CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

SALMA ATTAH FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS SUPPORT

Version 2.0 | November 2026

SAFWGS

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Child Safeguarding Policy

Version 2.0 | Approved November 2026 | Next review November 2027

Policy statement

Girls and young people are at the centre of SAFWGS's work, through mentorship, leadership fellowships, coding bootcamps, menstrual health sessions, school clubs, campaigns and online spaces. Every child who takes part has the right to be safe, to be heard and to be protected from all forms of harm.
SAFWGS has zero tolerance for child abuse and exploitation. We will take every concern seriously, act in the best interests of the child, and cooperate fully with the authorities.
A child is anyone under the age of 18, whatever the age of majority, marriage or consent in any law or custom.

Who this policy applies to

- Board members, staff, interns, fellows and volunteers
- Mentors, facilitators, trainers, coaches, consultants and drivers
- Partner organisations, schools and suppliers working on SAFWGS activities
- Visitors, donors, journalists, photographers and content creators

It applies at all times during SAFWGS work and in any contact with children that comes about through SAFWGS, in person or online.

What child abuse means

Physical abuse: hitting, beating, burning or any other act that causes physical harm, including harsh physical punishment.
Emotional abuse: humiliating, threatening, insulting, shaming or isolating a child, or exposing them to violence.
Sexual abuse and exploitation: involving a child in any sexual activity, including touching, exposure, grooming, sexual messages or images, and offering money, gifts, grades or opportunities for sex.
Neglect: failing to meet a child's basic needs for food, shelter, health care, safety or supervision.
Harmful practices: child marriage, female genital mutilation and other practices that harm a child's health or development.
Online abuse: grooming, sextortion, cyberbullying, sharing a child's images or personal information without consent, and any abuse carried out through phones, social media, messaging apps or games.

Trafficking and child labour: recruiting, moving or keeping a child for exploitation, or work that harms their health, safety or education.

Principles

- The best interests of the child come first in every decision
- Every child has an equal right to protection, including girls with disabilities, married girls, out-of-school girls and displaced children
- Children have a right to be heard, and their views are taken seriously in decisions that affect them
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; it is not left to one person
- Information about a child is shared only with those who need it to protect them

Code of conduct

Anyone working with children for SAFWGS must:

- Treat every child with respect and never use language or behaviour that is abusive, sexual, humiliating or culturally inappropriate
- Follow the two-adult rule: never be alone with a child in a closed or hidden place; if one-to-one mentoring is needed, meet where you can be seen and tell another team member
- Never hit or physically punish a child
- Never have any sexual or romantic contact with a child, or say anything with a sexual meaning to a child
- Never offer money, gifts, transport, phones or favours to a child outside approved programme support
- Never take a child to your home or travel alone with a child in a vehicle without written approval from the activity lead and the parent or guardian
- Never ask for or give personal phone numbers or social media contacts for private communication; use only official SAFWGS groups and accounts
- Never photograph or film a child without consent under this policy
- Report any concern, including about a colleague, within 24 hours

Safe recruitment

- Every role and volunteer opportunity that involves children states SAFWGS's commitment to child safeguarding
- Interviews for these roles include questions on safeguarding and on how the candidate would handle a concern
- At least two references are taken, including from the most recent employer or institution, and each asks about any safeguarding concerns
- Identity is checked, and a police character check is requested where available

- Everyone signs this policy and code of conduct before any contact with children, and new mentors and facilitators are supervised until their induction is complete
- Schools, partners and suppliers whose staff will be in contact with children confirm in writing that they will follow this policy or an equivalent one

Safe activities and events

Before each activity with children, the activity lead completes a safeguarding risk check covering venue, toilets, transport, supervision, overnight stays, food, first aid and emergency contacts. In addition:

