



Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy 2019

Produce by YACAN June 2019

This document provides a general overview and guidance about how YACAN Staff, Volunteers, Associates, Visitors and other Representatives are required to conduct themselves during their engagements or contacts with Children and Youths to ensure maximum safety and protection is accorded to Children and Youths and not abuse their positions that comes with their being part of YACAN.

YOUTH AND CHILD ADVOCACY NETWORK (YACAN)

CHILD AND YOUTH SAFEGUARDING POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

As a National Child and Youth-Centred community development organization whose work is underpinned by the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the National Youth Policy of Sierra Leone, YACAN is committed to the safeguarding of all children and youths from all forms of violence and abuse of their rights. YACAN believes that all children and youths regardless of age, gender, disability, tribe or ethnicity have a right to be safeguarded and protected from all forms of harmful influences, abuse, neglect and exploitation. We take active measures to ensure that all who work with and engage with us does not in any way harm, abuse or commit any act of violence against children and youths or place them at risk of the same. We take positive action to prevent anyone who might be a risk to children and youths from becoming involved with us and take stringent measures against any staff, associate or visitor who perpetrates an act of violence and abuse against a child or youth.

YACAN acknowledges its expectation that its employees and others who associate with YACAN have the interests of children and youths at the center of their involvement with YACAN.

This Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy is YACAN's statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children and youths from harm and makes clear to all staff in the organization and those who come into contact with us, what is required in relation to the safety and protection of children and youths, and that abuse of children and youths in any form is unacceptable to YACAN.

OUR VISION FOR CHILD AND YOUTH SAFEGUARDING

We aim to create 'Child and Youth Safe' environments that prevent impairment of the health and development of children and youths, both internally and externally, where children and youths are safe, protected, respected, empowered and active in their own protection, and all staff are skilled, confident, competent and well supported in meeting their responsibilities commensurate to their roles in the safeguarding of children and youths.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENTS

YACAN is committed to actively safeguarding children and youths from harm and ensuring children's and youths' rights to protection are fully realized. We take seriously our responsibility to promote child and youth safe practices and protect children and youths from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we will take positive action to prevent children and youths abusers from becoming involved with other organizations and governments in any way and take stringent measures against any YACAN staff and/or Associate who abuses a child or youth. Our decisions and actions in response to child and youth safeguarding concerns will be guided by the principle of "the best interest of the child" as stated in international and national statutes for children. YACAN as an organization supports Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Child Rights Act of Sierra Leone 2007 and the Revised National Youth Policy of Sierra Leone 2014.

DEFINITION OF TERMS UNDER THIS POLICY

1. A Child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.
2. A Youth is defined as any person from the ages of 15 to 29 years.
3. An Associate is any individual (including service providers) contracted (paid or non-paid) who has committed to work with or support YACAN in any form and at any level.
4. An abuse to a child or youth is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child or youth and includes any action that result in actual or potential harm to a child or youth.

An abuse of a child or youth may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm to a child or youth. Child or youth abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or a youth that will damage their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

5. Child and Youth Safeguarding, within the scope of this policy, refers to the set of policies, procedures and practices that YACAN employs to ensure that it is a child and youth safe organization. It is the means by which we ensure that anyone who represents or is associated with our organization behaves in appropriate manners towards children and youths and never abuses the position that comes with his/her being part of YACAN.
6. Protection refers to the responsibilities, measures and activities that YACAN undertakes to protect children and youths who are suffering or are likely to suffer from significant harm caused either intentionally or unintentionally.
7. Child and Youth Rights refers to the fundamental human rights of the child and youth as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Rights Act of Sierra Leone 2007 and the National Youth Policy of Sierra Leone 2014.

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy includes mandatory requirements that apply to everyone associated with YACAN in all aspects of YACAN's work e.g. all YACAN staff, whether full time, part time or engaged on short term contracts such as consultants, researchers, volunteers etc. and any other individuals, groups, organisations or associates who have a formal or contractual relationship with YACAN that involves any contact with children and youths or are party to YACAN child or youth sensitive data while working for or with YACAN. YACAN visitors such as donors, journalists, media, celebrities etc) who may come into contact with children and youths through YACAN are also bound by this policy.

RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THIS POLICY

All YACAN Staff, Associates, Visitors and Representatives MUST:

1. Never abuse and / or exploit a child or youth or act/ behave in any way that places a child or youth at risk of harm.
2. Contribute to an environment where children and youths feel respected, supported, safe, protected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
3. Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
4. Always ask permission from the parent or guardian and children before images (photographs, videos) of them are taken. Respect their decision to say “NO” to an image being taken. Ensure that any image taken of children are respectful (for example: children should have adequate clothing that covers up the sexual organs. Images of children in sexually suggestive poses or that in any way impact negatively on their dignity or privacy are not acceptable). Stories and images of children should be based on the child’s best interest.
5. Not disclose research tools, images, audio/video recordings or project Information that identifies beneficiary children and youths or their families to any unauthorized person or the general public without the expressed consent of the family/guardian and if necessary from the child/youth and YACAN.
6. Be aware that where concerns exist about the conduct of staff or Associates in relation to child protection and /or where there has been a breach of a child protection policy, this will be investigated under the national laws; and /or by YACAN in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary actions and /or dismissal of staff. Also be aware that YACAN will sever all relations with any YACAN Associate or visitor who is proven to have committed child abuse.
7. Be aware that, if a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, any employee who makes false and malicious accusation will face disciplinary action.
8. Be aware that YACAN will take appropriate legal or other action against YACAN Associates and Visitors who makes false and malicious accusation of child abuse.
9. Agree, by signing, to comply with the provisions stated here in this Policy.

All YACAN Staff and Volunteers MUST NOT:

10. Disclose information that identifies beneficiary children or their families to any unauthorized person or the general public without the expressed consent of the family/guardian and if necessary from the child and YACAN.
11. Behave physically in a manner with a child which is inappropriate, sexually provocative, harassing, and abusive or that is intended to shame, humiliate or emotionally abuse the child.
12. Withhold professional assistance or give preferential treatment, gifts or payment of any kind to a child or any of its relation, in order to solicit any form of advantage or sexual favour from a child.
13. Arrange to make contact or spend time with any child with whom they come into contact except as part of the designated activities set out in their role.
14. Have sexual intercourse or involve in any form of sexual activity with a child.

YACAN Associates and Visitors MUST NOT:

15. Disclose information that identifies sponsored children or their families to the general public without explicit consent from YACAN.

- 16. Allow being placed in a position where they are alone with a child or children with whom they come into contact as part of their work with YACAN.
- 17. Fail to report any suspicion, allegation or witness of child abuse or other breaches of the safeguarding through the appropriate channel to YACAN.

The Executive Director and the Senior Management Team MUST:

- 18. Ensure that each YACAN office has in place local procedures that are consistent with the National Child Protection Policy and with the document reporting and responding to child and youth safeguarding issues in YACAN to respond to incidents of child or youth abuse. Local procedures should be developed with assistance of local advisers in accordance with the local law. Any deviation from this Policy must have prior formal approval from the Executive Director or the Senior Management Team.
- 19. Hold overall accountability for this Policy and its Implementation.

PERSONAL CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK

We are committed to ensuring that our staff and representatives apply high standard of behaviour towards children and youths within both their professional and their private lives. YACAN does not intend to dictate the belief and value system by which YACAN employees conduct their personal lives. YACAN's position throughout the country is dependent however on maintaining good relations and upholding its reputation as a child and youth focused Non-Governmental Organization with numerous partner organisations. Unlawful or other conduct by YACAN employees which jeopardizes YACAN's reputation or position whether during or after business hours will not be tolerated. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to: any unlawful activity related to sexual abuse; any other unlawful activity; sexual harassment; physically/verbally abusive behaviour; and public disorderly conduct.

Staff and Associates are required to bear in mind the principles of the Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy and heighten their awareness of how their behaviour may be perceived both at work and outside of work.

{This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. Staff, Associates, Visitors and other Representatives of YACAN should at all times avoid actions or behaviour which may allow their behaviour to be misrepresented, constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour}

This policy has been viewed and approval by:

Francis F. Kamara {Admin and Finance Coordinator (YACAN)}

Hassan Fuad Kanu {National Director (YACAN)}

Acknowledgement Form - Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy

Declaration

I,(Status e.g. employee, volunteer, visitor, partner etc.).....

acknowledge that I have received, read and understood the Child and Youth Safeguarding Policy of YACAN and hereby firmly commit myself to duly abide by it.

Signed: Date: