



Health Bridges International

Child, Youth, and Young Adult Protection Policy

Introduction

This Child, Youth and Young Adult Protection Policy has been developed after extensive reviews of Health Bridges International's (HBI) previous Child Protection Policy (2016). This Policy was developed based on extensive research into models, frameworks and best practices for working with marginalized and underserved youth and includes guidance from child-welfare experts. This document was reviewed by subject matter experts and professionals in child-welfare and safety both internal and external to HBI. A good portion of this document was drawn from previous frameworks developed by international non-governmental organizations with guidance from the United Nations International Emergency Children's Fund (UNICEF).

This policy is governed by the basic premise that HBI does not tolerate any form of child abuse or exploitation. Children who come into contact with HBI must be protected from deliberate or unintended actions that place them at risk of child abuse, sexual exploitation, injury, discrimination and any other harm. In all actions concerning children, the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration with HBI being committed to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Children 1989¹ and the Declaration of Human Rights 1948² both of which promote respect for the rights of children.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that HBI has guidelines in place to ensure children are protected from deliberate or unintended actions that place them at risk or harm by any member of the Federation. This policy is applicable to all associated with HBI including all staff members, consultants, interns, volunteers, board members, representatives of partner agencies, donors, journalists and others who come in contact with children due to their association with HBI.

This Policy defines children as any person under the age of 18 years and child abuse according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition as: 'all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power'.



The Policy references child protection – but is meant to be a general guidance for working with children, youth, and young adults (see page 3) in institutional care settings, orphanages, group homes, transitional housing, foster care or congregate housing.

This Policy defines clear roles and responsibilities with respect to child protection for all levels of staff in HBI including leadership, senior staff and key collaborators and partners, managers, Human Resources and all HBI staff as well as for HBI Partners.

This Policy also provides reporting procedures for internal allegations involving someone internal to HBI and for someone not employed by HBI. It also contains compliance, dispute resolution mechanisms, and consequences of policy breaches.

This Policy document ends with annexures containing Definitions and Recognizing Child Abuse and a Permission Statement for using information and images. It ends with an undertaking to be agreed upon and signed by staff or anyone engaging with HBI confirming that they have read, understood, and accepted *HBI's Child Protection Policy*.

2. Introduction

2.1. Policy Statement

HBI does not tolerate any form of child abuse, maltreatment, or exploitation. Children who encounter HBI must be protected from deliberate or unintended actions that place them at risk of child abuse, sexual exploitation, injury, discrimination, and any other harm. In all actions concerning children, the child's welfare is the paramount consideration, with HBI being committed to the principles of the Convention of the Rights of Children 19893 and the Declaration of Human Rights 19484, both promoting respect for children's rights.

2.2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of HBI's Child Protection Policy is to ensure that HBI has guidelines in place to ensure children are protected from deliberate or unintended actions that place them at risk of child abuse, sexual exploitation, injury, discrimination, and any other harm by any member of HBI, partner organizations or agents of programs, projects or work.

This policy provides guidance and direction to all associated with HBI so that:

- HBI staff members and representatives understand issues of child protection, are aware of the problem of child abuse and violence against children and strive to prevent and report occurrences of child abuse in their work.



- Organizational risks and duty of care towards children are covered through implementing procedures to safeguard children through good practice.
- There are clear guidelines on reporting suspected child abuse and all forms of violence against children.
- There are clear consequences for a breach of the guidelines.

The scope of HBI’s Child Protection Policy (and any adaptations made to ensure legal compliance within an HBI country of operation or programmatic activity – including partnerships and collaborations) applies to:

- All HBI staff members, whether full-time, part-time, contracted, or engaged in fixed-term employment (staff members must act following this policy in their professional lives and are encouraged to do the same in their personal lives).
- Consultants, interns, volunteers, Board Members, representatives of partner agencies/organizations, and any other individuals, groups, or organizations who have a formal/contractual relationship with HBI that involves any contact with children.
- Donors, funders, contributors, journalists, celebrities, politicians, and other people who make contact with or communicate externally about children must be made aware that this Policy applies to them while visiting HBI programs, projects, facilities, or activities.

3. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Child	Any person under the age of 18 years ⁵
Youth	The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 ¹
Young Adult	Any person between the ages of 18 and 32 ²
Child Abuse	Child Abuse is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as: ‘all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship adult caregiver, trust or power.’ ⁶ The main categories of abuse are defined by WHO as physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional and psychological abuse; and neglect.



4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Leadership Team

- Be aware of the local and international laws applying to child protection and ensure all staff members are made aware of them.
- They should provide adequate support to protect children involved in HBI's program work.
- To nominate a staff member who would act as a focal point for raising awareness of HBI's Child Protection Policy among staff members and partners.
- Create procedures for reporting of and investigating suspected cases of abuse and exploitation of children and ensuring they are in line with this policy and local laws.
- Ensure that the relevant disciplinary procedures are implemented for staff members who have violated the HBI's Child Protection Policy.
- Ensure all staff members are trained on the rights of the child how to recognize child abuse and exploitation, and what the appropriate action to take.

4.2. Managers

- To report and record any incident of concern about child protection to the appropriate child protection agency.
- Ensure staff members in contact with children are aware of and provide induction on HBI's Child Protection Policy and ensure access to Child and Human Rights documents.
- Ensure that staff members are aware of procedures for reporting concerns and their responsibilities in reporting.
- Ensure parental or guardian consent is sought for any activity with a child and encourage parental participation in activities involving children wherever possible.
- Ensure parental or guardian consent is sought before gathering any interviews, images or footage of children. Ensure that the parent or guardian understands the purpose of this activity and how the images or footage will be used.
- Ensure that any content gathered is used responsibly without risk to the child.
- Ensure that children remain in their known environment and are never removed from their known environment.
- Plan and organize the work and the workplace to eliminate risks to children.
- Be aware of situations that may present risks and ensure these are supervised appropriately.
- Be involved and available to the community in all work with children.
- Ensure that staff members are accountable for the welfare of children during HBI activities.



- Ensure that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior towards children by HBI or partner staff members does not go unchallenged.
- If a Funding Affiliate, ensure HBI's Child Protection Policy is shared with the supporters and to get the policy signed and returned by the supporter before departure.
- Ensure HBI's Child Protection Policy is included as part of any partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding or agreement (MOU/MOA) with HBI partners.

4.3. Human Resources

- Ensure HBI's Child Protection Policy for all staff is included in the offer letter to all new and HBI Board Members.
- As part of the acceptance procedure, staff members will be asked to sign a declaration of the policy stating that they are aware of its existence and will abide/adhere to it. The statement will be kept on the staff member's file and may be referred to in legal proceedings if a staff member is found to be in breach of the policy.
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities regarding child protection are incorporated into job descriptions.
- Ask pertinent questions when requesting references for new staff members, particularly concerning dealings and work with children before joining HBI.
- Request references from bodies charged with child protection, if such exist, if the staff member will be required to spend a lot of time with children. Where local legal requirements for criminal record checks are in place, they must be complied with.
- Should there be an instance of child abuse, HR would support the investigation and ensure that the necessary policies and procedures are followed.

4.4. All HBI Staff

All staff must:

- Be aware of the national, local, and international laws protecting the rights and welfare of children.
- All staff must endeavor to always promote the rights and welfare of children, both in the workplace and at home.
- Staff members should also raise awareness of child protection and HBI's *Child Protection Policy* to children, parents, and communities they work with so they can report any form of child abuse.



- When children are involved in a program event, e.g., during a training, workshop, conference or meeting, rally or campaign, educational trip, etc.
- Organizing staff must ensure that children are in a safe and conducive environment and are always protected from any abuse during any outings or programmatic activities.
- Should there be an instance of child abuse, HR would support the investigation and ensure that the necessary policies and procedures are followed.
- Any disciplinary action will be considered, reviewed, and overseen by a committee appointed by the Board of Directors of HBI.

