

# World YWCA Global Safeguarding and Protection Policy

## 1. Purpose

The *World YWCA Global Safeguarding and Protection Policy* and associated procedures aim to provide clarity to all on how they should engage with children, young people and adults at risk when working for, on behalf of, or in partnership with World YWCA.

This policy serves to:

- outline World YWCA's commitments and principles to safeguarding and protecting children, young people and adults at risk in practice, policy and in procedures across our work.
- provide a common understanding of World YWCA safeguarding and protection responsibilities to operating and ensuring safe environments for children, young people and adults at risk
- specify minimum standards and procedures that World YWCA will operate by to prevent, report and respond to harm or abuse suspected or known of children, young people and adults at risk.
- support the adoption of good practices across the diverse and complex environment in which the World YWCA and YWCA associations and entities operate and increase accountability in the area of safeguarding and protection across the YWCA global movement.

As an international movement and organization, the World YWCA advocates and supports volunteerism, membership, diversity, tolerance, mutual respect, integrity and responsible accountability<sup>1</sup>. The World YWCA puts the rights of all human beings at the centre of its interventions, seeks to do no harm and ensure the safety and wellbeing of people with whom it comes in contact with in the course of its work, in particular children, young people and adults at risk. As such, the World YWCA recognizes it has an obligation to put in place all reasonable safeguarding measures to ensure – as far as possible – the safety and protection of children, young people and adults at risk, including those with whom World YWCA works directly and those involved in World YWCA's work through YWCA national and local associations or entities<sup>2</sup>.

This policy constitutes World YWCA's global policy as stated in its name. While it is recognized that local legislation may vary from country to country, this policy identifies minimum World YWCA standards and may exceed or not the requirements of local legislation.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all World YWCA staff, contractors and interns;
- all World YWCA volunteers;
- all World YWCA consultants;
- all members from the World YWCA Board, Nominations Committee, and other World YWCA governance bodies;

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<sup>1</sup>[World YWCA Constitution 2019](#)

<sup>2</sup>YWCA national and local associations and entities have their own status of registration which might vary from country to country and from association or entity to association or entity.



- all YWCA national or local associations, entities and individuals that are actively collaborating to and/or working in partnership with World YWCA on World YWCA campaigns, engagement processes, projects, programs, advocacy outreach, events or other work streams of the World YWCA and/or participating in those activities;
- all other external organizations and their representatives that are actively collaborating to and/or working in partnership with World YWCA on World YWCA campaigns, engagement processes, projects, programs, advocacy outreach, events or other work streams of the World YWCA and/or participating in those activities.

This policy does not cover World YWCA's role and responsibility for safeguarding issues in YWCA national or local associations and entities that are not directly related to World YWCA led or coordinated work streams or activities in which the YWCA associations or entities are taking active part. For guidance in this regard, you can refer to the policies available on the [feedback section of the World YWCA website](#).

Breach of this policy or the World YWCA Safeguarding Code of Conduct (Annex A) constitutes an act of misconduct and is grounds for disciplinary action that may lead to possible dismissal, termination of contracts or partnerships, where appropriate, referral to relevant authorities.

This policy supersedes the World YWCA Child Protection Policy last approved in November 2013.

There are additional policies and procedures that apply to those who have contact and/or working with children, young people or adults at risk, through the World YWCA such as the [World YWCA Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse at Work Prevention and Response Policy](#). As of its last date of approval, the *World YWCA Safeguarding and Protection Policy* and its own updates and developments shall guide and inform future updates and developments of all safeguarding related policies or safeguarding components in policies, existing and future.

Further policies may be developed in the context of specific World YWCA initiatives, programs, projects or activities to respond to specific safeguarding needs. These policies should be in line with the minimum standards and principles outlined in the World YWCA Global Safeguarding and Protection Policy but can have additional or adapted procedures as long as they fulfil the same aims as those expressed in this policy.

