



# KEEPING SCOUTS SAFE FROM HARM

**WOSM's Position Paper  
on Child and Youth Protection**



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October 2016

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Some Background Information</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>A Global Approach to Child and Youth Protection</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Our Principles</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>A Call to Action</b>	<b>14</b>











## Introduction

**F**or over 100 years, Scouting's successful existence has been credited to the fact that it has taken on the responsibility of providing a safe environment to support the emotional, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual development of children and young people.

The educational purpose and values of the Movement, the Scout Method, and the partnership between youth members and adult leaders proposed by Baden-Powell have played a fundamental role in helping Scouting to maintain its attractiveness to young people and to maintain quality and consistency worldwide.

Over the years, child and youth protection has been an increasing priority for the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM). Both WOSM and the National Scout Organizations (NSOs) have invested considerable effort in raising awareness, implementing policies and procedures and keeping up with the developments in this area.

Today, Scouting is the largest global youth Movement with over 40 million members in 224 countries and territories around the world. WOSM has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children and young people in Scouting by supporting the development and adoption of policies and procedures at the national level.





This Position Paper aims to strengthen the Resolution 2002-07 on “Keeping Children Safe from Harm” and acts as a policy of WOSM.

Apart from providing an up-to-date position statement on child and youth protection, it supports NSOs which are implementing national policies and strategies on child and youth protection.





## Some Background Information

In 2002, at the 36<sup>th</sup> World Scout Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, WOSM adopted Resolution 2002-07 "Keeping Scouts Safe from Harm". This resolution highlighted the importance of having child and youth protection policies and procedures in place at the national level in each NSO/NSA to ensure the "safe passage" of young people throughout their time in the Movement.

The resolution also emphasised the need for a comprehensive approach to child and youth protection that focuses on each NSO's activities in the areas of the Youth Programme, adult leadership and management of the NSO. This resolution has since been WOSM's key policy statement on child and youth protection.



# A number of developments at the World level have helped contribute to the progress made in the area of child and youth protection, namely:

## **1989 • United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

- Requests States to ensure that children are protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. (Article 19)

## **2002 • 36<sup>th</sup> World Scout Conference, Greece – Resolution 2002-07 “Keeping Scouts Safe from Harm”**

<https://www.scout.org/node/135471>

- WOSM’s key policy statement on child protection strengthened the importance of including child protection procedures and mechanisms in the overall processes of managing volunteers and professionals in Scouting, especially with regard to recruitment and training.

## **2007, 2011 and 2015 • Safe from Harm World Scout Jamboree trainings**

- Mandatory training for all adult staff and volunteers attending the World Scout Jamboree. These online trainings were developed to train adults to handle various event scenarios regarding child protection and are part of the World Scout Jamboree organisation guidelines.

## **2011 • 39<sup>th</sup> World Scout Conference, Brazil – Resolution 2011-11 “World Adults in Scouting Policy”**

[https://www.scout.org/sites/default/files/ConfDoc4\\_ImplementationOfResolutionsAdoptedBy39thWSCConference\\_e.pdf](https://www.scout.org/sites/default/files/ConfDoc4_ImplementationOfResolutionsAdoptedBy39thWSCConference_e.pdf)

- New provisions that modified the existing World Adults in Scouting Policy in the areas of adult recruitment, appointment, support, training and retention were adopted.

## **2013 • World Scout Education Congress, Hong Kong**

- Brought together adult volunteers to share, discuss and debate the experiences and expertise in the Youth Programme and Adult Resources from over 200 countries and territories.

## **2014 • 40<sup>th</sup> World Scout Conference, Slovenia – Resolution 2014-08 “World Scout Youth Programme Policy” – Update**

[http://scout.org/sites/default/files/BusinessResolutions\\_e.pdf](http://scout.org/sites/default/files/BusinessResolutions_e.pdf)

- An updated World Scout Youth Programme Policy was adopted to emphasise the importance of keeping Scouts safe from harm during the implementation of national youth programmes.





# A Global Approach to Child and Youth Protection

In an organisational context, UNICEF defines child protection as “a broad term to describe philosophies, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of organisations – and individuals associated with those organisations – towards children in their care”.<sup>1</sup> WOSM uses this definition as a basis for shaping its own approach to child and youth protection.

In Scouting, child and youth protection is a responsibility shared by every individual involved in the Movement. The well-being, development and safety of children and young people should consistently be considered a top priority in all Scouting related activities. It is important that this mentality is adopted and displayed by everyone, including all adults who directly support the delivery of the Youth Programme and related activities, as well as all adults who perform supporting and administrative tasks and may or may not be in direct contact with children and young people.

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF Child Protection Policies and Procedures Toolkit - <http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/pdf/CP%20Manual%20-%20Introduction.pdf>



Child and youth protection in Scouting should encompass a full range of strategies, systems and procedures implemented at all levels of Scouting that work together to provide children and young people with a safe environment that enables them to develop their full potential. A safe environment is an environment that promotes and supports young people's well-being, while simultaneously working to address and prevent harmful practices.

This approach acknowledges the need to consider child and youth protection in a broader social and political context. When working in partnership with children, young people, adult volunteers, professional staff, families and other stakeholders, it is necessary to understand how the issues of child well-being, abuse<sup>2</sup> and neglect relate to and are affected by societal influences such as poverty, domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, disability, education, education, physical and mental health.

It is important to note that each NSO's specific policies, procedures and practices may vary as a result of differing legal, religious and cultural backgrounds. With that being said, a common approach has been developed by WOSM to be used as basis to help facilitate sustainable implementation throughout the Regions and all NSOs.