In general, it is inappropriate for staff members to:

- Spend unnecessary time alone with children.
- Take children home, mainly if they will be alone with the staff member unless they are acting to protect the child/children.
- Place a child in a position where risk cannot be determined or defined so that a staff member or caregiver can determine risk mitigation.
- Inappropriately use children to solicit support, financial or otherwise.
- Promote any form of child labor – exploitative or otherwise.
- Demonstrate or practice discriminatory attitude/approach/treatment towards children with disabilities, children of Ameri-Indian or indigenous backgrounds, children of sex workers, children living in extreme poverty, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Staff members must never:

- Act in ways that may be abusive (physically and emotionally) towards children.
- Develop physical/sexual relationships with children.
- Develop any form of relationship with children who could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Place a child at risk of abuse or exploitation, or be aware of these and not do anything about it.
- Exploit their own position vis-à-vis the children by making them run errands, do domestic work or carry out other forms of economic exploitation.
- Make inappropriate referrals to the relevant government, state institutions, or federal programs responsible for protection of children and other organizations offering responsive services for child abuse.
- Disempower children – staff should discuss rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.



Staff members must avoid actions or behaviors construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, they must never:

- Use language, make suggestions, or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive.
Behave physically in a manner that is inappropriate or sexually provocative to children.
- Have a child/child with whom they work to stay overnight at their home without others being present.
- Sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working.
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves (e.g. write letters on behalf of children).
- Condone or participate in conduct that is illegal, abusive, or unsafe for children.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or degrade children or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others (e.g. recruitment for fundraising activities, selective award of gifts).

4.5. HBI Partners

HBI partners should also follow HBI's Child Protection Policy, and it must be included as part of the partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding or agreement (MOU/A) with the partners.

HBI partners, by the nature of their work, interact with vulnerable communities and children and will, therefore, be aware of sensitive information concerning children. This information may be called upon as evidence in child protection investigations or to inform decision-making.

Concerns regarding staff members and/or partners must be reported immediately to the HBI representative who in turn will report them to the HBI Country Director and the Executive Leadership Team (as presided by the Executive Director).

- Whenever a Partner has concerns of abuse or exploitation, detailed notes of circumstances and dialogue must be included in records and kept confidential. These records may be used as evidence to save a child from abuse and exploitation.
- Concerns that are evidenced by impairment of health, physical injury, sexual exploitation, criminal activity or threats to children must be reported immediately to statutory child protection agencies or equivalent authorities.



5. Interaction with Children

HBI's Child Protection Policy focuses on internal organizational measures taken to keep children safe. This includes protection from HBI staff members, partner organizational activities, and any person interacting with HBI child welfare programs that involve children, youth and young adults. More information is outlined below to help shape responses and sound policy directives in key areas of work.

5.1. Communications and Media

It is not only in direct contact with children that HBI's duty of care towards children exists, but also in the process of gathering, aggregating and publishing any communications that could expose a child to risk. The basic principle is not to provide sufficient information e.g. family name, exact location, to allow the child to be identified and located by anyone with access to our communications materials. It is also necessary to be mindful of the 'jigsaw' effect where separate limited amounts of information can be aggregated to reveal direct identification and location e.g. the presence of an unnamed child in a photograph captioned with the mother's family name and separately a photo of the child captioned with her first name.

The following are practices that all staff members must follow in the collection, storage and dissemination of communications material concerning children, youth and young adults engaged with or involved in HBI programs, projects or activities:

5.1.1 Gathering Content

- The child's best interests must always be the primary consideration.
- Ensure fully informed consent is sought from a parent or guardian before gathering any case studies, photos or video of children. Never photograph, video or interview a reluctant child, even with parental or guardian consent.
- Never ask children to pose for images that put them at risk, physically or mentally, either at the time of gathering or in the images potential future use.
- The content gathering must always be a positive experience for the child, providing a potential for learning and enjoyment.
- Never gather content that could shame, humiliate or degrade the child or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, discrimination and exploitation.
- Children should never be depicted in erotic, seductive or provocative poses or context – even when illustrating child trafficking or sex work.
- Ensure that children are suitably dressed. Never take images of children with no clothing, appearing to be wearing no clothing or wearing transparent clothing. Do



not take any such pictures to blur naked areas or use props or photo manipulation to cover naked areas.

