

# **HINDER NOT CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

Hinder Not Working Group, Africa, YWAM

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These child safeguarding guidelines are to cover any children with whom the YWAM North Africa Center locations come into contact: team functions, team retreats, and team facilities. We recognize that we all come from different cultural upbringing and have different views on appropriate disciplinary action. We are not trying to control what you do in your own home and family or the agreement you have with trusted friends. These guidelines are for team events and team locations. We do want to bring this topic into the light so we can better discuss it. We are all a work in progress and need God's light to show us what is the best way to keep our children safe.

All staff need to review this document and sign it on a yearly basis.

## **1. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

- a) YWAM believes that all children have value, worth and dignity because they are made in the image of God. Thus, we believe that all children should be treated with respect and cared for in ways that honour God.
- b) YWAM is committed to the welfare of children and youth worldwide.
- c) YWAM students, staff and leaders are expected to engage in positive supportive relationships with children, young and older adults in all aspects of our mission.
- d) YWAM opposes all forms of child exploitation and child abuse. If abuse is suspected, we will not keep silent.
- e) YWAM believes that all children have a right to protection from abuse irrespective of race, social background, age, gender, skin colour, disability, religion, nationality, or beliefs.
- f) YWAM believes in the importance of child protection measures so that children can be protected from abuse by any YWAM staff, students, volunteers, friends and/or visitors. These measures also protect anyone involved with YWAM and the mission's integrity.
- g) YWAM believes that children have the right to speak and be taken seriously. Where appropriate, children should be included in planning activities that involve them.

## **2. FORMS OF CHILD ABUSE**

- a) Physical Abuse: Any physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury, or suffering including deliberate hitting, beating, shaking, throwing, burning, drowning, suffocating, or poisoning. This also includes denying the child permission to use the bathroom when needed, excessive withholding of food or water or of other physical needs that the child may have.

b) We recognise in Africa many forms of discipline and correction are used. The heart and purpose of Discipline/Correction is to train a child, not to punish them. It is common for physical discipline/correction to be used. Therefore, in the event of that, we recommend the following guidelines for the safety, health, and development of the child:

- **Take time to explain** to the child the error and implications of the behaviour first. Discipline/Correction is only practised when there is disobedience. Not for mischievous behaviour, or when the child might not be fully understood.
- **Warn the child** that in the event of further disobedience you will physically discipline them.
- **Tell the child what the discipline will be** and be specific, for example two swats on the bottom.
- **Where to give physical discipline:** The heart of discipline is not to shame the child but to rather affirm. Therefore, it is suggested that the child be removed from the group or public place for this very purpose. We are mindful of different cultural interpretations of this which also have value. In this case it may be more appropriate to stay with the cultural value.
- **Do not discipline/correct when angry, disappointed, embarrassed, upset etc.** Discipline/ Correction needs to be done from a place of love. If needed, explain to the child that the discipline will be done later when you are not angry/upset.
- **If you have separated yourselves** to discipline, give the child time to prepare themselves to return to the group setting.
- **NB:** The bible specifically instructs us to use the rod and not the hand (Pro 23:13). This is because the hand is used to give love and care. It is not meant to inflict pain.
- **We do not recommend** physical discipline of another person's child, however if it is required parental permission must be given. Written permission (in any form) is preferable.

c) Mental/Emotional Abuse: Anything that would impact on the normal psychological development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection. This may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless or unloved and cause children to feel frightened, in danger or inadequate. It can also include manipulation, punishment through denial of love, pressuring a child, or rejection as punishment. Emotional violence is behaviour leading to the destruction of trust between the child and authority figure and hinders the development of the child's personality. The damage from such is momentous and can be as equally traumatizing as physical/sexual abuse.

- d) **Sexual Abuse:** is the purposeful engagement in sexual acts with a child or in the presence of children. Besides sexual intercourse, it also includes any form of touching of genital areas as well as crossing of physical boundaries stated by the child. It is any exploitation of a child in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate societal or family rules. Sexual abuse also takes place through sexual comments, exhibitionism, and forcing the child to watch or take part in pornography. Parents are the ones to share with their children and affirm their God given sexual identity.
- e) **Spiritual Abuse:** is linked with other forms of abuse and could be defined as an abuse of power, often done in the name of God or religion, which involves manipulating or coercing someone into thinking, saying, or doing things without respecting their right to choose for themselves.
- f) **Neglect:** choosing deliberately not to give food, shelter, medicine, care, clothes.