### 3. Principles

The World YWCA recognises that abuse and exploitation happen in all countries and societies across the world, and that these forms of violence are more likely to be exerted over particular groups of people due to existing inequalities, including those experienced by children, young people, and adults at risk.

The World YWCA is therefore committed to:

- Encourage safe, empowering and inclusive spaces and opportunities for children, young people and adults at risk of all backgrounds, with a focus on girls and young women, to learn, participate and achieve best outcomes to grow their civic roles and transformative leadership.
- Promote best practices and approaches that prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and adults at risk with whom there is direct/indirect contact or engagement.



- Respect and uphold their human rights at all time based on international standards including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and in accordance to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); in particular SDG 3, 4, 5, 10, 16 and 17<sup>3</sup>.
- Ensure everyone in the scope of this policy understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and are provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse or any form of violence relating to children, young people and adults at risk.

World YWCA will meet its commitment to the furthest extent of its capacity and reach to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk through the following means:

**Awareness:** ensure that all those covered in the scope of this policy are aware of the issues and responsibilities to create safe environments for children, young people and adults at risk.

**Prevention:** ensure, through awareness and personal and professional conduct, that those covered in the scope of this policy minimise the risk of harm or any form of violence relating to children, young people and adults at risk.

**Reporting:** provide clear steps to be followed when concerns arise regarding the safety of children, young people and adults at risk.

**Responding:** ensure that action is taken to support and protect children, young people and adults at risk where concerns arise regarding possible abuse, without denying procedural fairness principles to the accused. In order that the standards of reporting and responding are met, World YWCA will ensure to the furthest extent of its capacity and reach that it:

- takes seriously any concerns raised;
- takes timely positive steps to ensure the protection of children, young people and adults at risk who are the subject of any concerns;
- supports children, young people and adults at risk or others who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns;
- acts appropriately and effectively in instigating or co-operating with any subsequent process of investigation;
- demonstrates responsibility to and respect for children, young people and adults at risk by being sensitive in our communications that involve them; and
- applies recruitment and selection measures that have been designed to minimise the possibility of recruiting persons who may pose a risk to children/adults at risk.

#### 4. Definitions (\*Trigger warning for explicit definitions of abuse)

**Child/Children:** for the purpose of this policy and in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the World YWCA will always consider a child/children to be anyone under the age of 18. The World YWCA also recognises that children are generally more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation due to factors such as age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, social and economic status, developmental stage, and dependence on others.

**Young people:** the World YWCA centres it works particularly on the transformative leadership of young women and girls. The term “young people” is used as an umbrella term that includes diverse identities and communities

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Goals / <https://www.globalgoals.org/>

that youth represent. For the purpose of this policy and in accordance with World YWCA Constitution, a young person is considered to be a person aged 30 years old or under.

**Adults at risk:** people that are 18 years and above, who by reason of age, mental, learning or physical disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, social and economic status, illness, or based on the context they are in, may be at higher risk of abuse, harm or exploitation.

**Safeguarding:** are the responsibilities, preventative, responsive and referral measures that are undertaken to protect children, young people and adults at risk and ensure that they are not subjected to any form of abuse or harm as a result of their association with the World YWCA.

This includes ensuring that their contact or engagement with us and with those associated with the World YWCA is safe and that it addresses and responds to their concerns, welfare and human rights.

While all people must be protected from harm, the World YWCA recognises that children, young people and adults at risk can have particular safeguarding needs and requiring distinct consideration for care, support and protection.

**Protection:** includes ensuring that individual basic human rights, welfare and physical security are recognised, safeguarded and protected in accordance with international standards.

**Care and support:** may include an assessment of children, young people and adults at risk needs, and the provision of practical, financial and emotional support as required.

**Abuse:** is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can take the form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the health, survival, development or dignity of a child, young person or adult at risk.

**Physical abuse:** occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child, young person or an adult at risk. This may take the form of hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to the child, young person or adult at risk. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures. Specific physical harm to girls and young women also includes female genital mutilation.

**Emotional abuse:** is a persistent attack on a person's self-esteem that can cause a severe and long-lasting impact such as trauma. It can take the form of name calling, demeaning, bullying, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment, though it may occur alone, and can also take place online.

**Neglect:** is the failure to provide with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter and supervision to the extent that the person's health and development are at risk. It may or may not be intentional.

**Sexual abuse:** involves forcing, persuading or threatening physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. This covers non-contact forms of harm such as genital exposure, having a child, young person or adult at risk pose or perform in a sexual manner or exposing them to sexually explicit materials or acts (including through digital means); to a range of contact behaviours such as kissing, touching, or fondling in a sexual manner, penetration of the vagina or anus, or coercing the child, young person or adult at risk to perform any such act on themselves or anyone else.



It is important to note that sexual abuse is committed by women and other children as well as men and that victims may not be aware of what is happening.

**Exploitation:** refers to the use of children, young people and adult at risk for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel, and harmful treatment of the child / adult at risk.

There are two main forms of exploitation that are recognised:

**Sexual exploitation:** any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes: this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the exploitation of another as well as personal sexual gratification.

**Economic exploitation:** the use of a child, young person or an adult at risk in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour. Economic exploitation implies the idea of a certain gain or profit through the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. The material interest has an impact on the economy of a certain unit, be it the state, the community or the family.

**Online abuse:** considering working practice and engagement of World YWCA is also undertaken online, in particular with women, young women and girls, it is important to highlight online abuse as any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including social media, text messages and messaging apps, emails, online chats, online gaming, live-streaming sites.

## 5. Safeguarding measures

### 5.1 Safe recruitment and selection

The World YWCA will include the following actions in its recruitments procedures and selection processes of staff, interns, volunteers, contractors, members of the World YWCA Board, Nominations Committee and other World YWCA governance bodies:

- Request for relevant documentation to confirm the applicant's identity, background and proof of qualifications;
- Request applicant to disclose and guarantee that they have not been charged with child, young people, adult at risk abuse or exploitation offences;
- Request for relevant endorsements, references and statements of support from other entities who have engaged with and/or worked with the applicant;
- Whenever the local situation and legislation allows it, successful applicants must undergo a police background check, including in the country of their last residence;
- Applicants are to be informed by World YWCA Human Resources focal point ([hresources@worldywca.org](mailto:hresources@worldywca.org)) of this policy and other relevant policies and procedures upon beginning employment or association with World YWCA. At that time, a good understanding of the World YWCA movement, its principles and values will be provided, and the World YWCA Safeguarding Code of Conduct (Annex A) must be signed. Further training and accompaniment will be considered and tailored to individual / team requirements and needs.

Recruitment, on-boarding and selection guidelines and approaches will be reviewed and discussed regularly when conducting a recruitment or selection process, to ensure that they accurately reflect child, young people and adult at risk safe recruiting, participation, and screening standards, consistent with global standards and national legislation.



## 5.2 Safe partnerships

The World YWCA is committed to ensuring that all of its work in which different partners can participate in is assessed to be safe for children, young people and adults at risk. This includes a responsibility to ensure that partners (including YWCA associations and entities) as they participate in the work of the World YWCA have the ability to fulfil their obligations safely and have the policies and procedures in place to prevent harm or abuse to children, young people and adults at risk.

The World YWCA will include at minimum the following actions as it deals with partners who participate in the work of the World YWCA:

- Include the World YWCA Safeguarding and Protection Policy as annex to agreements with partners and request in writing as part of the agreement that the partners and partner representatives' actions as they participate in the work of the World YWCA do not contradict the spirit of the policy. At that time, a good understanding of the World YWCA movement, its principles and values as well as the policy will be provided.
- Request for the organisations' policies related to safeguarding and protection. If they do not have any, request for a written explanation and description of the approach the partner is using in absence of those policies.

