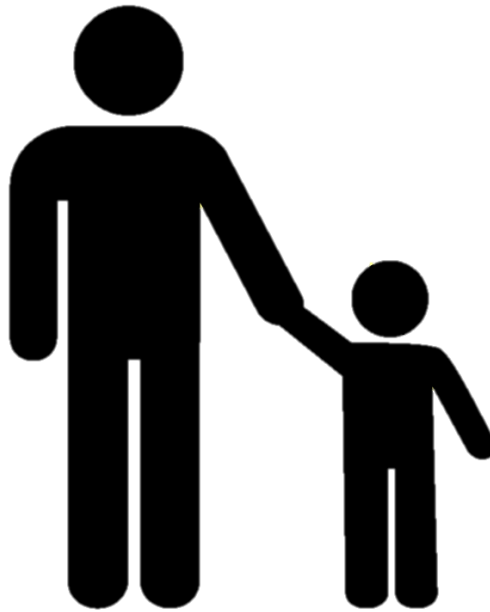




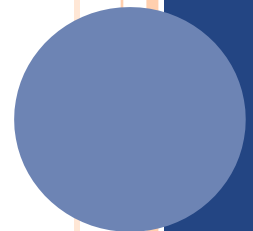
NETWORK MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Child Protection & Safeguarding

Our vision for children



REVISED CHILD PROTECTION AND
SAFEGAURDING POLICY 2023



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CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGAURDING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Child Protection

The Board of Advisors, management and staff of Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights is committee to uphold the Child Protection Policy

- Say 'Yes' to keeping children safe!
- Reporting and responding to Child Protection issues in NMDHR-SL Child Protection Policy Implementation Standards Corporate: By-Laws of NMDHR-SL Strategy:
- Creating a safer environment for children.
- Child Protection Policy creating a safer environment for children.

NMDHR-SL Contact: Executive Director, Abdul Karim Habib

2. SUMMARY/ PURPOSE

As a National Human Rights Non-Governmental organization whose work is underpinned by the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), NMDHR is committed to promoting the rights of children including their right to be protected from harmful influences, abuse, and exploitation. NMDHR takes active measures to ensure children's rights to protection are fully realized. NMDHR acknowledges its expectation that its employees and others who with NMDHR have children's best interests at the heart of their involvement with NMDHR.

This Child Protection Policy is NMDHR statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear to all in the organization and who come into contact with us what is required In relation to the protection of children, and that child abuse in any form Is unacceptable to NMDHR.

A. NMDHR VISION FOR CHILDREN

We aim to create "Child Safe" environments, both internally and externally, where children are respected, protected, empowered and active in their own protection, and staffs are skilled, confident, competent, and well supported in meeting their protection responsibilities.

B. STATEMENT OF COMMITMENTS

NMDHR Is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children's rights to protection are fully guaranteed. NMDHR as an organization support article 19 of the convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



3. SCOPE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Child Protection Policy applies to everyone working for or associated with NMDHR. It encompasses the whole of NMDHR and includes without limitation:

1. Staff at all levels - the regional offices, community platform and National Headquarters.
2. NMDHR Associates - these include board members (volunteers, community volunteers, sponsors, consultants, and contractors. Also, staff and/ representatives of partner organization and local government who have been brought into contact with children or are party to NMDHR child sensitive data while working for or with NMDHR.
3. NMDHR visitor - (e.g. donors, journalists, media, researchers, celebrities etc.) who may come into contact with children the rough NMDHR are also bound by this policy

4. DEFINITION UNDER THE CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

- a) A Child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years. This definition is the standard all staff and third parties of NMDHR should go by during professionally or privately trip in and out of the country. No matter the legal age of consent in other countries or territories country, staff and third parties must not have a sexual relationship with a person below age 18.
- b) **Child Abuse:** This is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of child and includes any action that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be deliberate act, or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally, which harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.
- c) Child Protection, within the scope of this policy, is defined as the responsibilities measures and activities that NMDHR undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm. Child protection is the response to the different ways in which an adolescent's or child's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health is damaged by the actions of another person.



- d) **Physical Abuse:** This is where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, and drowning. Giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute child abuse.
- e) **Emotional Abuse:** This is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved, and inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. Emotional abuse may occur when the young person is constantly criticized, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying. Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, will always feature a degree of emotional abuse.
- f) **Neglect:** This occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter, and clothing especially, when the individual (parent, caregiver, or adult) has the means to provide, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, refusal to give love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.
Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the child safe or exposing them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.
- g) **Sexual Abuse:** This occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs, whatever form this may take. Showing children pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.
- h) **Safeguarding:** It is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Child protection is part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes child protection procedures which detail how to respond to concerns about a child.