### **3. COMMUNICATION**

YWAM is committed to truthful, accurate, timely and relevant communication. We believe good communication is essential for strong relationships, healthy families and communities and effective ministry. (YWAM Foundational Value 18)

- a) Anything we share about children, whether online or in person, should uphold their value and dignity and be respectful, not seeking to exploit their situation.
- b) Due to a significant increase in child pornography and AI technologies we strongly advise our best practice is not to allow photographs or videos which could identify children to be shared publicly online without prior consent from a legal guardian. If there is no consent, or if there is doubt, photographs should not be able to identify the children, e.g. taken from behind or blurring of faces.
- c) Even with parental permission, YWAM should take special care to protect children's' identities in public relations materials using identifiable faces. YWAM should never post children's names or contact information.
- d) To protect any children involved in past or present abuse, disclosure of information about any of the persons involved should be limited to only the people who need to know (as outlined in the section: Child Abuse Allegation).

### **4. BEHAVIORAL PROTOCOLS** (these protocols are concerning team functions and team properties).

- a) YWAM expects all its staff, students, volunteers, friends and visitors to give respect and dignity to all children.
- b) There will be training once a year on child protection which all staff members need to attend. (A video will be made for those who are unable to attend.) Hinder Not is ready to help facilitate this and train staff in how to run such a training.
- c) All YWAM staff, students, volunteers, and anyone involved in ministry with children must sign a statement to say that they have read the policy, will respect

it and understand that action will be taken in cases of inappropriate behavior. This will be done each year.

- d) YWAM staff, students, volunteers, supporters or visitors should always be in an open and public area with other adults and children around when with a child who is not their own offspring. Children should not enter a private room not their own without written\* permission from parents or guardians.
- e) YWAM Staff children or children from YWAM projects will not stay overnight with YWAM staff, student, volunteer or supporter, unless consented to by the legal guardian in writing\*.
- f) YWAM Staff, students, volunteers, supporters or visitors are only allowed to take a child to the bathroom when specific instructions from the parents / guardian have been given.
- g) YWAM Staff, students, volunteers, supporters or visitors should not give children anything to eat without first checking with the parents / guardian.
- h) When a child is being driven in a vehicle as part of a team function, the driver must have the written\* consent of their legal guardian, unless the child is a family member.
- i) YWAM staff, students, volunteers, visitors, and supporters will not touch a child in an inappropriate way or expose them to inappropriate materials such as pornographic videos and literature (A general guideline for touching inappropriately is not to touch children in areas that would normally be covered by shorts and t-shirt, but also includes kissing and tickling in an inappropriate way.) An appropriate touch should be requested of the child. (Ex: "Can I give you a hug?") If you are a trusted family friend and the child is happy with the hug/kiss this is obviously OK. We are not trying to say that our YWAM kids can't be hugged. But the child needs to be OK with this touch.
- j) YWAM staff, students, volunteers, supporters, and visitors will not discipline a child in a humiliating way. (i.e. hitting, slapping, beating, grabbing or with verbal abuse such as swearing or use of demeaning language). Staff have the right to correct but not discipline. If a child is not listening to correction, then one of the child's parents needs to be involved.
- k) YWAM staff, volunteers, visitors, and supporters will not violate the rights of a child (based on the UN Rights of a Child: [www.unicef.org.au/upload/unicef/media/unicef-simplified-convention-childrights.pdf](http://www.unicef.org.au/upload/unicef/media/unicef-simplified-convention-childrights.pdf)).
- l) Adults are always responsible for their actions. The child cannot be blamed, even if it has provoked or behaved seductively. If a relationship between an adult and a child becomes inappropriate, it is up to the adult to set healthy boundaries.
- m) If minor violations occur, there will be questions asked and individuals will be reminded of the policy. If there are repeated violations, we will ask the parents

of the child and a team leader to discuss the situation with the person in violation.