- Never use a child to promote the HBI brand, e.g. by taking an image of them holding up a banner of our logo – this doesn't apply to our logo being present in the background e.g. on a sign or a sticker on an item.
- When children are heads of household or already married before the age of 18, the child's fully informed consent must be obtained and consent sought from a guardian, if one exists or someone who has a clear responsibility towards the child, e.g. HBI partner or staff.
- Payment and/or gifts must not be given following content gathering as it can be confused with information payment.

5.1.2. Distribution and Publishing, including social media

- Never publish any story, image or video which could put a child, their family or community at risk, even if the child's identity is concealed. The informality of social media, especially personal social media accounts, can lead to potential risk. All measures should be taken to ensure that both official and personal social media use (by staff, partners, supporters, donors, journalists or anyone else associated with HBI) as well as all other forms of communication conforms to HBI's Child Protection Policy.
- Publications in any media must never include a child's full name, school or precise location that could lead to the identification of a child.
- Do not publish pictures of school names in background or school badges on shirts, maps, etc., that could identify child and location.
- Check that fully informed consent consistent with section 5.1.1 has been gathered before public cation of case studies, photos or videos using any channel or platform.
- Remove the GPS metadata that some cameras may record with images before using or uploading them to social media accounts (this happens automatically when you upload to a secure file share method,), so that GPS co-ordinates of the image cannot be tracked. Switch off the GPS or location tracking settings used on social networking sites or adjust them to make sure that children's personal details (e.g. like address or location) are not revealed online.
- Avoid unsupervised and unofficial Facebook (or other social media engagement) between sup porters and sponsored children – ensure all communications (in both directions) come through national offices in the countries and markets.
- Consult legal opinion if a child is in anyway involved in any current or potential legal proceedings (e.g. a community dispute over land) in case publication puts the child at risk or prejudices the proceedings.



- If any staff members find any content published by HBI that contravenes the practices of this policy, the relevant line manager must be informed immediately.

5.2. Information Technology

Technological development has increased the possibilities for online exploitation of children through email, instant messaging and social network sites that provide opportunities for inappropriate contact with children to be developed. All countries where HBI works, partners or has programmatic activity should have in place robust IT policies which enable the risk of such exploitation to be reduced and procedures in place to address any acts of inappropriate use of technology by HBI staff.

5.3. Child Sponsorship

The following information pertains to the any child in a “sponsorship” program administered by HBI or a partner or collaborative agency.

- All staff members must take adequate time to explain to the child the meaning and purpose of any marketing activities in a manner that will facilitate self-confidence of the child’s contribution to the development of his/her community.
- All staff members involved in child sponsorship activities (i.e. message collection, photo taking) shall endeavor to make it a positive experience for the child with a potential for learning and enjoyment.
- The consent of the child and parent/guardian must be taken in the form of parents/guardian’s signature on the child profile form.
- Staff members must take time to explain to a child when their sponsor stops or withdraws out of the sponsorship program or moves on to other funding and marketing products.
- Supporters and donors will be required to go through a background check in the Funding Affiliates where it is possible, should they wish to visit a sponsored child in a country or region where HBI works, partners or has programmatic activity. The cost of this will be borne by the supporter.
- Supporters and donors will be required to read and sign HBI’s Child Protection Policy when they visit a sponsored child. It will be the responsibility of the Funding Affiliate to inform and share this policy with the supporters and to get the policy signed and returned by the supporter prior to departure. A copy of the signed policy should be emailed to contact person in the HBI country being visited.
- Funding Affiliates should be advised that supporters will be prevented from or against posting any photo or details of a child on any social media. This is for child protection and also to respect the children’s privacy.



