

VVOB's Youth Protection Policy

Policy Title:	VVOB's Youth Protection Policy
Links to:	VVOB's Child Protection Policy; VVOB's Code of Conduct; VVOB's HR Manuals
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PURPOSE

Throughout all its efforts, VVOB is dedicated to providing a safe environment for youth who participate in projects and programmes of VVOB, wherever they may be carried out. VVOB is committed to upholding the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, and all organisations or companies that work as contracted parties with VVOB are required to comply with the entirety of that convention, the key principles of which have been incorporated into the policy contained within this document.

This document outlines VVOB's policy to protect Youth. The policy illustrates VVOB's commitment to support and respect Youth rights to be protected from violence and abuse. It articulates VVOB's zero tolerance approach to the abuse and exploitation of Youth and VVOB's commitment to provide a safe environment for Youth who are involved with any projects or programmes of VVOB.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of people at any age and in the equal rights of men and women.

Abuse and exploitation of Youth occur throughout the world and in all societies, and involves the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of Youth. VVOB endorses the principles and articles of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is committed to supporting and respecting the rights of Youth and protecting them from harm. VVOB takes its responsibility to protect Youth from all forms of violence very seriously and will not tolerate any form of abuse or exploitation of Youth in the projects and programmes of VVOB.

All VVOB personnel must demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour towards Youth both in their private and professional lives. They have a responsibility to understand and promote this Youth Protection Policy. They must do all that they can to prevent, report and respond appropriately to any concerns or potential breaches of this Youth Protection Policy.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all VVOB personnel and individuals who are involved in carrying out VVOB's projects or programmes directed at assisting Youth. These include, but are not limited to: contractors, sub-contractors, (including their employees, volunteers, directors and officers and any other personnel), as well as any consultants or affiliates that may work with such contractors or subcontractors, as applicable.

DEFINITIONS

Abuse includes Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse and Exploitation;

Physical Abuse is the deliberate application of force by any person (including Children, Youth or Other Persons) to any part of the body of Youth, which results or may result in non-accidental harm or injury to the Youth. Physical Abuse may include shaking, choking, biting, kicking, burning, poisoning, holding Youth under water, or any other harmful or dangerous use of force or restraint.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a person (including Children, Youth or Other Persons) uses Youth for sexual purposes, without the consent of the Youth in question. Sexual Abuse includes fondling, intercourse, incest, sodomy, exhibitionism, and commercial Exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials. Sexual Abuse may include, but is not limited to, permitting, encouraging or requiring Youth to engage in any of the following activities if they occur between a person (including Children, Youth or Other Persons) and Youth:

- using or engaging in sexually provocative language, acts or conduct towards Youth;
- rough-housing or engaging in conduct which involves physical contact with Youth and which is sexually suggestive in nature;
- kissing, fondling, caressing, patting or pinching Youth or engaging in sexual intercourse or other sexual conduct designed to sexually stimulate either or both of VVOB personnel and Youth;
- using sexual remarks, jokes, innuendo or taunting about Youth's body or sexual orientation or uttering, either verbally or in writing, invitations, requests or sexually suggestive remarks or displaying pornographic or sexually suggestive material to Youth;
- conduct of a sexual nature for the stimulation, gratification, profit and self interest of VVOB personnel who are in a position of trust or authority or with whom the Youth are in a relationship of dependency; and/or
- prostitution or production of material of a pornographic nature.

Emotional Abuse involves actions towards Youth that cause or could cause serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders in the Youth. Emotional Abuse also occurs when a person (including Children, Youth or Other Persons) makes verbal threats, socially isolates Youth, intimidates, Exploits, terrorizes, or routinely makes unreasonable demands on Youth.

Exploitation refers to situations whereby an abuser makes unfair profit and/or takes advantage of unequal power and/or economic status of Youth.

Best Interests of Youth: The principle of best interests of Youth applies to all actions concerning Youth and requires active measures to protect their rights. These measures should promote Youth safety; Youth physical, emotional and developmental needs; well-being of Youth; and support and assist Youth to realize Youth rights. This includes Youth participation to ensure that the opinions of Youth are heard in matters affecting them.