5. POSSIBLE INDICATORS FOR ABUSE

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognize a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent.
- the child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them.
- another child or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person.
- unexplained changes in a child's behavior e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behavior
- nightmares, sleep problems,
- sudden or unexplained personality changes/mood swings; seems withdrawn, angry, clingy, shows significant changes in eating habits.
- an older child behaving like a younger child, e.g. bedwetting or thumb-sucking
- develops fear of particular places or resists being alone with particular child or young person for unknown reasons
- shows resistance to routine bathing, toileting or removing clothes even in inappropriate situations.
- play, writing, drawings, or dreams include sexual or frightening images.
- refuses to talk about a secret he/she has with an adult or older child.
- stomach aches or illness, often with no identifiable reason
- leaves clues that seem likely to provoke a discussion about sexual issues.
- uses new or adult words for body parts; engages in adult-like sexual activities with toys, objects or other children.
- develops special relationship with older friend that may include unexplained money, gifts or privileges.
- intentionally harming himself or herself, i.e. drug/alcohol use, cutting, burning, running away,
- sexual promiscuity
- develops physical symptoms, e.g. unexplained soreness, pain or bruises around genital or mouth;
- sexually transmitted disease;
- pregnancy



6. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- a. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/ behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.
- b. Report any child abuse and protection concerns they have in accordance with applicable local office procedures. This is a mandatory requirement for staff. Failure to do so may result to disciplinary action.
- c. Respond to a child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local office procedures.
- d. Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
- e. Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concern and rights.
- f. Always ask permission from children (or, in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before images (photographs, videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Ensure that any images 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 is not acceptable). Stories and images of children should be based on the child's best interest.
- g. Beware 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 the Child Protection Policy, this will be investigated under the law of the country in which they work; and/or by NMDHR in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary sanctions and/or dismissal for staff. Also be aware that NMDHR WILL sever all relations with any NMDHR Associate or visitor who is proven to have committed child abuse.
- h. Beware 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.
- i. Beware that NMDHR will take appropriate legal or other action against NMDHR Associates and visitors who make false and malicious accusation of child abuse. NMDHR staff and volunteer must not:



- Disclose information that identifies sponsored children or make it available to the public unless that disclosure is in accordance with standard NMDHR policies and procedures. NMDHR associates and Visitor must not:
- Disclose Information that identifies sponsored children or make it to the public without explicit consent from NMDHR.

The Executive Director and Programs Director must:

- j. Ensure that each NMDHR office has in place local procedures that are consistent with the National Child Protection policy and with the document reporting and responding to Child Protection issues in NMDHR to respond to Incidents of child abuse. Local procedures should be developed with assistance of local advisers in accordance with the local law. Any deviation from the National Policy must have prior formal approval from the relevant Programs Director or Executive Director. Ensure that local procedures are made available in local languages.

7. PERSONAL CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK

We are committed to ensuring that our staff and representatives apply high standard of behavior towards children within both their professional and their private lives. NMDHR does not intend to dictate the brief and value system by which NMDHR employees conduct their personal lives. NMDHR position throughout the country is dependent however on maintaining good relations and upholding its reputation as a child - focused community development organization with numerous partners' organization. Unlawful or other conduct by NMDHR employees which jeopardizes NMDHR reputation or position whether during or after business hours, will not be permitted. Such conduct includes but is not limited to any unlawful activity related to sexual abuse; any other unlawful activity; sexual harassment; physically verbally abusive behavior; and public disorderly conduct.

8. CHILD PROTECTION FOCAL POINT

8.1 Functions of the CP focal person

The **NMDHR-SL** shall appoint a staff as focal person. If any worker has any child safety concerns; they should discuss them with him/her. He/she will take on the following responsibilities:

- Ensuring that the policy is being put into practice.
- Being the first point of contact for child protection issues.
- Keeping a record of any concerns expressed about child protection issues.
- Bringing any child protection concerns to the notice of the Management Committee and contacting the Local Authority if appropriate.
- Ensuring that paid staff and volunteers are given appropriate supervision.
- Ensuring that everyone involved with the organization is aware of the identity of the Child Protection Representative.