- Written consent from a parent or guardian is obtained before a child joins a programme, using the form in Appendix 1. For activities run through a school, the school's consent process may be used if it covers the same points
- Children also give their own agreement, in a language they understand
- There are at least two adults present, including at least one woman for activities with girls, and at least one adult for every 10 children (one for every 6 for children under 12)
- Children are signed in and out, and are only released to a parent, guardian or person the parent has named in writing
- Trips and overnight stays need separate written consent, a female chaperone for girls, separate sleeping areas for children and adults, and approval from the Executive Director
- An emergency plan and the nearest health facility and police contacts are known before the activity starts

Online and digital safeguarding

SAFWGS runs coding and digital skills training, online mentoring and WhatsApp and social media groups, and is developing digital tools such as SafeSisi+. For any online activity with children:

- Use only official SAFWGS accounts, groups and platforms; at least two SAFWGS staff or approved volunteers are administrators of every group
- Set group rules at the start, including no private messaging between adults and children, no sharing of personal photos, and how to report a problem
- Online sessions are scheduled, take place in a group, and are not recorded unless all participants and parents have been told and agreed
- Teach children about online safety, privacy, grooming and how to report abuse, as part of the programme
- Collect only the personal data a digital tool needs, and handle it under the Data Protection Policy
- Check that any platform, app or AI tool used with children allows users of that age and has suitable privacy settings, and follow the AI Use Policy

Images, stories and media

- Photos, videos and stories of children are only taken and used with written consent from the parent or guardian (Appendix 2) and the child's own agreement
- A child's full name, school, home location or other identifying details are never published together with their image
- Children are shown with dignity and as active participants, never in a degrading, sexualised or pitiful way
- Survivors of abuse, married girls and children in sensitive situations are never identifiable in any material
- Images are stored on SAFWGS systems only, not on personal phones, and are deleted from personal devices after transfer
- Journalists, photographers and donors visiting activities are briefed on this policy and accompanied by SAFWGS staff

How to report a concern

If you see, hear or suspect that a child is being harmed or is at risk, or a child tells you something worrying, report it as soon as possible and within 24 hours. You do not need proof.

- **Email:** info@safwgs.org with the subject line "CONFIDENTIAL – Child Safeguarding"
- **Phone or WhatsApp:** +234 813 693 1762
- **In person** to the Designated Safeguarding Officer or the Executive Director
- **The Board Chair**, if the concern involves the Executive Director or the Designated Safeguarding Officer

If a child is in immediate danger, contact the police or emergency services first, then inform SAFWGS.

How children and parents can report

At the start of every programme, children and parents are told, in English, Hausa or another language they understand, that they can speak to any facilitator they trust, or call or message +234 813 693 1762, if anything makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable. The number is shared on programme materials and in online groups. Children will not get into trouble for reporting.

Responding to a child who tells you something

- Stay calm, listen, and let the child speak in their own words
- Tell them they did the right thing in telling you and that it is not their fault
- Do not ask leading questions, examine the child or investigate
- Do not promise to keep it secret; explain that you will tell someone whose job is to help keep them safe

- Do not confront the person the child has named
- Write down what the child said, in their words, with the date and time, sign it and give it to the Designated Safeguarding Officer the same day

What SAFWGS will do

- The Designated Safeguarding Officer acknowledges the report within 24 hours, checks whether the child is in immediate danger and acts to protect them
- Unless doing so would put the child at greater risk, the parent or guardian is informed
- The child is referred to health, psychosocial, legal or child protection services as needed, including the state Ministry responsible for social welfare, Sexual Assault Referral Centres and NAPTIP
- Where a crime may have been committed, SAFWGS reports it to the police or other relevant authority
- If the concern is about someone working for SAFWGS, that person is removed from contact with children while the matter is investigated, and an independent investigation is arranged within 5 working days
- Funders are informed within the timeframe in the relevant grant agreement, without identifying the child
- The Board receives an anonymised summary of every case at its next meeting

Records and confidentiality

Safeguarding records are kept in a locked or password-protected location separate from other files, and only the Designated Safeguarding Officer, the Executive Director and investigators can access them. Records about a child are kept until the child turns 25, or for at least six years after the case is closed, whichever is later, and are handled under the Data Protection Policy.

