

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Revised: January 2016



## Introduction

Child abuse is more than just a global problem – it’s a tragedy. Abuse occurs in all countries and in all societies and includes physical violence, sexual molestation and exploitation, emotional cruelty, and neglect of children’s basic needs. It is nearly always preventable.

At Kids Alive International, the child’s best interests are our primary concern and consideration. We believe:

- Children<sup>1</sup> have the right to a happy, healthy, and secure childhood
- The abuse of children is an abuse of their rights
- Child abuse is *never* acceptable

Abuse of minors, which includes child molestation, is a serious moral fault and is subject to criminal charges in most societies. Child abuse takes advantage of the vulnerability of children. It violates Biblical standards of holiness and the mandate to genuinely love and seek the good of others, and causes deep spiritual and psychological wounds.

Kids Alive International will ensure that **all** staff, missionaries, volunteers, and Board members around the world:

- Are aware of the problem of child abuse and of situations where children may be at risk
- Actively safeguard children from abuse through good practice
- Report all concerns about possible abuse
- Respond appropriately and quickly when abuse is suspected or discovered

This Child Protection Policy is based on Kids Alive International’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>2</sup>; and the guidance provided by other organizations, including the “Keeping Children Safe” network<sup>3</sup> and the “Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service”<sup>4</sup>.

This policy is approved by the Board of Kids Alive International. It is the responsibility of the President, through the vice presidents and directors, to ensure that all Kids Alive International personnel and associates are aware of and agree to abide by this policy and other applicable local procedures while working for Kids Alive.

While this policy is written with the protection of children in mind, its principles can also be applied to any vulnerable adults that Kids Alive works with in the course of its work.

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<sup>1</sup> A child is defined as being a person under the age of eighteen years.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Keeping Children Safe network: <http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk>

<sup>4</sup> Churches Child Protection Advisory Service: <https://www.ccpas.co.uk>

**This policy is binding for all Kids Alive International fields.**

Based upon this policy, each field shall define clear reporting and responding structures and crisis management plans. Kids Alive International must approve any additional regulations and guidelines adopted by fields in their Child Protection policies. However, the following minimum guidelines **must** be maintained.

## **Types of Abuse**

Kids Alive International defines abuse as follows:

### **Physical abuse and neglect**

Physical abuse includes inflicting physical injury upon a child. This may include burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating, or otherwise harming a child. It may be the result of over-discipline or physical punishment which is not appropriate to the child's age. Physical neglect may include failing to provide any of the following: adequate food, appropriate clothing, medical care, supervision, or proper protection from harm.

### **Emotional abuse** *(also known as verbal or mental abuse or psychological maltreatment)*

Emotional abuse can include caregivers threatening or terrorizing a child, using extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishment, such as confinement in a closet or a dark room, or tying a child to a chair. Other forms of emotional abuse may include ignoring, belittling, rejecting, using derogatory terms, excessive blaming, or excessive isolating. Emotional neglect may include a lack of love, emotional support or attention, or excessive inconsistency.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse ranges from inappropriate contact to rape, as well as non-contact abuse such as forcing children to observe sexual acts and pornography. **Child grooming** is befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child (and sometimes the family) to lower a child's inhibitions for child sexual abuse; this is also a criminal offense in many countries.

It should be noted that sexual abuse may occur between people of the opposite sex and between people of the same sex.

### **Spiritual abuse**

All children who enter a Kids Alive program are expected to participate in all spiritual activities provided for them. This expectation is made clear to the children and their families. While children's participation is essential, Kids Alive will seek to safeguard children from any form of spiritual abuse. Spiritual abuse, as with all forms of abuse, is about the misuse of authority to promote the interests of the abuser rather than the best interests of the child. Spiritual abuse can take the form of:

- Authoritarianism which demands unconditional submission to spiritual leadership
- Refusal by a caregiver to respect a child's opinions or views on spiritual issues
- Valuing an individual for their performance rather than their worth to God
- Unbalanced and excessive focus on particular points of theology
- Manipulation through fear and condemnation

## **Orientation and Screening of Field Staff**

Kids Alive International will carry out a thorough background check on all new employees in the US, and missionaries and interns applying to serve on a field. This will include an interview, criminal background checks, and obtaining references.

The Field Director and Ministry Director of each Kids Alive program are required to ensure that thorough background checks are conducted on all paid and volunteer local staff who work at the ministry.