The World YWCA understands that partners who are in contact (direct or indirect) with children, young people and adults at risk might not have established policies or have the interest and/or capacity to develop formal policies. As the partners are on-boarded, where relevant, the World YWCA will start a dialogue with them about safeguarding commitments and what kinds of safeguarding measures/procedures are a priority for them. This will serve to learn on safeguarding approaches, as well as document safeguarding measures/procedures that are a priority for partners. It will also serve, where applicable due to specific nature of a collaboration, as a starting point to accompany partners to undertake risk assessments throughout the lifecycle of World YWCA initiatives and programmes, including but not limited to when developing and implementing disaster or crisis response activities or operating in conflict areas.

In addition, partners and consultants of the World YWCA are invited to use the processes outlined in this policy, such as for reporting any instance of harm.

At times and due to specific nature of collaborations, the World YWCA may require more documentation and information to ensure that safeguarding measures in place and practices accurately reflect child, young people and adult at risk safe recruiting, participation, and screening standards, consistent with global standards and national legislation.

The safeguarding procedures within World YWCA initiatives, programs, project or activities can be adapted or added to in order to best answer to the safeguarding needs and risks identified in the context of the aforementioned World YWCA work, provided that those additions or adaptations remain true to the intent and principles in this policy.

## 5.3 Safe communications and social media

The World YWCA will take every precaution to favour the privacy, rights and dignity of children, young people and adults at risk and ensure that their safety is not compromised as a result of their involvement in World YWCA social media activities, communication materials, online events or campaigns. As such, the following measures



should be always upheld when producing and publishing any communication or social media content that portrays children/adults at risk:

- Images/videos and content must be fact-based and portray children, young people and adults at risk in a dignified manner. Never degrade, victimize, stereotype or shame them.
- Images, videos, or content of children, young people and adults at risk require informed consent from the subjects depicted and/or from a parent or guardian before photographing or filming, and publishing. This includes providing a clear understanding of the usage of the multimedia material and content.
- Any form of communication media, metadata, or text descriptions of children, young people and adults at risk must be assessed to ensure it does not detail information that can put them at risk of harm. For example: identity information or place of residence.

World YWCA will also ensure that its digital applications, platforms and services are safe, secure and do not result in inappropriate or unethical capture and/or use of data on children, young people and adults at risk, in compliance with [World YWCA Responsible Data Policy privacy and GDPR](#)<sup>4</sup>.

#### 5.4 Reporting of concerns relating to the wellbeing of children, young people, and adults at risk

In handling complaints related to safeguarding issues in the context of the work carried out by World YWCA, its staff, interns, contractors, volunteers, Board, Nominations Committee and global governance bodies, the [World YWCA Feedback and Complaints Policy](#) shall be followed, as the main system for any person or entity (including those covered in the scope of this policy) to report to World YWCA any complaints they may have regarding the safeguarding and protection of children, young person or adults at risk.

Complaints related to safeguarding issues related to partners in the context of the work they participate in with World YWCA shall thus be addressed to the World YWCA Complaints focal points ([feedback@worldywca.org](mailto:feedback@worldywca.org)). The World YWCA Complaints focal points will respond within 48 hours or as soon as possible and follow a course of action in line with the spirit of the World YWCA Safeguarding and Protection Policy and other safeguarding related policies of the World YWCA.

In addition, all those covered in the scope of this policy have the obligation to report any concerns they may have about the abuse of a child, young person or adult at risk immediately (ideally within 24 hours or as soon as possible) to the World YWCA Office Human Resources focal point ([hresources@worldywca.org](mailto:hresources@worldywca.org)). The HR focal point will consult with the World YWCA Complaints focal points and respond within 48 hours or as soon as possible with a suggested course of action in line with the spirit of the World YWCA Safeguarding and Protection Policy and other policies of the World YWCA, and mirroring the ethical and professional process outlined in the [World YWCA Feedback and Complaints Policy](#). Should the concern be with the World YWCA Office Human Resources focal point, reporting should be addressed to the World YWCA General Secretary (see [World YWCA website](#) for address of the General Secretary).

