

Media Diversity Institute Global (MDIG) - Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Policy Statement

Media Diversity Institute Global (MDIG) recognises that safeguarding children is both a moral imperative and a legal obligation that extends across all our operations worldwide. As a media organisation working in diverse cultural and legal contexts, we are uniquely positioned to influence how children are portrayed and protected in media narratives. This policy establishes our unwavering commitment to creating environments where children's rights, dignity, and wellbeing are paramount.

Every child who encounters MDIG through our programs, partnerships, media content, or advocacy work has the right to be safe, respected, and protected from harm. This commitment extends beyond our direct operations to encompass our influence on media practices and public discourse about children's issues globally.

Legal and Ethical Framework

MDIG's safeguarding approach is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which recognises children as rights holders rather than passive beneficiaries. We uphold the four core principles of the UNCRC: non-discrimination, best interests of the child, right to life and development, and respect for children's views.

Operating across multiple jurisdictions, MDIG commits to meeting the highest applicable safeguarding standards, whether international, national, or local. Where local frameworks are underdeveloped, we apply internationally recognised best practices. Where local standards exceed international minimums, we align with those higher expectations.

Core Definitions and Scope

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as anyone under 18 years of age, consistent with the UNCRC. Our safeguarding responsibilities encompass all forms of harm, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation, bullying, and digital harm. We recognise that vulnerability can be heightened by factors including disability, displacement, minority status, poverty, and family circumstances.

Safeguarding extends beyond child protection to encompass proactive measures that promote children's wellbeing, create protective environments, and build resilience within communities. This includes how children are represented in media, how their stories are told, and how their voices are amplified in public discourse.

Organisational Responsibility and Governance

The MDIG Board of Trustees maintains ultimate accountability for safeguarding effectiveness, ensuring adequate resources, oversight, and strategic direction. The Board receives annual safeguarding reports and reviews this policy annually to ensure it remains current and effective.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) serves as the central point for coordinating safeguarding concerns, maintaining expertise in child protection procedures, and ensuring consistent application of this policy across all operations. Deputy DSLs provide coverage and support, ensuring safeguarding capacity is maintained at all times.

Standards of Conduct

Every person representing MDIG must demonstrate the highest standards of conduct when working with or around children. This means treating children with respect and dignity, recognising their rights as individuals, and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries in all interactions.

Physical contact with children should be minimal, appropriate to the context, and conducted in open settings with others present. One-to-one interactions with children must be conducted in transparent, accountable ways, preferably in open spaces where others can observe but conversations can still be private when necessary.

Communication with children must be respectful, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive. We recognise that children communicate differently across cultures and developmental stages, and we adapt our approaches accordingly while maintaining consistent safeguarding standards.

Our digital safeguarding standards require particular attention in our media work. This includes:

- Obtaining informed consent from children and parents/guardians before creating any content involving children
- Protecting children's personal information and digital footprints
- Ensuring children understand how their images or stories may be used

- Maintaining secure storage and limited access to content involving children
- Regular review of published content to ensure ongoing appropriateness

Safe Recruitment and Capacity Building

MDIG employs robust recruitment processes for all positions involving contact with children. This includes comprehensive background checks appropriate to local contexts, thorough reference checking with previous employers, and clear assessment of candidates' understanding of child protection principles.

All staff, volunteers, and partners receive mandatory safeguarding training within their first month of engagement with MDIG. This training covers recognising signs of abuse, understanding reporting procedures, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and applying safeguarding principles in their specific roles. Refresher training occurs every two years, with additional updates as needed when policies or procedures change.

We extend our safeguarding requirements to all partners, contractors, and third parties who may encounter children through MDIG work. Partnership agreements explicitly outline safeguarding expectations and provide mechanisms for monitoring compliance.

Risk Assessment and Prevention

Every MDIG activity, project, or initiative undergoes safeguarding risk assessment before implementation. These assessments identify potential risks to children, evaluate existing protective measures, and establish additional safeguards as needed. Risk assessments are living documents, updated as circumstances change throughout project implementation.