The agreed Kids Alive International application process must be followed by all employees. References must be received, and follow up with contacts (including asking the applicant's current employer and church pastor if they have observed any concerns regarding the applicant's conduct with children) must be made before hiring staff. If possible, police background checks for criminal records must be completed. Refusal to agree to a background check during the interview process will result in a candidate being disqualified from employment or from becoming a volunteer with Kids Alive.

All new employees must be oriented in Kids Alive International's Child Protection Policy and sign an agreement saying they are aware of and support Kids Alive International's Child Protection Policy and that they will abide by its contents.

All staff, missionaries and interns in a Kids Alive International field must be appropriately managed, supervised, and supported. The Director of a Kids Alive program must conduct orientations and periodic evaluations of staff, missionaries and volunteers that work in the program and must respond immediately to any concerns regarding child protection issues.

Kids Alive International will **never** knowingly permit child abuse offenders, pedophiles, or those with related offenses to work with our children or have access to children's records.

## **Action Taken to Prevent Abuse**

### **Staff Training**

Kids Alive International considers it essential that all its staff, missionaries, and volunteers are aware of the dangers of child abuse. The Field Director and leadership staff should ensure this matter is discussed in an honest and open manner by staff. In addition, there must be regular staff training sessions on Child Protection. These should include:

- What child abuse is
- How abuse can be prevented and the role of staff in prevention
- Symptoms of child abuse
- Procedures for responding to alleged abuse
- Roles and responsibilities regarding child protection matters
- Use of resources for children to teach them about abuse
- Communicating with and responding to children that have been abused, or that make allegations of abuse
- Safeguards that staff members can observe to protect themselves from the risk of allegations and appearance of inappropriate behavior, including the development of unhealthy emotional attachments with children
- Training of staff members who are responsible to handle complaints and carry out disciplinary procedures regarding child abuse or inappropriate behavior towards children

### **Education Programs for Children**

All children should be made aware of what child abuse is, how to protect themselves, and how to respond in the event that abuse occurs. There should be regular teaching sessions with all of the children. These sessions should cover:

- The concept of “Good Touch and Bad Touch”
- How to say “No” to abuse
- Clear procedures teaching the children who would be a safe person to talk to if they are abused, know of others that are being abused, or even if they feel uncomfortable around another person
- How children can express themselves appropriately
- An age-appropriate sex education program

A series of resources (worksheets, games, videos, stories, etc.) about child abuse, preferably in the children’s first language, may be used to aid these teaching sessions.

Providing training to parents may be appropriate and valuable in some contexts.

### **Guidelines to Prevent Abuse**

Each ministry will create a list of specific regulations and guidelines regarding how to prevent abuse. Regular risk assessments should be carried out, with subsequent actions taken to reduce or eliminate any identified risks.

**It is important that staff, missionaries, and volunteers protect themselves from allegations of abuse by demonstrating good practice at all times.** This means that they will

avoid putting themselves into a position where they could be accused of abuse or of attempting to abuse a child. Examples include:

- A male caregiver in a girl's area or a female caregiver in a boy's area should be very careful when entering children's bedrooms
- Caregivers who are alone with a child should keep the door of the room open
- Children should not be permitted to enter any staff member's bedroom or private living area out of sight of other adults
- One-on-one meetings, counseling or disciplining children should be done in an appropriate place, preferably in a location where there are see-through doors. Other staff members should be made aware of the counseling or meeting that is taking place
- It is preferable that a staff member should not travel alone in a vehicle with a single child
- There should be clear procedures for dealing with medical and first aid issues

**There should be adequate rules and regulations that prevent child-on-child abuse.**

Examples:

- No more than one child is allowed into the same toilet cubicle at any time
- Two or more children should not be allowed to lie in or on the same bed together
- There are to be no locked bedroom doors
- There should be adequate supervision of play areas and children's living area

Kids Alive recognizes that appropriate physical touch by caregivers is important in a child's development. It is extremely important, however, that staff avoid any appearance of inappropriate behavior. Staff, missionaries and volunteers may not hold, kiss, cuddle or touch children in an inappropriate or culturally-insensitive way. Staff members should use good judgment, wisdom and caution in becoming personally involved with children who have emotional and/or psychological problems. Children should be aware that, at any time, they can say "no" to any activity or interaction that makes them feel uncomfortable.

