



Child Safeguarding Policy

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Introduction

Yazda is committed to ensuring that the programmes and initiatives it funds, organises and executes are respectful of, and accountable to, all programmes' beneficiaries.

Our organisation supports fundamental human rights, including the human rights of children, but in spite of the existence of international covenants, regional treaties, and domestic laws, the reality is that children are routinely unable to claim their basic rights. Yazda seeks to contribute to a world in which children have the rights, capacity and opportunity to experience safety from violence and to enjoy their full and equal human rights.

Yazda recognises its duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with the best practice.

We acknowledge that some children, including disabled children and young people or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

The aim of the policy and procedures is to regulate how we work as an organisation so that the children with which we come into contact (either directly or indirectly) are safeguarded and have their wellbeing promoted, and that our actions, while implementing programmes or institutional activities, do not cause any harm to children.

Objectives and Principles

The main goal of this Child Safeguarding Policy is to ensure the protection of children and vulnerable adults from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation, or any form of abuse in the process of Yazda's work.

The objectives of the policy are to ensure that:

1. Children who come in contact with Yazda are protected from any form of abuse;
2. Yazda's staff and board members are fully cognisant of child protection issues and recognise their duty to ensure and promote the welfare of children;
3. Any external parties, involved in Yazda's activities, undergo background check and agree to comply with this policy prior to commencement of their work.

Our Safeguarding Policy is based upon a number of principles and beliefs, including:

1. All children have equal rights to protection and to have their wellbeing and participation promoted. Children should be empowered to understand their rights in this area, and made

aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem or a concern.

2. All representatives of Yazda must demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour towards children both in their private and professional lives. They have a responsibility to understand and promote the policy. They must do all that they can to prevent, report and respond appropriately to any concerns or potential breaches of the policy.
3. All actions regarding child safeguarding must be taken in the best interest of children. This includes an understanding that in all our programmes and activities we must ensure that we respect children's rights and do not cause harm.
4. We find it essential to ensure that poor practice can be addressed, potentially abusive behaviour must be challenged and best practice promoted.
5. We work in a transparent and open way where child safeguarding is made a priority, recognising that situations of abuse and harm are able to flourish when staff, volunteers, partners, children, families and community members do not feel able to raise their concerns.
6. All reports of concern regarding the safety and protection of a child will be taken seriously. Where necessary, appropriate steps will be taken to protect the child and to take action against the alleged perpetrator (without predetermining the issue). This may include referrals to law enforcement and child protection agencies. In relation to allegations against staff, volunteers and partners, action may also include the suspension or termination of engagement or any type of cooperation.
7. No single organisation is able to safeguard children by working in isolation, and therefore we will work with other organisations, agencies (such as state departments and ministries with a mandate to protect children) and groups as necessary and appropriate.
8. We maintain confidentiality and do not disclose personal details of those involved in child protection concerns, including the names of those raising concerns unless it is necessary to pass on information to ensure that a child is protected or is required by law.
9. We raise awareness and influence others on the importance of safeguarding children, using our policy and procedures as a way of both highlighting our commitment and also of explaining our values. We will share our policy and procedures with others, and be open to feedback regarding its application and relevance.
10. We work within the framework of international and national laws and policies regarding safeguarding.

Preventive Measures

Recruitment

1. Safer recruitment procedures act like a safety net that in combination provide a level of assurance that proper attempts have been made to ensure that recruitment processes identify those who may pose a risk.
2. All recruitment procedures must be based on a risk assessment of each job or volunteer task and the level of contact with children.

3. Work should not commence until all safer recruitment processes have been followed and background checks and guidance on the Child Safeguarding Policy have been completed. However, it is recognised that in some exceptional circumstances there may be a long delay, or for operational reasons it may be necessary to start work at short notice. In such situations, additional measures must be put in place so that Yazda can be confident that the risks to children are minimised. For example, providing additional supervision and ensuring the staff member in question does not work alone.
4. All potential staff undergo a thorough reference check including two written references with a clause stating that, to the best of the referees' knowledge, the candidate has neither committed nor failed to disclose any abuse of children.
5. Records of safer recruitment practice, such as references etc., must be kept in HR files. This information must be kept in accordance with applicable data protection rules.