- The HBI country hosting the supporter or donor cannot leave a child unattended with the supporter or donor.
- A supporter should go and visit the child and his or her family in a public place in front of other community people and HBI staff, not the other way around, i.e., the child should not be taken to the hotel or place where the supporter is staying during the supporter visit.
- A donor or supporter should always be accompanied by an HBI staff member while visiting any child or participating in any activity involving children.

End Notes

The following policy is meant to be guidance to enforce and reinforce best practices and to assure the highest level of protection for vulnerable, marginalized, and underserved children. In any instances of ambiguity regarding the interpretation or enforcement of the *HBI Child Protection Policy and Guidelines*, the Executive Leadership team of Health Bridges International will make the ultimate decision regarding actions or activities. Any disciplinary action will be considered, reviewed, and overseen by a committee appointed by the President of the Board of Directors of HBI.

HBI stands by and respects the rights and privileges of all children, youth, and young adults to be active decision-makers in developing care plans, custodial responsibility arrangements, and life decisions. HBI actively involves and promotes the involvement of children (in developmentally appropriate situations and circumstances), youth, and young adults in their care planning and life course development. HBI abides by a complete commitment to supporting children, youth, and young adults regardless of their personal beliefs, self-described sexual, gender, or life orientation, and race, ethnicity, or gender. Our highest calling is to protect the rights of the child, youth, and young adults above everything else.

¹ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> ² <https://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

³ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

⁵ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> ⁶ http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2006/9241594365_eng.pdf

¹ Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

² Furlong, Andy (2013). *Youth Studies: An Introduction*. USA: Routledge. pp. 3–4. [ISBN 978-0-415-56476-2](https://doi.org/10.1080/17513758.2013.804444).



Casa Girasoles Ica and Sacred Valley – Volunteer Agreement

Welcome to the Casa Girasoles! Thank you for your commitment to the Casa Girasoles in the City of Ica and the Sacred Valley of Cusco. Health Bridges International, Inc. (<https://www.hbint.org>) appreciates your interest in the Casa Girasoles.

The following document provides information about Health Bridges and the general rules and standards for short-term visits or volunteers spending time at the Casa Girasoles Ica and the Sacred Valley. Should you have any questions about the operations of the homes, rules or standards expected of volunteers or anything about Health Bridges, please contact us at: Info@HBInt.org

Our requests are as follows:

1. Health Bridges is an organization that respects all. We are open to all and invite diversity. We do not permit any discrimination of any kind with our staff, volunteers, the youth we serve or the people we build community.
2. HBI is a team of professionals. We are medical doctors, nurses, public health professionals, scientists, researchers, care advocates, and trained child welfare specialists. We adhere to a code and standard of evidence-based practice. We are scientists – and our mission and vision are to bring the best of evidence-based and fidelity measured practices to our work with children and families.
3. We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind.
4. The use of any illicit substances or smoking, vaping of any kind is strictly prohibited at the Casa Girasoles.
5. For the safety of the boys and the volunteers, no volunteer will be permitted to accompany an unchaperoned boy to any activity, area of the Casa Girasoles property, or room in any facility.
6. Health Bridges adheres to a three-person rule regarding minors. Health Bridges prohibits one adult being alone with one youth (<18 years old). A second adult must be always present.
7. Any volunteer wishing to spend more than 1 week volunteering with the Casa Girasoles programs in the City of Ica and Sacred Valley of Cusco must submit to a criminal background check. Health Bridges uses the services of a Coeus Global (<https://www.coeusglobal.com/index>) complete background checks.
8. No volunteer is permitted into the bedrooms or dormitories and bathrooms of the boys. Volunteer bathrooms are available.
9. Encountering poverty in Perú produces the natural desire to give generously. However, gift giving can create problems for those who receive a gift as well as for those who do not. Therefore, gift giving is strictly prohibited. Do not give



gifts to individuals during your trip. Your presence and interest in the people themselves are the most important aspect of your trip. And please DO NOT give any individual gifts to the boys.