**Inappropriate physical contact includes:**

- Demanding hugs and kisses
- Touching chest, genital area, upper legs, buttocks, waist, and stomach area
- Sitting child in the center of the caregiver's lap
- Seductiveness or suggestive contact
- Physical contact of any kind which is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of caregivers
- Any touching used to express power or control over a child, except holds/restraints that are used to prevent a child from hurting himself/herself or others

Each Kids Alive International field should carry out regular Risk Assessments that identify the potential risks for abuse occurring and implement action to reduce or eliminate these risks.

Information about Kids Alive International's commitment to keeping children safe should be openly displayed and available to everyone.

## **Procedure for Dealing with Suspected or Alleged Child Abuse**

**The focus is always safeguarding and protecting the child.** All who work at a Kids Alive International site must treat any suspected abuse seriously. No one should ever ignore it in the hope that it will go away.

**All suspected abuse must be reported immediately to the Ministry Director and Field Director who will inform their Vice President of Operations.** Any adult who withholds information or covers up any kind of abuse **may be considered an accomplice**, and action may be taken against him/her, up to and including dismissal.

**When it is suspected that a member of staff is involved in child abuse, the following procedures must be followed:**

- Anyone suspecting child abuse must **immediately** discuss with his/her Ministry Director the situation he or she has observed. The Field Director must then be informed immediately.
- The Field Director will contact the Vice President of Operations **within 12 hours**. An action plan to respond to the matter will be developed by the Field Director and Vice President of Operations and implemented immediately. This plan will include setting up a committee of three or more persons to investigate the alleged abuse. The President will be notified immediately.
- Should an allegation be made against the Field Director, the Vice President of Operations will, in consultation with the President, appoint someone to oversee the investigation.
- The Field Director (or designated person investigating the incident) will immediately convene a special meeting of the committee appointed to review the suspected behavior.
- The accused will immediately be relieved of all duties and contact with children until the investigation is completed.
- All procedures in handling the allegation will be documented. Factual elements of an investigation will include things like interview notes, witness statements, hard copies of emails, medical reports, and in some cases audio or video tapes. All documentation is to be gathered quickly, organized carefully, and kept in a locked location.
- During the investigation, all details will be held in confidence by the investigating committee and the Vice President of Operations. This is to protect both the staff member and child from potentially damaging information being circulated prior to verification of the facts. The President will be kept informed of progress made with the investigation.

