## **Child Protection Policy – Volunteers and Visitors**

Lifewater International (herein referred to as “Lifewater”) recognizes the dignity and rights of all people, especially children. As a child-focused organization, we believe that every child, regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, or socio-economic status, should have the opportunity to experience a life of health and wholeness. Lifewater and all of its staff, volunteers and other representatives, are committed to creating a safe environment for children and young people. Lifewater does not tolerate abuse, neglect, violence, or exploitation in any form.

All Lifewater representatives must comply with the terms of the Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct at all times. This policy applies to all Lifewater staff, volunteers, visitors and other representatives involved in Lifewater’s work that involves or comes into contact with anyone under the age of 18. A copy of the full policy is posted in the country office and available upon request.

**Reporting and Response**

Any Lifewater visitor who has concerns regarding abuse should report to a Lifewater staff member, who will then follow the procedures below. As soon as any Lifewater staff member or representative observes or learns of any incident or allegation of abuse by someone affiliated with Lifewater or a third party, that staff member is responsible for alerting the reporting Vice-President and President/CEO. The Vice-President and President/CEO will initiate a response in line with the process detailed in the Child Protection Policy. If allegations are verified, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate and in line with the Child Protection Policy. Lifewater will comply with all laws regarding reporting any violation of laws to local or state authorities, including police departments and child protection agencies.

**Code of Conduct**

Lifewater staff, representatives, and visitors should:

1. Strive to create a culture of mutual accountability and openness at work so all child protection issues or concerns can be raised and abusive behavior can be challenged.
2. Be aware of situations that may put children at risk and takes steps to mitigate the risk.
3. Proactively avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position.
4. Ensure physical contact with children is limited, appropriate, generally initiated by the child, and respects the privacy of and boundaries set by the child.
5. Raise any concerns of inappropriate behavior immediately.
6. Encourage children to raise their concerns about staff or others and provide a mechanism for doing so.
7. Take responsibility for monitoring one another and challenge a colleague on his or her behavior if necessary.
8. Ensure two or more adults are present and supervising at all times when children are present. Work with children should be done in a public, visible location whenever possible.
9. Be aware that staff members, representatives, or visitors may interact with minors who, because of circumstances and abuses they have experienced, may use a relationship to seek to obtain “special attention.” The adult is always considered responsible, even if a child behaves inappropriately.
10. Be aware of the power imbalance between an adult and child, and avoid taking any advantage this may provide.

Lifewater staff and representatives must not:

1. Develop physical or sexual relationships with children or engage in any sexual activity with a child regardless of the age of consent locally. (Mistaken belief regarding the age of the child is not an acceptable defense.)
2. Touch a child in private areas of the body (breasts, buttocks, or genitals), even if it is culturally acceptable.
3. Spend time with a child unsupervised in their own home, in the home of the child, or in a car. This includes overnight stays in project villages.
4. Sleep in the same bed as a child.
5. Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing, and grooming (e.g., including the braiding of girls’ hair).
6. Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse a child, even where this may be culturally acceptable.
7. Use language, make suggestions or offer advice to a child that is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive.
8. Accept, allow or participate in behavior with children that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
9. Exploit children through child labor, sex work or domestic work.
10. Conduct or be part of harmful traditional practices, including spiritual or ritualistic abuse.
11. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children.
12. Show favor to particular children to the exclusion of others.
13. Show discrimination of race, culture, age, sex, disability, religion, or political persuasion.

**Acknowledgement of Receipt**

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ understand and acknowledge that

* I have reviewed this Child Protection Policy of Lifewater. I understand that Lifewater International will not tolerate any behavior that commits or condones abuse and/or exploits the children who a part of its programs. I understand that I am required to comply with the policy as stated and I agree to the terms set out in the policy; and
* I am responsible to seek clarification from my team leader or a Lifewater HQ staff member on any questions that I have about the policy before signing below; and
* Disciplinary action, in accordance with the Child Protection Policy, will be taken against anyone found guilty of committing abuse or exploitation; and
* I know how to report abuse in accordance with the policy.

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Applicant Lifewater Signing Authority