Mitigating Child Safeguarding Risks

1. Where possible and practical, the 'two-adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where children are involved and are present at all times, should be followed.
2. Representatives must not stay alone overnight with one or more children benefiting from Yazda programs who are not part of their immediate or extended family, whether in their house, project premises or elsewhere.
3. Yazda representatives must not do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves.
4. Representatives should not place themselves in compromising or vulnerable positions and should take care not to discriminate against, show differential treatment towards, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

Reporting and Investigation

General Provisions

1. Concerns and reports may be received from a number of sources - including staff, volunteers, partners, children and families/community members. All concerns and reports must be taken seriously.
2. Yazda shall appoint Designated Protection Officer (DPO)*, whose role shall be to:
3. act as a focal point to receive, record and assess relevant information in relation to child protection - consult with others including local protection agencies, local authorities etc;
4. ensure that Yazda's policies and procedures are effective and in line with recommended best practice.
5. *Yazda may appoint a group or committee to deal with child protection, depending on number of incidents and workload.

6. Regional offices should develop a reporting framework/ flowchart which identifies how concerns and reports should be managed. The main point of referral should be the Designated Protection Officer. This is to ensure that reports are managed in a systematic way, and lessons are learned in terms of the implementation of the policy. This does not mean that the Designated Protection Officer is responsible for action - but he or she should be involved in decision making.
7. Decisions about child protection incidents must not be made by individual workers in isolation. However in exceptional circumstances - such as a life threatening situation - staff or volunteers may take whatever action they deem necessary to protect a child at immediate risk, but this must be reported as soon as possible in accordance with the country reporting framework (i.e. in the first instance to the Designated Protection Officer). Local contacts with child protection agencies and law enforcement should be identified in advance to enable a referral to an outside agency if required to protect the child. Contact details should be retained so a referral can be made quickly and efficiently.
8. Consideration on whether to refer a child to an outside agency for protection must always be made within the legal framework of the country and with consideration for the best interests and wishes of the child.
9. When concerns are raised or reports made, importance must be placed on confidentiality, both of the referrer and also the children/adults involved. Information must be shared strictly on a need-to-know basis as necessary to ensure the child is kept safe and appropriate assistance is provided.
10. Where concerns are raised by staff and volunteers about other staff, volunteers and partners, even if these are not substantiated, providing there was no malicious intent, no punitive action will be taken against the person raising the concern or making the report.
11. Referrals to local child protection agencies/police should be done in the prescribed manner. Verbal referrals must also be confirmed in writing.
12. Written records of all reports received (even if the report is vague) must be kept and maintained in a secure and confidential location by the Designated Protection Officer. In some cases, such as where the programme/ project specifically addresses child protection and case management forms part of the intervention provided, as an alternative, records may be kept by the project team.

Investigation Procedure

1. When there is a suspicion of an abuse allegedly committed by Yazda's staff/ contractor/ board member, organisation will consider immediate referral to the statutory authorities where it appears an incident of child abuse may have been committed. Where the nature or details of the concern are unclear, Yazda will conduct an internal investigation and, should information on an incident of suspected abuse emerge, will then report this to the relevant authorities. A written record of actions will be made.
2. Concerns or allegations of possible breaches of the policy that are not deemed to be a serious incident of abuse will be dealt with by Yazda via an internal investigation and a subsequent disciplinary process should the concerns / allegations prove to be founded by the relevant statutory authorities. The Child Protection Committee will decide whether it is deemed serious or not.
3. In the event of an allegation of abuse by a Yazda staff member, an investigative committee will be formed which will consist of the Executive Director, at least one Board Member and an external protection expert; this committee's role is to fully and objectively investigate the case.

A written report, including recommendations, will be submitted to Yazda's board. The DPO, as a staff member herself / himself, shall not be involved in such an internal investigation.

Staff Training and Awareness Raising

Education, Advice & Support

1. Within their probationary period, and no longer than three (3) months after appointment, all staff must be given guidance as to the Child Safeguarding Policy, and their responsibilities towards safeguarding children. Volunteers should also be included in such training.
2. Staff and volunteers must be given the opportunity for regular updates on safeguarding children - either formally through training or supervision, or more informally - through discussion at team meetings.
3. Depending upon the nature of the work being undertaken, the role of the staff and their background and experience, additional specialist training regarding child wellbeing, protection and safety should be provided.
4. Records must be kept in HR files of all training/guidance meetings conducted with the date and list of attendees.
5. Where support or advice is sought regarding child safeguarding this must be taken seriously. At no time must seeking advice or support be considered indicative of someone lacking capacity or knowledge.
6. Where those working with/for Yazda are involved in child protection incidents - either as the subject of an investigation or as a witness - appropriate support must be provided. This may include additional supervision or counselling.