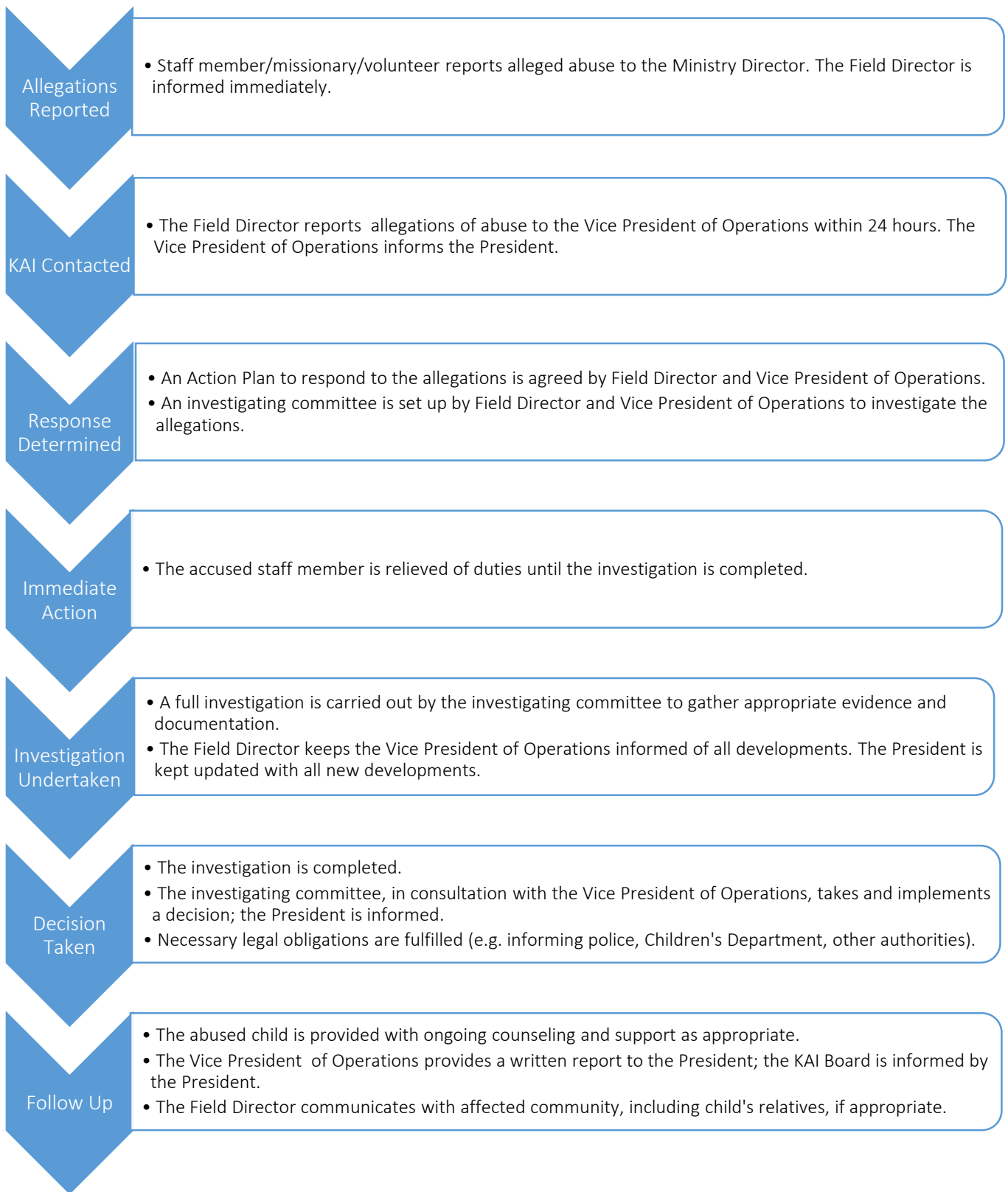
- If the investigating committee considers the staff member, missionary, or volunteer to be guilty of the abuse, appropriate action, up to and including dismissal and legal action, will be determined and implemented.
- After the investigation is completed, a plan for communication to the wider affected community will be developed and implemented by the investigating committee and Vice President of Operations. A plan to provide the abused child with any necessary support, including counseling as appropriate, will also be developed and implemented.
- The field should comply with all legal requirements regarding child protection in that country, including engagement of law enforcement agencies as appropriate.
- The Field Director or another designated person will, if appropriate, notify the parents/guardians of the children who are involved in the alleged abuse, and inform them of the steps that Kids Alive International has taken.
- The President will inform the Kids Alive International board of the incident and actions taken in response.

This procedure is shown in the flowchart below.

In addition, it should be noted that:

- In the event that the staff member is found to be not guilty of the alleged abuse, a re-entry plan for his/her return to the ministry will be developed and implemented. Counseling and other support will be provided as needed. An appropriate communication will be made to the other staff and children within the program.
- If an employee raises a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse, which proves to be unfounded upon investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. Any employee who deliberately makes false or malicious accusations, however, will face disciplinary and/or legal action. Kids Alive International will take appropriate steps against other Kids Alive International associates who make false and malicious accusations of child abuse.
- During any investigation, unless abuse has actually been proved to have occurred, one must always refer to "alleged abuse".

(Kids Alive International intends to develop further guidelines on conducting investigations into abuse in order to further assist field staff in this area).





**When the occurrence of child abuse by a child towards another child is suspected, the following procedures will be followed:**

- Anyone who suspects child abuse will discuss **immediately** what he/she has observed with his/her Ministry Director. The Field Director will be informed **immediately**.
- The Field Director will contact the Vice President of Operations **within 12 hours**. An action plan will be developed in response by the Field Director and Vice President of Operations and implemented immediately. The President will be notified.
- All procedures followed in handling the allegation will be documented, and the Vice President of Operations will be provided with copies of all such documentation.
- A plan to provide the abused child with any necessary support, including counseling as appropriate, should be developed and implemented.
- If the child is found to be guilty of abuse, immediate and appropriate action will be taken. This course of action will depend on the following factors:
  - Nature of the offense
  - Age of the child
  - Child's behavioral history in the ministry
  - Likelihood of the offense being repeated

Details of the abuse should be recorded in the child's file and reported to other authorities as required by local laws.