The responsibility for decisions and actions rests with the World YWCA as an organisation and not with any individual. Staff, interns, volunteers, contractors, members from the World YWCA Board, Nominations Committee, and other World YWCA governance bodies that receive any safeguarding concerns, complaints, allegations, suspicions and incidents of abuse involving children, young people and adults at risk engaged in World YWCA work, must not act in isolation, and shall inform and consult with World YWCA accordingly. If the incident constitutes criminal behaviour requiring immediate action, local police or relevant authorities such as relevant child

<sup>4</sup> [World YWCA Responsible Data Policy privacy and GDPR](#) is regularly reviewed and updated in light of Swiss and other applicable legislations.



welfare agencies shall be notified promptly even before World YWCA has been able to respond to the notification of the incident. The wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk should be prioritised at all times.

The reporting procedures outlined above can be added to or adapted depending on World YWCA initiatives, programs, project or activities to best answer to the safeguarding needs and risks identified in the context of the afore-mentioned World YWCA work provided that those additions or adaptations remain true to the intent and principles in this policy.

### 5.5 Monitoring and review of this policy

This policy was last reviewed and approved by the World YWCA Board in August 2021. The policy will be periodically reviewed to assess whether it is effective and fit for purpose. Updates may be made as frequently as needed, subject to approval by the World YWCA Board.

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## ANNEX A - WORLD YWCA SAFEGUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT

For the purpose of this code of conduct, a child will be considered to be a person under the age of 18 and adults at risk include young people aged 18 to 30 years old.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that I am accountable for my actions, and I agree that while implementing World YWCA activities I will:

treat children and adults at risk with respect regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;

not use language or behaviour towards children and adults at risk that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;

not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts. I understand that mistaken belief of the age of the child is not a defence;

wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;

not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger and in that case immediately notify a person in the organization with the highest level of accountability and responsibility;

not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible;

use any computers, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras appropriately, and never to exploit or harass children / adults at risk or to access child exploitation material, including child abuse material and child pornography material, through any medium;



refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children / adults at risk (excluding my own children);

refrain from hiring children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of harm;

comply with all relevant international and national legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;

immediately report policy non-compliance, breaches of code of conduct, concerns or allegations of child / adult at risk abuse by personnel and volunteers in accordance with appropriate procedures; and

inform World YWCA if I am under investigation or found guilty of any offenses related to children/adults at risk abuse and exploitation before or during the course of my association with the organisation.

Use of children / adults at risk sounds and images for work-related purposes:

When recording, photographing or filming a child or an adult at risk for work-related purposes, I must:

before recording, photographing or filming a child / adult at risk, assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or legislation for reproducing personal images;

before recording, photographing or filming a child/adult at risk, obtain informed consent from the child/adult at risk or a parent or guardian when applicable. As part of this I must explain how the recording, photograph or film will be used;

ensure recordings, photographs, videos or any multimedia resource present children/adults at risk in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner. Children/adults at risk should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;

ensure recordings and images are honest representations of the context and the facts; and

ensure file labels, metadata and text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child/adult at risk that could put them in danger when sharing images or videos electronically.

I understand that the onus is on me, as a person associated with World YWCA, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child/adult at risk abuse when participating in the work of the World YWCA.

I have read the World YWCA Global Safeguarding and Protection Policy and agree to uphold the principles and follow the guidelines contained herein. I understand that non-compliance with or a breach of this policy and the code of conduct is grounds for disciplinary action, and may lead to possible dismissal, termination of contracts or partnerships, where appropriate, referral to relevant authorities.

Name (please print)

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

Date and place: \_\_\_\_\_