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<sup>2</sup> According to the World Health Organization, child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results 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. Accessed at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs150/en/> on 10 December 2015.





## Our Principles

WOSM's global approach towards child and youth protection is underpinned by a number of key principles that enable NSOs to develop the necessary implementation framework at the national level. WOSM endorses a child and youth protection framework based on:

**Universality:** Regardless of cultural, social and educational frameworks, there are standards set for a universal approach to child and youth protection, and it is the responsibility of WOSM and NSOs to ensure their implementation.

**Empowerment:** The best way to protect children is to empower them to protect themselves. Empowerment is a key outcome of the Scout Method and safeguarding should be integrated into the educational programme (e.g. Children's Rights and the right to say "no").

**Holistic development:** Utilise the Scout Method as a powerful multi-faceted tool to support young people in their holistic development. Educating them to respect themselves and others is a key factor in preventing violence, and in creating a safe environment for children and adults.

**Transversal integration:** Child and youth protection should be viewed as a transversal matter. A fully integrated approach should be utilised, in which all aspects are aligned, and implemented in an articulated manner (e.g. Youth Programme, Adults in Scouting, management).



**Strategic planning:** Child and youth protection should be included in the priorities, strategies and action plan of the organisation, which should strive for continuous development, review and improvement of policies and procedures.

**Prevention and Reaction:** Whilst reaction mechanisms already exist in many associations, systematic prevention is key to the development of a safe environment and the elimination of violence against children. Prevention requires having the necessary knowledge of the types of abuse and harmful situations as well as child and youth protection education systems in order to be able to minimise or prevent potential problems.

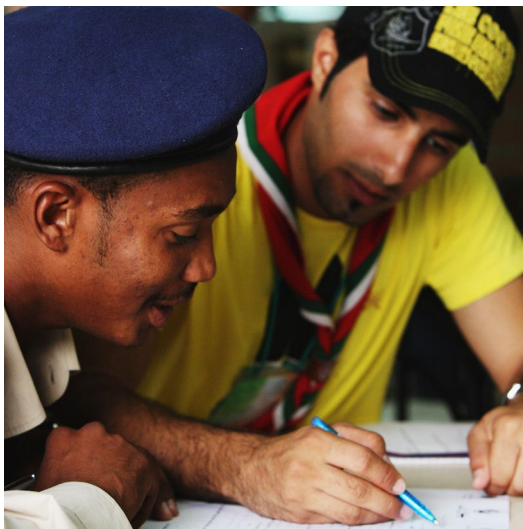
**Positive participation:** Building a positive framework can help increase dialogue and trigger a change process within the organisation. Child and youth protection needs to be enforced and implemented by all members at all levels, therefore, it is paramount to involve a wide variety of stakeholders from within and outside the organisation when developing it.

**Transparency:** Communicate the approach internally and externally. Wide dissemination of reference contacts and procedures is critical. This will help protect children and young people, as well as the adults who supervise and work with them.

**Law compliance:** Instil a sense of awareness in adults about their responsibilities from a legal point of view and ensure compliance with national legal procedures (e.g. confidentiality, reporting obligations and data archiving).

**Collaboration and networking:** Reaching out to WOSM and other organisations at the national or local level that work directly with young people often helps to acquire useful information and support. Working with other experts in the country and learning from their experiences can greatly benefit an NSO's work in this area.

**Up-to-date:** Systems, policies and procedures should be regularly reviewed and improved. New challenges and threats (e.g. cyber-bullying) require new strategies and mechanisms to be developed.





## A Call to Action

Protection of children and young people is a natural expectation of parents, partners and society in general. Therefore, it has to be an internal imperative in the organisation itself, constituting an underlying principle of most policies that are formulated within the Movement.

As a global Movement that is concerned not only with the well-being of children and young people around the world, but also with their potential to develop into active citizens who make positive contributions to society, Scouting is well placed to make a significant contribution to the development of child and youth protection strategies.


There are many NSOs that currently underestimate the level of danger present in society, and thus overestimate their current ability to provide a safe environment for children and young people. As a result, these organisations have not succeeded to generate adequate policies or put in place preventive measures that focus on child and youth protection.

It is the responsibility of WOSM and the NSOs to work together to address this issue by bringing to light these dangers, and to facilitate the development and implementation of necessary policies and procedures, as well as ensure the appropriate trainings are in place to promote awareness and facilitate implementation.

NSOs are encouraged to proactively rethink their strategies on child and youth protection, benefiting from a close collaboration with state institutions, local authorities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. This will be a great first step toward raising Scouting's profile as a leading organisation in child and youth protection, and implementing policies and/or procedures that result in increased trust among parents and civil society partners.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were established as a framework to monitor the strategy of the Triennial Plan and Vision 2023. The specific KPI set for the current Triennium (2014-2017) that applies to the area of Child Protection is that 20% of NSOs will have "Safe from Harm" policies and/or procedures in place.





# This can be achieved, particularly by:

- developing and further implementing policies and procedures based on this Position Paper to ensure the “safe passage” of young people throughout their time in the Movement
- ensuring that legal requirements within a country and the standards set out within the Convention on the Rights of the Child are met
- ensuring that such policies are duly reflected in the totality of the NSOs’ activities and are taken into consideration in all structural changes and operational procedures
- a wider advocacy and support of child and youth protection in partnership with internal and external stakeholders



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October 2016

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