- If the alleged perpetrator is found not guilty of abuse, appropriate support will be provided to them, including counseling, as necessary.
- The Field Director or his/her designate may, as appropriate, notify the parents/guardians of the children who are involved in the alleged abuse, and inform them of the steps that Kids Alive International has taken.
- Kids Alive International's President will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.
- Strict confidentiality about both victim and alleged perpetrator will be maintained at all times.

### **Allegations of Past Abuse**

- This refers to abuse which an adult reports having suffered as a child or young person while in contact with a Kids Alive International ministry. Often an individual does not report abuse until many years after the event has occurred.
- The child protection procedures set out above will be followed in such cases. Allegations will be handled transparently and responsibly.

- Kids Alive takes seriously allegations of past abuse. We will seek to promote the welfare of any adult who alleges past abuse, and we will protect any child currently in our care from the person who is alleged to be an abuser.
- Investigations of past abuse will be carried out regardless of legal statutes of limitations.

## Child Grievances

- Each Kids Alive International ministry will have a process for dealing with grievances that have been expressed by a child in its program. Children, parents, staff and missionaries must be made aware of this grievance process at least annually. The process should be reviewed and updated periodically.
- Designated persons will be appointed to review and respond to any such grievances expressed, reporting to the Field Director, Vice President of Operations, the child, and to other persons as appropriate.

## Field Visits by Service Teams, Donors and Supporters

- All service team members will be made aware of Kids Alive International's Child Protection policies as part of their orientation and will sign an agreement that they will abide by the contents of this policy and any other local expectations. Criminal background checks will be carried out on all service team participants.
- Sponsors and donors sometimes request to visit Kids Alive International fields and/or their sponsored child. Sponsors will be asked to coordinate such visits through the relevant sending office at least 6 weeks beforehand. This enables staff from Kids Alive International to work with the field in setting up these visits. All visitors will be made aware of Kids Alive International's Child Protection policies and will sign an agreement that they will abide by the contents of this policy and any other local expectations.
- If a donor or other visitor arrives at a field unannounced, the Field Director and/or Ministry Director will handle the visit according to its approved policies and procedures. The Vice President of Operations will be informed **within 12 hours**.
- All interaction between visitors and children must be accompanied by a Kids Alive employee or missionary at all times. The employee or missionary will be responsible for ensuring that the children are protected from any inappropriate activity.
- Should accommodation be provided to visitors, it will be ensured that no unauthorized contact between the visitors and children is possible.
- Any inappropriate behavior on the part of a visitor must be dealt with immediately. Any concerns should be reported to the Field Director, who will inform the Vice President of Operations **within 12 hours**. Appropriate action will be determined and implemented by the Field Director in consultation with the Vice President of Operations. This may include criminal investigation and/or potential severance of the relationship with Kids Alive International.

## Child Photographs and Histories

- Kids Alive International respects each child's right to privacy.
- All Kids Alive International offices must determine who has access to details of children. Access should be given on the basis of role. Details must be held securely on computer systems protected by passwords. Child details must not be maintained on personal computers.
- If information containing details of children must be destroyed, it must be done so in a secure manner.
- Kids Alive International will seek to limit the distribution of children's pictures and case histories, realizing that these can fall into the hands of people who do not share Kids Alive's regard for protecting children.
- Sponsorships promoted on the website will only contain the child's first name and minimal information about their background in order to protect their privacy.
- Kids Alive will perform searches of potential child sponsors at random to ensure they are not listed on a US sex offender state website. Kids Alive International reserves the right to refuse to process sponsorship applications should it have reasonable concerns about the motives of an applicant to sponsor a child. The Vice President of Communications and Marketing will manage such situations in consultation with the Sponsor Relations Coordinator and the President.
- Care will be taken at all times to ensure that no confidential details about a child's life, medical concerns, or confidential personal history are released to sponsors or donors. Examples of information that we do not share include details of abuse that children have received or done to others; personal struggles or family information that might embarrass children (e.g., alcohol or drug usage, psychological problems); communicable diseases, physical handicaps, or mental health needs; and addresses or other information that could identify members of their family. Training will be provided to field staff to assist them in understanding what information is appropriate to release to child sponsors or donors. Field Directors are responsible to ensure that all information that passes through their offices meets these requirements.
- Letters from sponsors to the children must be sent via the Kids Alive International office and be screened for inappropriate content.
- When the story of a child is shared with the purpose of informing and educating churches or other institutions, the name of the child in the story should be changed along with any other information that might identify him/her. If the story of an older child (16 years or older) is shared, the full name may be used if the child gives his/her permission.
- As needed, we will obtain written permission from the child's legal guardian before we photograph or video their child for use in sponsorship materials, newsletters, videos, online reports, and other publicity.