Training

Everyone who works with children receives child safeguarding training before or within one month of starting, and a refresher every year. Mentors and facilitators are briefed before each new programme. Board members receive a briefing each year.

Roles

- **Board:** has overall responsibility, appoints a Board Safeguarding Lead and reviews safeguarding at each meeting
- **Executive Director:** makes sure this policy is resourced and followed, and appoints the Designated Safeguarding Officer
- **Designated Safeguarding Officer:** receives and records concerns, manages referrals, keeps the local referral directory current, leads training and advises activity leads

- **Activity leads:** complete risk checks, collect consents and brief everyone on their activity
- **Everyone:** follows the code of conduct and reports concerns

Safeguarding contacts

Designated Safeguarding Officer: contact through info@safwgs.org or +234 813 693 1762
Board Safeguarding Lead: contact through info@safwgs.org (subject “CONFIDENTIAL – for the Board”)
General reporting line: info@safwgs.org (subject "CONFIDENTIAL – Child Safeguarding") | +234 813 693 1762

Legal framework

This policy is guided by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Child's Rights Act 2003 and the child protection laws of the states where we work, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015, the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015, the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act 2015, the Nigeria Data Protection Act 2023, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Related policies

- Adult Safeguarding and PSEA Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- AI Use Policy
- Communication and Visibility Policy
- Volunteer Policy

Approval

Approved by the Board of SAFWGS in November 2026. This policy will be reviewed in November 2027, or earlier if the law, a funder requirement or SAFWGS's work changes.
Approved by the Board of Trustees of SAFWGS by resolution dated 12 November 2026. Signed copies are held by SAFWGS and are available to funders and partners on request.

Personal declaration

I have read and understood the SAFWGS Child Safeguarding Policy and code of conduct. I agree to follow them, and I understand that a breach may lead to disciplinary action, the end of my engagement with SAFWGS and referral to the authorities.

Name: _____ Role: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 1: Parent or guardian consent for participation

Programme or activity: _____
Dates and location: _____
Name of child: _____ Age: _____ School (if any): _____

I, _____ (name of parent or guardian), am the parent or legal guardian of the child named above.

- I agree to my child taking part in the activity described above
- SAFWGS has explained the activity to me, and I have had the chance to ask questions
- I understand that SAFWGS follows a Child Safeguarding Policy and that I can report any concern to info@safwgs.org or +234 813 693 1762
- I agree that SAFWGS may keep the details on this form, and use them only to run the programme and contact me, under its Data Protection Policy
- I understand that I can withdraw my child at any time

Medical conditions, allergies or other needs we should know about: _____

Persons allowed to collect the child: _____
Parent or guardian's phone: _____ Emergency contact (name and phone): _____
Signature or thumbprint: _____ Date: _____
Child's agreement (explained to the child in a language they understand): I know what this activity is about and I want to take part. Child's name and signature: _____

Appendix 2: Consent for photographs, video and stories

Name of child: _____ Age: _____
Name of parent or guardian: _____ Relationship to child: _____
Phone: _____
SAFWGS would like to take photographs or video of your child during this activity, or record their story, to report to funders and to share our work. Please tick what you agree to:

- [ ] Photographs or video may be used in reports to SAFWGS's funders and partners
- [ ] Photographs or video may be used on SAFWGS's website, social media and printed materials
- [ ] My child's first name may be used with their image (their full name, school and home location will never be published)
- [ ] My child's words or story may be quoted, without their name

I understand that:

- SAFWGS will show my child with dignity and will not alter images in a way that changes their meaning
- I will not be paid for this consent
- I can withdraw this consent at any time by contacting info@safwgs.org or +234 813 693 1762, and SAFWGS will stop using the material in new publications and remove it from its website and social media accounts where it can
- SAFWGS will store the material securely and keep this form under its Data Protection Policy

Signature or thumbprint of parent or guardian: _____ Date: _____
Child's agreement: I am happy for my picture or story to be used as ticked above. Child's name and signature: _____