8.2 What should you do?

1. Listen to the child/ adolescent.
2. Look at them directly and do not promise to keep any secrets before you know what they are, but always let the child/young person know if, and why, you are going to tell anyone.
3. Take whatever is said to you seriously and help the child/adolescent to trust his/her own feelings. Take notes of exactly what is said to you avoiding assumptions and conjecture.
4. It is not the role of the worker to investigate any allegations (this would contaminate evidence if a situation went to court). Any disclosure by a child/adolescent must be reported to the named child protection officer.
5. Speak immediately to the Local Authority or NSPCC for further advice and guidance.



9. RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTY TO REPORT / HANDLING A DISCLOSURE

9.1 Duty to report

- a) ALL staff and third parties (including consultant, partners, contractors, interns and volunteers) have a duty to report any allegation or suspicion of inappropriate contact with children to line/senior managers.
- b) Report any suspicions to the Designated Child Protection focal persons, your Executive Director or designated Local Authority(ies) at community level.
- c) All staff (paid or unpaid) have responsibility to follow the guidance laid out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required procedures. We expect all staff (paid or unpaid) to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about child protection and safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.

9.2 Reporting Requirements

In consonant with the Child Right Act 2007¹ and the Convention of the Rights of the Child the following reporting requirements of child abuses cases will be channel directly to the Executive Director and referral will be done to the appropriate line ministries or authority.

9.3 Failure to Comply

Non-compliance with the policy on contact with children under 18 will result in disciplinary procedures. (See disciplinary procedure in staff handbook)

Employers have a duty to and will remove an individual from any activity where there is risk of harm to children. Employers have a ‘duty to refer’ the suspicion or allegation of an individual having inappropriate contact with children to external authorities where there is risk of harm to children.

9.4 Internal enquiries

The Principal and Directors will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be suspended pending further police and social services inquiries. Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries, NMDHR will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled.

This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, NMDHR will reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

¹ <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Laws/2007-7p.pdf>



9.5 Incidents that must be reported/recorded.

If any of the following occur, you should report this immediately to the focal person or Executive Director or dedicated local Authority at community level and record the incident. You should also ensure the child's group leaders are informed.

- if you accidentally hurt someone
- if a child seems distressed in any manner
- if a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something, you have done.

9.6 Handling a disclosure by a child

What should you do if a child comes to you and tells you that they are being abused? It's normal to feel overwhelmed and confused in this situation. Child abuse is a difficult subject that can be hard to accept and even harder to talk about. Children who are abused are often threatened by the perpetrators to keep the abuse a secret. Thus, telling an adult takes a great amount of courage. Children have to grapple with a lot of issues, including the fear that no one will believe them. So, care must be taken to remain calm and to show support to the child throughout the disclosure phase. The following guidelines will help lessen the risk of causing more traumas to the child and/or compromising a criminal investigation during the disclosure phase.

10. SAFER RECRUITMENT

NMDHR recognizes that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children in NMDHR. Pre-selection checks include the following:

NMDHR follows a policy of safer recruitment which means:

- References will include a specific enquiry as to whether there is any impediment to the employee being employed in a situation where s/he will have responsibility for the care of or substantial access to children.
- A self-disclosure form about any criminal record and suitability to work with children must be completed prior to employment.
- All references will be followed up
- We will require completion of a DBS disclosure before the induction day and normally prior to employment commencing.
- Staff must provide proof of identity and abode prior to taking up employment with NMDHR.
- Any gaps in CVs must be explained satisfactorily.
- Applications for employment will normally only be accepted via the official Centre of English Studies application form.

All advertisements for staff and host families will state 'NMDHR follows a policy of safer recruitment'. Furthermore, some of the questions asked in interview will be specifically designed to explore the candidate's attitude towards working with young



learners. In the event that we have to employ someone before receiving a formal DBS disclosure, additional checks on suitability will be undertaken by way of obtaining extra references (over and above 2), both verbal and written.

Evidence or disclosure of a criminal record will not necessarily result in a candidate not being appointed to a position. Naturally, the nature of the disclosure will be taken into account and if deemed irrelevant to dealing with children, the candidate may well be successful if all other employment criteria are met. Such issues will of necessity be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

11. POLICY REVIEW

NMDHR aim is this policy will be reviewed every three years or potentially sooner if in response to any applicable

Reviewed Date	31 st June 2023
Next Reviewed Date	31 st May 2026

If you have any questions or concerns, please just contact us via habib@nmdhr.org or +23276410137, we will be more than happy to help.

Sign off:

Name: Abdul Karim Habib



Designation: Executive Director.

Name: Nancy Diana Sesay

Designation: Board Chairperson