Particular attention is paid to activities involving:

- Direct contact with children in educational or advocacy settings
- Creation of media content featuring children
- Travel to regions with heightened safeguarding risks
- Digital platforms where children may be present
- Events or activities in partnership with other organisations

Prevention strategies are embedded throughout our work, focusing on creating protective environments rather than simply responding to problems. This includes establishing clear protocols, providing adequate supervision, maintaining transparent decision-making processes, and fostering cultures where concerns can be raised without fear of retaliation.

Reporting and Response Procedures

When safeguarding concerns arise, immediate reporting to the DSL is required. Staff are empowered and expected to report concerns regardless of their certainty about what they have observed. It is not the responsibility of MDIG staff to investigate or determine the validity of concerns—our responsibility is to report and ensure appropriate action is taken.

The DSL assesses all reports within 24 hours, determining appropriate next steps in consultation with relevant authorities and safeguarding experts. Where immediate risk to a child exists, emergency measures are implemented without delay, including contacting local child protection services or emergency services as appropriate. When concerns involve MDIG staff or the DSL directly, reporting channels bypass normal hierarchies and go directly to the Board Chair or designated Board member. External reporting options are also available to ensure no concern goes unaddressed due to internal conflicts of interest.

All safeguarding incidents are documented thoroughly, with records maintained securely and confidentially. Learning from incidents informs policy improvements and training updates, ensuring continuous improvement in our safeguarding practices.

Support and Care

Children affected by safeguarding concerns receive appropriate support coordinated through local child protection systems and specialised service providers. MDIG commits resources to ensure children's immediate safety and ongoing wellbeing, working collaboratively with families and communities where safe and appropriate to do so. Staff involved in safeguarding cases receive appropriate support recognising the emotional impact of such situations. This includes access to counselling services, reasonable adjustments to workload, and ongoing supervision throughout case management processes.

We are committed to meaningful child participation in our safeguarding processes, ensuring children's voices are heard in age-appropriate ways when making decisions that affect them. This includes regular consultation with child advisors and feedback mechanisms that allow children to express their views about MDIG programs and safeguarding measures.

International Operations and Cultural Sensitivity

Operating across diverse cultural contexts requires careful navigation of varying norms, laws, and practices while maintaining consistent safeguarding standards. MDIG

develops context-specific implementation guidance while never compromising on fundamental child protection principles.

Local staff receive enhanced training on adapting global safeguarding standards to local contexts, including understanding relevant national laws, working with local child protection systems, and engaging appropriately with families and communities. We build partnerships with local child protection organisations to strengthen our understanding of context-specific risks and protective factors.

Where cultural practices conflict with child protection principles, we engage in respectful dialogue with communities while maintaining our commitment to children's safety and rights. Our approach is to work collaboratively toward solutions that honour cultural values while protecting children from harm.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Continuous Improvement

This policy is reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees with input from staff, partners, and child advisors. Reviews consider changes in international standards, legal requirements, organisational context, and lessons learned from implementation experience.

Safeguarding practices are monitored continuously through:

- Regular supervision and case reviews
- Annual safeguarding audits of operations and partnerships
- Feedback mechanisms for staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries
- Analysis of incident reports and trends
- External safeguarding assessments where available

Learning from our safeguarding work informs broader organisational practices, contributing to improved program design, risk management, and partnership approaches. We share appropriate lessons learned with the broader sector while maintaining confidentiality about specific cases and individuals.

Implementation and Accountability

This policy comes into effect immediately upon approval by the Board of Trustees. All existing staff, volunteers, and partners must familiarise themselves with the updated policy within 30 days of its publication. New joiners receive safeguarding training as part of their induction process.

Compliance with this policy is a condition of employment and partnership with MDIG. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or partnership agreements. However, our primary focus is on creating supportive environments where compliance is enabled through clear guidance, adequate training, and ongoing support.

Questions about this policy or its implementation should be directed to the DSL or designated deputies. Regular updates and clarifications will be communicated through normal organisational channels to ensure all stakeholders remain informed about safeguarding expectations and procedures.

This policy reflects MDIG's commitment to safeguarding as a shared responsibility requiring constant vigilance, continuous learning, and unwavering dedication to children's rights and wellbeing.