Child (or Children) is defined as any person, of either sex who is under the age of 18 years.

Other Person means any person, of either sex, who is older than Youth as defined herein, i.e. "Other Person" means a person who is aged 25 years of age or older.

Protection of Youth: The responsibility, actions and measures taken to prevent and respond to Abuse, Exploitation and violence against Youth.

Youth is defined as any person, of either sex, who is above the age of 17 years and under the age of 25 years.

GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH PROTECTION

1. Prevention

VVOB takes appropriate measures to address risk factors and prevent Abuse and Exploitation before it occurs. Prevention measures include VVOB's policies, procedures and codes of conduct for protecting Youth; capacity building for all those who work with Youth; awareness raising and good practice for minimizing the risks to Youth.

2. Screening Procedures

Prevention measures should include detailed screening procedures for all VVOB personnel who will come into contact with Youth, including the following, as may be applicable in each country: certificate of good conduct, police reference checks or equivalent, verification that applicants are not listed in national registries of Child offenders; a detailed application and interview process; references who support the applicant's suitability to work with Youth. Any certificate of good conduct, police reference check or equivalent that is obtained will be updated by the VVOB on a regular basis, where possible.

3. Acknowledgement

Each applicant who wishes to work with Youth should be required to sign an acknowledgment form confirming that he/she agrees to comply with the policy on the Protection of Youth for VVOB and that he/she understands that disciplinary action will be taken against anyone found guilty of Abuse of Youth.

4. Awareness

VVOB ensures that all VVOB personnel involved with Youth projects or programmes are aware of Youth protection risks, policies and procedures; including national laws and international instruments, as applicable.

5. Gender Equality and Non Discrimination

VVOB ensures that all policies and procedures to protect Youth take into account gender equality and non-discrimination requirements. Recognizing that women and men may face different risks relating to their safety and protection and that all Youth have the equal right to protection, irrespective of: race; colour; sex; language; sexuality; disability; religion; political or other opinions; national, social or indigenous origin; property; birth or other status.

6. Capacity Building

VVOB develops the capacity of all VVOB personnel who work with and for Youth to appropriately prevent, detect and respond to Abuse and Exploitation of Youth as reflected in these Guidelines. Efforts are made to ensure VVOB's policies and practices are understood and can be effectively implemented through on-going training courses for all VVOB personnel. This also includes (1) policies and practices on appropriate cyber-conduct which outline rules for behaving properly online and (2) policies and practices on cyber-bullying which outline rules on conduct that is derogatory, illegal and/or abusive towards Youth.

7. Participation of Youth

Whenever taking steps to prevent, respond to or monitor incidents of Abuse or Exploitation, VVOB personnel must consult with the Youth on the matters under review. Youth must not be treated as simply objects of concern but rather listened to and taken seriously and treated as individual people with their own views.

8. Reporting Mechanisms for Youth

Mechanisms should be established that enable Youth to safely report any concerns relating to their well-being, safety and protection to VVOB. Youth should be aware of the mechanisms available to them and services should be confidential, Youth-friendly and accessible to Youth. VVOB personnel should be able to identify and address concerns involving Protection of Youth, taking into account the Best Interests of Youth.

9. Response and Follow Up

VVOB will take appropriate measures to support and protect Youth when concerns arise. All measures taken to respond to Abuse or Exploitation shall respect the rights of Youth, local laws and take into account the best interests of the Youth, as applicable, and endeavour to ensure no further harm comes to the Youth, as applicable, as a result of any actions taken by VVOB. Efforts to work in conjunction with other service providers, specialists, parents, legal guardians, caregivers and others should be explored when appropriate upon the consent of the Youth in question. After any incident or report of Abuse and Exploitation, proper measures should be taken to ensure organisational learning, evaluation and follow up takes place.