- n) If protocols are repeatedly broken, the person involved will be disciplined and may lose his/her position and his or her right to work within YWAM; he or she may be subject to criminal proceedings where laws have been breached.\*\* o) We understand that emergencies happen and you might need to step in. In these cases the parent should be told about the situation afterwards.

## **5. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING**

- a) All YWAM staff, students and long-term and short-term volunteers will be carefully and properly screened during their recruitment period. This includes agreeing to the Child Safeguarding Policy and stating that there have been no previous convictions for abuse against minors, violent behavior or other convictions that would raise concern about behavior towards children or minors.
- b) All YWAM staff, students and volunteers will be screened according to local standards, with a minimum of two references during their recruitment period, including a legal/police clearance document/certificate of moral integrity where possible.
- c) YWAM leaders will ensure that all the references of all new staff are checked, preferably by telephone, and recorded in the staff files, before that staff member is invited to join the ministry.
- d) YWAM locations will not accept as volunteers any minors (anyone under 18) without parental/guardian written consent. (this will be filed).

## **6. CHILD ABUSE ALLEGATION**

Where an allegation has been made that a YWAM staff, student, volunteer or visitor (hereafter “YWAM Staff”) has abused a child, YWAM will take the appropriate action to deal with the situation, as outlined below:

- a) YWAM staff are required to report suspected abuse to either their ministry or location leader (or where available, the Child Protection Coordinator).
- b) All reports of alleged abuse will be investigated. The investigation process will be documented, and a written report of findings be completed within 30 days of the allegation. Outside expertise or legal authorities may be involved.
- c) During this process, the YWAM Staff member will not be involved in any ministry until the investigation is concluded.
- d) The National Leadership Team and legal board need to be informed of all child abuse allegations that are being investigated, so they can assist in the process.
- e) If the local jurisdiction laws require it, an immediate report of the alleged abuse will be made to the police or government social services agency.

- f) The allegation will be kept confidential, with only those directly involved having the appropriate information. The person under investigation will be asked to not approach children during this process.
- g) YWAM will work in cooperation with child welfare and legal organizations during an investigation as appropriate, especially where the child involved requires extra protection.
- h) Both victim and offender will be treated with respect from the start of the process to the end.
- i) YWAM will not dismiss a child's accusation of abuse without appropriate investigation, no matter who the alleged offender is.
- j) YWAM will designate a point person to deal with the media/social media and the police.
- k) Conclusion of investigation process: If the investigation leads to the conclusion that abuse has occurred, then the appropriate legal authorities will be notified if they have not previously been involved in the process. If the investigation proves that there was abuse, then the offender will be removed immediately and subject to criminal prosecution.

The written report of the investigation will be kept locally and shared with the National Leadership Team. If they are YWAM Staff, the report should be shared with their home church pastor and/or the people who gave them references to be on staff.

Where no evidence of abuse has been found, the informant of the abuse, alleged victim and alleged offender will be notified. Where appropriate, the YWAM Staff can be reinstated into ministry. The written report of the investigation will be confidentially filed in the local staff file.

- l) It is recommended that all involved are thoroughly debriefed about the process. Please contact Member Care for assistance.

## **7. RESPONSES TO ALLEGATIONS**

- a) YWAM staff, students, volunteers, friends and donors will be encouraged to be open in discussing the potential of abuse within the organization.
- b) YWAM prohibits any retaliation against any staff, students or volunteers who, in good faith, have registered a complaint under this procedure.
- c) There is a Child Protection Coordinator for the team who is responsible for dealing with child protection for our team.

\* Written permission could be in the form of an email, messaging application or a note.

## **DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT FOR CHILD SAFEGUARDING**

To be signed by all YWAM North Africa Center staff, mission builders, short-term teams, volunteers, and overnight visitors. A copy will be kept on file.

I declare that: Name:

Surname:

1. I have read and understand the YWAM North Africa Centre Child Safeguarding Policy.
2. I will work within the procedure as laid out in the YWAM North Africa Centre Child Safeguarding Policy.
3. I have not been convicted of any offense involving physical or sexual abuse of children or minors.
4. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of children while engaged in YWAM activities or staying on YWAM property, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_