

PEACE SHAPERS' CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Peace Shapers is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children involved in our programs. This safeguarding policy outlines the procedures and protocols to protect children from abuse and harm within the context of our programs.

This policy applies to everyone working for or with us in any capacity. This includes employees at all levels, directors, officers, agency workers, seconded workers, volunteers, interns, agents, contractors, external consultants, third-party representatives, suppliers, and business partners. It is in effect at all times, both during and outside working hours, every day of the year.

We are dedicated to maintaining transparency in our operations and in how we prevent and address any child-safeguarding violations. This commitment extends to our supply chains and relationships with third parties. We adhere to national and international disclosure obligations and comply with all relevant laws, statutes, regulations, and codes, including:

- a. United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC),
- b. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Children,
- c. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,
- d. Child Rights Act, 2003,
- e. Child Rights Laws of the States in which the organization exist,
- f. Traffic In Persons Prohibition Law Enforcement and Administration Act (NAPTIP Act)
- g. Cybercrime Act 2015 and
- h. Other relevant state laws and regulations referred to in this policy or are in operation to protect children from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

2. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- A. Child Safeguarding:** The policies, procedures, and practices employed to ensure the safety, well-being, and rights of children are protected from harm, abuse, and exploitation.
- B. Child:** Any individual under 18, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- C. Abuse:** Any action that intentionally harms or injures a child, encompassing physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
 - i. Physical Abuse:** Any act that causes physical harm to a child, including hitting, shaking, burning, or otherwise inflicting physical injury.
 - Examples: Bruises, fractures, burns, or other physical injuries caused intentionally by another person.
 - ii. Emotional Abuse:** Any action that harms a child's self-worth or emotional well-being. This includes verbal abuse, emotional manipulation, or withholding love and support.
 - Examples: Constant criticism, threats, rejection, or neglecting to provide emotional support and affection.

- iii. **Sexual Abuse:** Any act that involves a child in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This includes both contact and non-contact activities.
 - Examples: Child defilement, molestation, child defilement, involving children in the production of pornographic materials, or exposing them to sexual content.
 - iv. **Neglect:** The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, or educational needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.
 - Examples: Failing to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, supervision, or education.
 - v. **Exploitation:** The use of a child for someone else's advantage, gratification, or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel, and harmful treatment.
 - Examples: Child labor, trafficking, using children for begging, or involving them in illegal activities.
 - vi. **Child Labor:** The employment of children in any work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children, or interferes with their schooling.
 - Examples: Forcing a child to work long hours in hazardous conditions, depriving them of an education, or employing them in inappropriate activities for their age.
- D. Zero Tolerance:** A strict policy that does not allow any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or child labor under any circumstances. Any breach of this policy will result in immediate and severe consequences, including legal action and termination of employment or contract as necessary after thorough investigation.
- E. Well-being:** The overall health, happiness, and prosperity of a child, including physical, mental, and emotional health.
- F. Protection:** Measures taken to guard children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other forms of harm.
- G. Nurturing:** Providing a supportive and loving environment that promotes a child's development and well-being.
- H. Inclusion:** Ensuring all children, regardless of their background or abilities, are fully integrated and able to participate in all aspects of life and receive equal protection.
- I. Confidentiality:** Ensuring that personal information about a child is kept private and shared only with authorized individuals when necessary for the child's protection and well-being.
- J. Designated Safeguarding Officer:** The designated individual responsible for overseeing the implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures within the organization, and for addressing any concerns or reports of abuse.
- K. Reporting Mechanism:** The established process through which concerns or allegations of child abuse can be reported, investigated, and addressed.
- L. Duty of Care:** The legal and moral obligation of the organization and its representatives to ensure the safety and well-being of children in their care.

M. UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child): An international agreement that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children.

3. OBJECTIVES

- A. Prevention:** Ensure all staff, volunteers, and partners understand their roles and responsibilities in preventing abuse and promoting child safety.
- B. Protection:** Provide a safe environment for children where they feel secure and can disclose concerns.
- C. Reporting:** Establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to abuse allegations.
- D. Response:** Take prompt and appropriate action to address any allegations of abuse or harm.

4. SCOPE

This safeguarding policy applies to all staff, volunteers, partners, and anyone engaged in our activities.

The policy emphasizes prevention, protection, reporting, and response to create a secure environment where children can thrive.