- We do not actively ask children to do or say anything that might make them feel displayed as objects of pity.
- A statement outlining Kids Alive International’s commitment to child protection will be posted in the “About Us” section on our website.
- Missionaries and service team members who post pictures or stories on personal websites, blogs, or social networking sites are required to ensure that child confidentiality and the terms of this policy are maintained.
- Internal procedures will be reviewed and modified as appropriate to provide increased security of child photographs and case histories and to limit easy access to these pictures. Procedures will also be extended to events where mass quantities of child photographs and case histories are available to the public.
- Any partners, suppliers and agencies working with Kids Alive International or on our behalf will be made aware of our child protection policies and are expected to comply with such policies and standards.
- Kids Alive International will not facilitate the visit of any child to a sponsor’s home country. Any request from sponsors for such assistance will be tactfully declined.

## Internet Use by Kids Alive Children

- Kids Alive is committed to ensuring that children are taught about the benefits and dangers of the Internet and know how to use the Internet safely. This includes the appropriate use of email and social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Each field will develop clear policies and procedures on the use of the Internet, with appropriate procedures, that are relevant to the context of its individual programs and that have the safeguarding and protection of our children as paramount importance. Such policies and procedures for Kids Alive Children’s Homes, schools and care centers should include the following:
  - Use of the Internet will be closely supervised and monitored by trained Kids Alive staff. This function should be included as part of the designated staff member’s Job Description.
  - Computers that have access to the Internet will be in rooms which allow for frequent and easy access by staff and where the screens are clearly visible.
  - There should be appropriate restrictions on times when the Internet can be used.
  - Appropriate filters and firewalls should be used to control and prevent the download of inappropriate content.
  - There must be appropriate restrictions on the use of smart phones and other devices on which the Internet can be accessed.
  - No residential child should be permitted to use any social networking site (such as Facebook) before the recommended age or as permitted by individual field

policies. A designated staff member should be aware of such access. Clear policies and procedures should be established for children who become “friends” with staff members.

- Visits by residential children to Internet cafes or shops should be carefully controlled by the children’s supervisor or another designated person.
  - Kids Alive staff must not access inappropriate content on the Internet at any time. The use of pornography is strictly prohibited.
- Children will be trained and advised on an ongoing basis about the risks of Internet use. These include:
    - People using false identities on the Internet
    - Cyber-bullying
    - Viruses
    - Pornography and other inappropriate and damaging content
    - Dangers of sharing personal information
    - Appropriate email protocol
    - Downloading pictures and other files
    - Sharing concerns about Internet use
  - Under no circumstances should Kids Alive International staff give permission to children in a Kids Alive program to connect directly with sponsors, visitors, or service team members on Facebook or other social networking sites, by email, or by mobile phone. It should be made clear to children that they are not to initiate such contact as well as how they should respond if contact is made with them by a sponsor, visitor, or team member. This response will include reporting the contact to a designated staff member. Sponsors, visitors, and team members will be made aware of this regulation in relevant literature and in other ways (for example, orientation of team members) as necessary. All correspondence to and from children and their sponsors should be sent via the Kids Alive International office.
  - Upon “graduation” of the sponsorship (usually when the child reaches the age of 18), approval for requests for contact detail exchanges are the exception and will be subject to a risk assessment which reviews the relationship to date, and approval by appropriate senior management in the field and US. Where continued contact is approved, the graduated sponsored child and his/her family are made aware of the implications of the continued relationship, including risks. Final approval for contact is obtained in writing from the graduated sponsored child and/or caregiver as appropriate.

## **Policy Monitoring and Review**

- Kids Alive International will monitor implementation of child protection policies on its fields, and will ensure that effective procedures are in place. This will form part of the regular field evaluations.
- Kids Alive International will review this policy annually and update as necessary.