Awareness Raising

1. Staff and volunteers, as well as partners, communities, families, children and other stakeholders and all those working with/for Yazda should be made aware of the Child Safeguarding Policy, and how to report a concern. This should be done in ways that are appropriate and accessible given the context.
2. A copy of the Child Safeguarding Policy - including local adaptations - should be translated and made available in local languages. Depending on the context, this should be provided in a variety of suitable formats, and could include posters or booklets using pictures.
3. Child Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed at least once a year and will be updated/improved as required and based on Yazda's experience/feedback.

Media and Communications

Media Representatives

The following rules shall govern the activities of all the media representatives:

1. Respect the Child Safeguarding Policy and its procedure.

2. Make sure that the safety of the child will not be compromised if one disseminates images of his or her home, community or environment.
3. Be accompanied by an employee of Yazda while doing a report (video, photo, etc.).
4. Obtain permission from the child and the person who is responsible for looking after him or her.
5. Ensure that the child does not pose in any inappropriate manner.
6. Do not take or publish photos of children who are naked or dressed inappropriately.
7. Taking pictures or videos is reserved for strictly professional use. Unofficial photographs must not be posted or uploaded on personal pages.
8. Never indicate in the files any information that could endanger the child victim of abuse (title, metadata, captions etc.). When publishing/distributing photos, images, stories etc., personal information must be removed to ensure privacy (i.e. names and addresses must not be included and if necessary other identifying features such as school name should also be omitted).

Guidelines for Interviewing Children

1. Do no harm to any child. Avoid questions, attitudes or comments that are judgmental or insensitive to cultural values, that place a child in danger or expose a child to humiliation, or that reactivate a child's pain and grief from traumatic events.
2. Ensure that the child and guardian know they are talking with a reporter. Explain the purpose of the interview and its intended use.
3. Assess any potential risks to the child or children, including:
 - a) Reprisals,
 - b) Stigmatization, rejection or attacks by family or communities,
 - c) Legal prosecution,
 - d) Misguided or malicious attempts by outsiders to "rescue" the child from a difficult situation.
4. No staging: Do not ask children to tell a story or take an action that is not part of their own history. Do not ask children to promote products contributed by corporate supporters.
5. Obtain permission from the child and her or his guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, documentary photographs. When possible and appropriate, this permission should be in writing. Permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and understand they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally. This is usually ensured only if the permission is obtained in the child's language and if the decision is made in consultation with an adult the child trusts (and who is not a Yazda employee).
6. Pay attention to where and how the child is interviewed. Limit the number of interviewers and photographers. Try to make certain that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including pressure from the interviewer. In film, video and radio

interviews, consider what the choice of visual or audio background might imply about the child and her or his life and story. Ensure that the child will not be endangered or adversely affected by showing their home, community or general whereabouts.

7. If a child discloses bad practice during an interview (such as abuse, criminal activity etc), the person carrying out the interview should know the local procedures for reporting this. Staff should also be familiar with Yazda's Child Safeguarding Policy.
8. No payments or any other form of compensation are to be provided to children or parents in exchange for their interview, photo or consent.

Online Protection and Safety

1. Yazda will ensure that sufficient guidance is provided to staff and volunteers about the appropriate use of technology - including internet, mobile phones and social media.
2. Filters and blocking software shall be installed to ensure that unsuitable/offensive sites cannot be downloaded.
3. In the event that offensive material or unsolicited messages/chats are received, these must be passed on to the DPO who must report to an agency working to improve internet safety.
4. Staff and volunteers must report to their line manager if any offensive material is received or accidentally downloaded.
5. In the event that offensive material, such as child pornography, is received or accidentally downloaded and a report is made to law enforcement, the materials must not be sent with the referral. The transmission of images is considered a crime under international law. Guidance should be sought from the law enforcement agency as to how to arrange for images to be transferred appropriately. Yazda's General Counsel should also be notified.

Information, Communication & Technology

1. IT equipment is provided for business purposes, and its use is subject to the Safeguarding Policy.
2. The use of computer and technology resources for private purposes is allowed provided that this does not prevent employees from exercising their professional activities, and that it is not prejudicial to the reputation and image of Yazda.
3. While the privacy of staff is respected, this is not guaranteed. Additionally the HR Director may exceptionally grant access to private files. This may be, for example, if there was a suspicion that IT equipment had been used to access child pornography online, in violation of relevant policies and regulations.
4. Any voluntary non-professional access to websites detrimental to the reputation of Yazda (and in violation of the Child Safeguarding Policy) is strictly forbidden and can justify a dismissal with immediate effect. Any unintended access to harmful data should be immediately reported to line managers to avoid any misunderstanding.