10. The Casa Girasoles homes and properties are smoke and drug free. Please, no smoking anywhere on the property. In addition, the properties are alcohol and drug free. Please abstain from using any illicit substance or alcohol while on the property.
11. Health Bridges believes in the dignity of all humans. We do not permit discrimination based on gender, sex, religion, ethnicity, culture, or beliefs.
12. Faith, spirituality, personal beliefs, or religious practices and preference are not a criterion for participation in a visit to the Casa Girasoles. We have had Buddhists, Christians, agnostics, and atheists join us. All we ask is that you are respectful to the beliefs of those around you and that do not proselytize your faith or religion to our staff, youth, or community.
13. Health Bridges is not an evangelical organization, or a faith based non-governmental organization. We do not expect trip participants to abide by any single doctrine. We ask that everyone who participates in the HBI experience be respectful, open, and flexible.
14. Please be respectful to the facilities and property of the Casa Girasoles. Please make every attempt to leave the property in better condition. Pick up after yourself, collect garbage off the grass, and help - when and where you can. Thank you.
15. The Casa Girasoles property is a safe place. However, no one can assure things won't go missing. Take care of your personal items and keep them in a secure location. If you need help securing any personal items, talk with your team lead or a Casa Girasoles House Parent.
16. If you see something that just doesn't look right or feel right, please say something. Connect with a team lead and/or a Casa Girasoles House Parent.
17. Anyone wishing to visit the Casa Girasoles must first contact HBI. Please email Lic. Mg. Karen Falkenstein (Karen@hbint.org) with information about your intended visit and details of your travel dates.
18. We always have a need for donations, so please feel free to contact us with questions about what you can bring to help the boys! Thank you.

Who is Health Bridges International, Inc.? HBI is a nonprofit organization led by health and child welfare professionals that seeks to provide vulnerable Peruvian children and their families with opportunities toward a life built on health, hope, home, and purpose. With our Centers of Excellence (CoE) model, we work with nonprofit, government, and private organizations to standardize services and programs on a national scale to ensure



that children and families living in poverty have access to the quality caregiving and medical treatment they deserve. The CoEs are community-driven, collaborative, and replicable program models focusing on self-advocacy for children and families and training for childcare providers.

Decades of Co-Creating Change in Health and Welfare with Peruvian Communities

Since the mid 90's, HBI has been directly working with the local leaders and community members through skills training and equitable access to health and welfare services. Our shared mission is to create pathways for children and families to improve their health and well-being through quality services.

HBI's programs provide Peruvians with access to individualized welfare and medical support. We are also furthering the training of care providers and healthcare workers so they can address diverse and constantly evolving needs in the communities they serve. Our programs led by local health professionals and social workers trained on evidence-based strategies inform our CoE model development and impact these three areas:

- **Child Welfare and Empowerment:** HBI supports formerly abandoned children who have lived through violence and abuse in unstable home environments. Through Casa Girasoles Sanos, we provide these children with safe housing, a stable home setting, and opportunities for personal, social, and educational growth.
- **Child Health and Development:** HBI addresses the socioemotional needs of families caring for children with medical conditions through the Community of Support Group. Led by psychologists, the support group meets virtually and in-person and serves as a safe space for participants to express their feelings and share experiences, information, and resources.
- **Equitable Change in Perú's Healthcare System:** HBI aims to support local health systems in Peruvian communities through the Newborn Resuscitation Training Program, which focuses on upskilling midwives on neonatal care. We also co-manage the Maria Madre Mission Clinic with our partner, Mission of Alto Cayma of the Missionary Society of Saint Paul. Through the clinic, residents of Alto Cayma, Arequipa access quality and affordable primary and specialized medical services.

Working at the intersection of public health, child welfare, and community development, HBI creates systemic transformation in healthcare and welfare so that every Peruvian child and their family have the best shot at a safe and healthy future. In collaboration



with our partner communities, HBI has served over 250,000 people and trained over 7,500 service healthcare providers to date.