, reduce liability, and offer additional help in emergencies.
  13. Avoid inappropriate physical contact with children. If a child hurt or distressed, comfort or reassure him/her without compromising his/her dignity or doing anything to discredit the child's own behavior.
  14. Model good behavior, ensuring appropriate language and refraining from inappropriate jokes or comments.
  15. Pay attention to what children say and respect their right to be heard.
  16. Know how to respond to and report disclosures appropriately, following the guidance on handling disclosures.
  17. Understand that the guiding principle in responding to any concerns around child safeguarding and protection is that the safety and welfare of the child should always take precedence. No child should be put at more risk by any action you undertake. You should do all you can to remove the child from immediate danger and ensure she or he is comfortable. You should respect the two-adult rule and you should do all you can to minimise delays.
  18. Use social media responsibly, safely, and in accordance with the organization's child safeguarding policy.
  19. Understand that as much as 80% of child abuse cases may include a digital component. The person receiving a disclosure should note any disclosures in this regard, which may be essential to capture compelling evidence during any investigation.
  20. Be mindful of the power imbalance between adults and children and never abuse that power.
  21. Empower children by informing them of their rights and teaching them what behavior is acceptable from adults and what they can do if something concerns or worries them.
  22. Be familiar with the organisation's reporting procedure. This means that you must report to the designated child safeguarding focal point any concern relating to the safety of a child immediately or as soon as it is safe to do so.
  23. Maintain confidentiality and respect children's privacy, while respecting national child protection laws with regard to reporting, mandated or otherwise, of known or suspected child abuse.
-

## Acknowledgment

On behalf of my organization, I agree to abide by the organization's **Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct** and its child safeguarding policy.

**[For the Director/Executive Director/CEO]:** I take responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that all individuals affiliated with my organization are fully informed about our child safeguarding policy, and that appropriate gatekeeping and supervision mechanisms are in place for visitors to our premises, events, or activities.

I understand that any breaches of the child safeguarding policy and/or Code of Conduct must be reported, and appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the established policies and procedures.

Organization:

Name:

Title/Role:

Date:

Signature:

## Training

Proper training is essential for the effective implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy. During the induction period (within the first month of starting their position), all staff, volunteers, consultants, and ISSA Board members will receive an introduction to ISSA's Child Safeguarding Policy from the designated Child Safeguarding Focal Person.

An annual refresher training will be organized for all ISSA staff, incorporating case studies and situations tailored to ISSA's context to ensure continuous learning and understanding.

As part of the onboarding process for new Member organizations, they will receive the Child Safeguarding Policy, be required to sign the Code of Conduct, and will be provided with a sample Network Child Safeguarding Toolkit. Additionally, Members will receive support from the Network Hub or peers within the network to help build their capacity in implementing safeguarding practices.

## Child-Safe Communication

ISSA's Child Safeguarding Policy also outlines the principles ISSA follows when communicating externally about our work and the work of our members and partners. It emphasizes general principles to ensure the protection of children's rights and dignity while avoiding stereotypes or degrading portrayals. Images or descriptions of children should not mislead, sensationalize, or expose them to stigma, harm, or exploitation. Communication must respect the cultural backgrounds and contexts of children and their families.

## Guidelines for Media and External Communications<sup>7</sup>

Specific guidelines are in place for ISSA staff, as well as for photographers, video production agencies, and journalists visiting ISSA events. The use of children's images, stories, or personal details requires prior informed consent from both the child and their legal guardian. ISSA has developed special consent forms to ensure children's images are not used without proper consent.

Personal and identifying information about children must not be disclosed without explicit consent.

- **Photographs and Videos:**
  - Obtain documented consent before capturing or using images of children.
  - Ensure children are clothed appropriately and depicted in a context that reflects their dignity and reality.
  - Blur or anonymize identifiable features when consent for direct depiction is unavailable.
- **Storytelling:**
  - Avoid revealing specific details that could lead to a child's identification or location.
  - When sharing a child's story, focus on resilience and achievements rather than framing them solely as victims.
- **Media Collaboration:**
  - Journalists, photographers, and agencies involved in ISSA projects must sign agreements to adhere to child-safe communication practices.
  - Any breach of these guidelines will result in removal from assignments and potential termination of contracts.
- **Online and Social Media:**
  - Follow strict privacy settings and protective measures when sharing children's images or stories on digital platforms.
  - Avoid sharing real-time updates about locations or activities involving children.

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Eurochild's Child Safeguarding Policy

# ANNEX

## Annex 1: Statement of Commitment to ISSA Child Safeguarding Policy

ISSA Staff, Consultants, Board and Committee Members, Interns, and Volunteers

**TO BE SIGNED BEFORE SIGNING THE WORK CONTRACT.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Safeguarding Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing and promoting child safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices contained within this document while working with ISSA.

---

(Name)

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(Job Title/Role)

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(Signature)

---

(Date)

---

**Individuals on Site or Project Visits (e.g., Donors, Journalists, Partners Attending Meetings on Behalf of ISSA)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Safeguarding Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing and promoting child safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices contained within this document while associated with ISSA.