We're committed to preventing child abuse and exploitation through the following means:

A. Awareness

I. Educational Programs:

- Conduct regular workshops for children, staff, volunteers, and the community to raise awareness about child rights, personal safety, and recognizing signs of abuse.
- Distribute informational brochures, posters, and digital content highlighting safeguarding practices, children's rights, and available support services.

II. Child Participation:

- Offer programs that empower children to speak up about their concerns, educate them on their rights, and encourage them to participate in decision-making processes affecting their lives.
- Establish child councils or committees where children can voice their opinions, contribute to policy-making, and play an active role in promoting a safe environment within their schools and communities.

III. Environmental Safety:

- Ensure that all facilities used by Peace Shapers are secure, child-friendly, and free from potential hazards. This includes regular safety inspections and maintenance of buildings, playgrounds, and other areas accessed by children.
- Implement strict supervision policies to ensure that children are always under the watchful eye of trained and vetted adults, reducing the risk of harm or abuse.
- Limit access to areas where children are present to authorized personnel only, using visitor logs, identification badges, and security measures to monitor and control entry.

B. Prevention

Recruitment and Training

- **Background Checks:** Conduct thorough background checks on all staff, volunteers, and partners.
- **Training:** Provide mandatory safeguarding training for all staff, volunteers and program participants, including regular refresher courses.
- **Code of Conduct:** Develop and enforce a code of conduct outlining appropriate behaviour and interactions with children.

C. Protection

Creating a Safe Space

- **Safe Spaces:** Establish safe spaces within schools where children can discuss concerns confidentially.
- **Counselling Services:** Provide access to counsellors and psychologists for children in need of emotional support.

D. Reporting

I. Reporting Procedures

- **Reporting Channels:** Establish multiple, accessible channels for reporting abuse, including a dedicated phone line, email, and anonymous drop boxes.
- **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):** Appoint a DSO responsible for receiving and managing reports of abuse.

II. Reporting Guidelines

- **Immediate Action:** All reports of abuse must be taken seriously and acted upon within 24hrs.
- **Confidentiality:** Ensure confidentiality in handling reports, disclosing information only to those necessary for the investigation.

E. Response

I. Managing Allegations

- **Initial Assessment:** The DSO will conduct an initial assessment of the report to determine the appropriate course of action.
- **Investigation:** If required, an investigation will be conducted in collaboration with partners and necessary agencies and service providers. Criminal cases are reported and left to be investigated by the law enforcement agencies.
- **Support for Victims:** Provide immediate support and counselling to the child involved.

II. Disciplinary Actions

- **Internal Disciplinary Measures:** Depending on the outcome of the investigation, take appropriate disciplinary actions against the perpetrator, which may include suspension or termination.
- **Legal Action:** Report the case to the relevant authorities for legal action if necessary.

III. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Regular Audits:** Conduct regular audits of safeguarding practices to ensure compliance and effectiveness.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Implement feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and focus groups, to gather input from children, parents, and staff.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Use feedback and audit results to improve safeguarding measures continuously.

5. PROHIBITED BEHAVIOUR AND PRACTICES

To help you identify incidents of child abuse, exploitation, and poor safeguarding practices, the following are the prohibited behaviour and practices that are not tolerated by Peace Shapers:

- A. **Harming or Threatening a Child:** Physically, sexually, or emotionally harming or threatening to harm a child, including beating or any other form of physical or humiliating discipline.
- B. **Sexual Activity:** Engaging in any form of sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of the age of consent or local customs.
- C. **Exploitation for Sex:** Exchanging money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behaviour. This includes exchanges for assistance that is due to beneficiaries and their families.
- D. **Inappropriate Communication:** Sending private messages to children you have met through Peace Shapers, such as private messaging on social media or by mobile phone.
- E. **Exploitative Labor:** Engaging anyone under the age of 18 in exploitative and harmful labour.
- F. **Commercial Exploitation:** Employees engaging in the commercial exploitation of children, such as a hotel employee facilitating sexual abuse by hotel guests.
- G. **Reckless Driving:** Causing the death of or seriously injuring a child due to reckless or careless driving.
- H. **Health and Safety Failures:** Failing to ensure the required health and safety at construction or other sites where services are being provided and work is implemented on behalf of Peace Shapers.
- I. **Legal and Procedural Compliance:** Failing to follow the law or required procedures and regulations, resulting in the death or harm of a child.

Peace Shapers maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards these behaviours and practices to ensure the safety and well-being of all children under our care.