VVOB retains written records of all reports of Abuse of Youth, including, but not limited to the date of the report and the date of the alleged Abuse, the name and address of the Youth, the name of the VVOB personnel who made the report, the name of the governmental contact to whom the report was made and a clear description of the facts that led to the report, as well as any other available information. VVOB will advise its insurance provider of the complaint of Abuse of Youth, as applicable, and retain records of any such reports. VVOB also advises relevant partners of any complaints of Abuse of Youth either in writing or by email.

All such records will be kept within the files of VVOB in accordance with the privacy and confidentiality policies of VVOB.

10. Implementation, Monitoring and Review

The implementation and monitoring of the policy to protect Youth is designated to the Director-General. The Director-General has the duty to review the policy at regular intervals as determined necessary by the Board, preferably at least every three (3) years, where possible.

11. Sanction and Discipline of VVOB personnel

Where an allegation is made that VVOB personnel has committed Abuse of Youth, the accused personnel will be immediately suspended from all duties with VVOB (with pay, if applicable) to protect Youth from further potential harm. Where VVOB personnel is convicted of Abuse of Youth, the said personnel will be immediately terminated with cause from his or her position. Where VVOB personnel is terminated as an employee or volunteer, such personnel will not be permitted to enter onto VVOB's premises or participate in activities of VVOB following termination.

12. Informed Consent

VVOB provides Youth with all necessary details to make an informed decision regarding their participation in projects, programmes and activities, including any voice recordings, video or photographs of Youth. Youth should understand how their images may be used and be supported to identify and evaluate any associated risks. Personal information and/or images of Youth should only be used after informed consent has been obtained in writing from the Youth.

13. Protection of Personal Information

Personal information regarding any Youth, whether or not such information is obtained as part of the projects or programmes involving Youth, will not be disclosed to any third party, except in accordance with the policies of VVOB or as required by applicable local laws. Personal information includes, but is not limited to, any information that can be linked to Youth or used to identify Youth.

14. Medication

VVOB personnel should not give or apply any medication to Youth, unless the VVOB personnel in question is a doctor, nurse or other professional medical personnel. VVOB also complies with all applicable laws of the jurisdiction with respect to access by Youth to prescribed medications (such as asthma inhalers).

15. Code of Conduct of VVOB personnel

VVOB ensures that their personnel avoid any behaviour or conduct that compromises the safety and Protection of Youth within its activities, operations, projects and programmes.

VVOB personnel MUST:

Prevent

- Be aware of potential risks and take appropriate action so as to minimize risks.
- Create an environment where concerns can easily and safely be raised and discussed.
- Recognize and remedy potential situations which may lead to violent acts against Youth.
- Ensure that ALL one-on-one interaction with Youth be done in plain view of other people, i.e. in an open public space, in the same room as another person or in a room with large windows which permits others to clearly see into the room.

Create a Friendly Environment

- Contribute to an environment where Youth are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
- Ensure that Youth are aware of their rights, policies and resources which are available to them if there is a problem.
- Work with Youth to define what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour with VVOB personnel.

Report and Respond

- Report any concerns involving protection against Abuse of Youth (whether by VVOB personnel or by Children and/or Youth) to relevant partners and take appropriate actions.
- Ensure the Youth are well-informed and participate in the decision-making and the types of intervention agreed upon.

VVOB personnel MUST NEVER:

- Abuse or exploit Youth or behave in any way that places Youth at risk of harm.
- Exchange money, gifts, employment, goods or services for sex with Youth, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour or any other behaviour that could be deemed exploitative of Youth.
- Have Youth they are working with stay overnight at their home unsupervised or sleep in the same room or bed with Youth.
- Do things for Youth of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
- Offend, insult, humiliate or degrade Youth or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Discriminate or provide favourable treatment to one Youth.
- Restrain Youth.
- Discipline Youth using any form of physical contact, or emotional or psychological pressure, Abuse or intimidation.

The above is neither an exhaustive nor exclusive list and VVOB will consider all related actions and behaviour which *may* compromise the rights and protection of Youth.