---

(Name)

---

(Job Title/Role)

---

(Signature)

---

(Date)

---

### ISSA Partner

I, **(name)**\_\_\_\_\_, *on behalf of* \_\_**(organization)**\_\_, *have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Safeguarding Policy. (organization)\_\_ agrees with the principles contained therein and accepts the importance of implementing and promoting child safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices in its work.*

**(organization)**\_\_\_\_\_ is open to working with ISSA to explore the implications of this policy for our organization, and to work together to build our mutual capacity to develop and implement child safeguarding policies and practices while associated with ISSA.

The designated contact person within **(organization)**\_\_\_\_\_ responsible for communication with ISSA on child safeguarding issues is \_\_\_\_\_**(name of individual)**\_\_\_\_\_.

**Senior Organization Representative:**

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(Name)

---

(Job Title/Role)

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(Signature)

---

(Date)

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**Child Safeguarding Contact Person:**

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(Name)

---

(Job Title/Role)

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(Signature)

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(Date)

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## ANNEX 2: Safeguarding Report Form

If you are concerned or know that a child's safety might be in danger, please complete this form to the best of your knowledge. Child safeguarding concerns must be reported directly to the designated child safeguarding focal point immediately. You may wish to complete this form before contacting the designated child safeguarding focal point or after contacting the designated focal point, according to the best interests of the child. This report is to be used as a tool to gather the most unbiased information-based report possible. For confidentiality reasons, the report should be written and signed solely by you. It should be delivered exclusively to the designated child safeguarding focal point or the most appropriate person. The Child Safeguarding and Well-being Report will be kept in a secure place and treated with the strictest confidentiality. A log of incidents/reports will be maintained by the organization, including any decision not to refer to local or national child protection authorities.

**Case Number:** 202\_\_ - 0\_\_ (To be filled out by the designated child safeguarding focal point)

### About You

- Your Name:
- Your Job Title:
- Workplace:
- Your Relationship to the Child:
- Contact Details:

### About the Child

- Child's Name:
- Child's Gender / Gender Identity:
- Child's Age:
- Child's Parents / Guardians:

### About Your Concern

- What is the concern?
- How do you know about the alleged abuse?
- Did the child disclose the alleged abuse to you? YES / NO
- Date of the alleged incident:
- Location of the alleged incident:
- Name of the alleged perpetrator:
- Alleged perpetrator's job title/relationship with the child:
- Nature of the allegation:
- Note if there were any references to a digital or online component:
- Your personal observations (visible injuries, emotional state, etc.): (Make a distinction between fact and opinion)

- Exactly what the child or other source said to you and how you responded: (Clarify whether it is a direct quote or interpretation)
- Action(s) Taken:
- Where is the child currently staying/living?
- Who is responsible for them? Name, Role, Contact Details: (Is this safe?)
- Were there any other children/people involved in the alleged incident?
- Who else knows about the incident?
- What would the child like to happen next?
- Any other information not previously covered:

**Declaration:**

I declare that the information provided by me on the above form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Received by the Designated Child Safeguarding Focal Point / Appropriate Person**

- **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_
  - **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_
- 

If a concern is not reported to the authorities or child protection services by the focal point, the following steps must be taken:

1. Log the reasons for not reporting within the reporting template.
  2. Log any actions taken as a result of the concern.
  3. Provide a written explanation to the person who raised the concern regarding why the issue is not being reported further.
  4. Advise that if the person remains concerned, they can report to the child protection authorities.
- 

**Follow-Up to Report as per Guidance Above:**

- Dated:
  - Signed:
  - Role:
-

## ANNEX 3: Media Consent Form

**Name of Organization/Entity:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose:** The purpose of this consent form is to obtain permission to use photographs, video recordings, and other media that include your likeness, voice, or work for the purposes described below, in line with our commitment to child safeguarding policies and practices.

**Details of Use:** By signing this form, you agree to allow [Organization Name] to use, publish, or distribute the following media:

- Photographs
- Video recordings
- Audio recordings
- Written or recorded statements

These materials may be used in:

- Promotional materials
- Social media platforms
- Websites
- Educational content
- News articles or press releases

### **Safeguarding and Consent Information:**

I, the undersigned, hereby grant permission to [Organization Name], its representatives, and employees to use my likeness, image, voice, or statements as described above. I understand and agree that:

1. All media will be used in accordance with [Organization Name]'s child safeguarding policies to ensure the protection of minors.
2. Personal identifying information (e.g., names, locations) will not be disclosed alongside media featuring minors unless explicit additional consent is provided.
3. These materials will not be sold or used for commercial gain without my additional consent.
4. I will not receive compensation for the use of these materials.
5. These materials may be edited, copied, exhibited, or distributed for lawful purposes without further notification.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time by providing written notice to [Organization Name]. However, I acknowledge that withdrawal of consent will not affect any materials already published or distributed.

**Child Safeguarding Measures:** [Organization Name] is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children. Media use will be strictly monitored, and any concerns regarding the misuse of materials can be reported to our safeguarding officer at [Contact Information].

**Contact Information:** If you have any questions or concerns about this consent form or our safeguarding practices, please contact: [Name of Contact Person]  
[Organization Address]  
[Phone Number]  
[Email Address]

**Acknowledgment and Agreement:**

**Full Name (Printed):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Consent (if under 18 years of age):** I, the undersigned, am the parent or legal guardian of the individual named above. I have read and understood this media consent form, including its safeguarding measures, and I agree to its terms on behalf of my child.

**Parent/Guardian Full Name (Printed):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



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**International Step by Step Association (ISSA)**

Kinderrechtenhuis / Child Rights Home

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