6. OUR EXPECTATIONS FROM YOU

Peace Shapers holds all partners, contractors, suppliers, and any third parties associated with our work to the same stringent standards. This includes implementing strict measures to prevent their staff and representatives from participating in any form of child sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, or other types of abuse or exploitation, both professionally and personally.

- a. It's crucial to have a zero-tolerance policy against child abuse and exploitation. You should do everything possible to prevent and address any actual, attempted, or threatened abuse involving staff or representatives from Peace Shapers or your own organization, especially when it's related to the work outlined in this agreement.
- b. Make sure all your employees and anyone working with Peace Shapers understand this policy well. Encourage them to report any incidents they suspect or know about that involve staff from Peace Shapers or your organization, which occur while carrying out the duties of this agreement.
- c. If there's any suspicion or evidence of child abuse within Peace Shapers, your organization, or any affiliated groups, you must **report it immediately**. Not reporting such incidents is taken very seriously and could lead to the end of your agreement with Peace Shapers.
- d. If you or your staff, while working on behalf of Peace Shapers, suspect or find out about a child protection issue, you must:
 - i. Act swiftly to report your suspicions or what you know to the appropriate person at Peace Shapers. This could be someone like the Child Safeguarding Focal Point, or the Director. You can also send an email to the child safeguarding team.
 - ii. Keep the details of the incident confidential, sharing them only with the person you report to.
- e. Work together with Peace Shapers during any investigations into reported concerns. Keep them updated on any developments, including the steps you've taken in response to the reports.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure the effective implementation of our safeguarding policy, Peace Shapers defines clear roles and responsibilities for all individuals involved in our programs. This section outlines the specific duties of staff, volunteers, partners, and key safeguarding personnel to maintain a safe environment for children.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
All Staff and Volunteers	Awareness: - Understand and adhere to the safeguarding policy and code of conduct. - Participate in mandatory safeguarding training and regular refresher courses. Reporting: - Be vigilant and report any concerns or incidents of abuse or exploitation immediately using the established reporting channels. - Maintain confidentiality and handle sensitive information appropriately. Behaviour: - Exhibit appropriate behaviour and interactions with children, following the guidelines outlined in the code of conduct. - Promote a culture of respect and safety within all activities involving children.
Designated Safeguarding Officer	Leadership: - Lead the implementation and monitoring of the safeguarding policy and procedures within the organization. Support: - Provide guidance and support to staff, volunteers, and partners on safeguarding issues. - Ensure that all concerns and reports of abuse are managed effectively and promptly. Training and Awareness: - Organize and deliver safeguarding training and awareness programs for all staff and volunteers. Reporting and Record Keeping: - Maintain accurate records of all safeguarding reports and actions taken. - Ensure compliance with legal requirements and organizational policies.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Safeguarding Committee	Oversight: • Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the safeguarding policy and procedures. • Review and update the policy annually to ensure it remains current and effective. Coordination: • Coordinate with local child protection agencies and other stakeholders to enhance safeguarding practices. • Facilitate regular meetings to discuss safeguarding issues and improvements.
Senior Management	Commitment: • Demonstrate a commitment to safeguarding by ensuring that it is a priority within the organization. • Allocate necessary resources for the effective implementation of safeguarding measures. Policy Enforcement: • Ensure that all staff, volunteers, and partners are aware of and comply with the safeguarding policy. • Support the DSO and safeguarding committee in their roles.
Partners, Contractors, and Suppliers	Compliance: • Adhere to Peace Shapers' safeguarding policy and code of conduct. • Ensure that their staff and representatives are aware of and comply with safeguarding practices. Training and Awareness: • Participate in safeguarding training programs provided by Peace Shapers. • Implement internal measures to promote and enforce safeguarding within their organizations.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Parents and Guardians	Engagement: - Participate in safeguarding awareness programs and activities organized by Peace Shapers. - Support and encourage their children to understand and exercise their rights. Reporting: Report any concerns or incidents of abuse or exploitation to Peace Shapers immediately.
Children	Awareness: - Participate in safeguarding educational programs and activities. - Understand their rights and know how to protect themselves. Reporting: Report any concerns or incidents of abuse to a trusted adult or through the established reporting channels.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

For any concerns or reports related to safeguarding, please contact:

Designated Safeguarding Officer:

Olabisi Afolabi

afolabilight@gmail.com

9. CONCLUSION

Peace Shapers is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for all children involved in our programs. By adhering to this safeguarding policy, we aim to protect children from harm and ensure their well-being.

Approved by:

Oluwaseun Kolawole

Executive Director