



Natubelenge Children's Library

Natubelenge Children's Library Safeguarding policy

September, 2022

Introduction

Natubelenge Children's Library is a Charity Organization dedicated to fighting illiteracy and ending the cycle of poverty by improving access to libraries and bettering the poor reading culture in Communities. This policy is designed to protect all children and young people who visit Natubelenge Children's Library. The policy defines children and young people as anyone under the age of 18 years and includes pupils over the age of 18.

Safeguarding Statement:

Natubelenge Children's Library has a strong commitment to protecting those most at risk and to acting as a role model for child- and youth-serving organizations. Although children and youth may be extremely resourceful and resilient, they are also particularly vulnerable to abuse due to their lack of status and power, their stage of development, and their reliance on adults. We support the rights of the child and will act without hesitation to ensure a child-safe environment is maintained at all times. We also support the rights and well-being of our staff and volunteers and encourage their active participation in building and maintaining a secure environment for all participants.

We recognize that:

- Organizations and professionals working or in contact with children and youth have to ensure safety and well-being.
- The welfare of the child is a paramount consideration, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- All children and youth have an equal right to protection, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief.
- It is our responsibility to minimize the harm that may be done as a result of our activities, including where any activities may lead to re-traumatization.

This Safeguarding Policy reflects our commitment to respect, promote, uphold, and protect the rights of the child as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in line with Natubelenge children's library's values.



Policy coverage:

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all. The procedures and processes contained in this Policy apply equally to:

- All NCL directors, Board of trustees
- Senior leadership team
- All staff
- Volunteers and interns
- Associates and Partners of NCL
- All NCL visitors, including journalists and media personnel, parents and any individual visiting NCL's work or NCL-supported work in any capacity at NCL's request or instruction, are expected to comply with this Policy.

Natubelenge Children's Library expects that all those involved with the program will follow the policies and procedures outlined in this document. If breaches of these policies and procedures occur they will be dealt with through disciplinary action (including possible dismissal) to termination of contracts or partnerships, and where appropriate, may result in referral to the police or other relevant authorities.

Definitions

Children

While the definition of a child varies around the world, this Policy refers to an individual under the age of 18, (for NCL this includes pupils above 18) in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Youth

An individual between the ages of 18 and 24, in line with the upper age limit in the UN definition of youth.

Unless otherwise noted below, all references to children in this Policy should be read as a reference to children and youth.



Safeguarding

Child and youth safeguarding is the responsibility that an organization has to develop and implement policies and procedures designed to ensure that its staff, operations, and programs do not harm children and youth; that they do not expose

children or youth to the risk of harm or abuse; and that any concerns the organization has about children or youth's safety within the communities in which it works are reported to the appropriate authorities, as appropriate.

Safeguarding means:

- Protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
- Preventing harm to children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are provided with safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Child protection is part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This Policy includes response and reporting procedures, which detail how to respond to concerns about a child.

Child abuse

Child abuse can take many forms and can have long-term and significant effects on a child or young person's development. According to the World Health Organization "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power." It is important to recognize, however, that definitions of abuse vary significantly across locations. Harm may also be caused to children or youth in ways that do not meet the threshold of "abuse" or do not fit easily within traditional definitions.

For this Policy, staff of NCL and others required to adhere to this Policy should be alert to any actions that may cause harm to children or youth, whether these reach the threshold of abuse or not and whether the harm is caused intentionally or unintentionally, or directly or indirectly.



Safeguarding within Human Resources

Safe Recruitment

NCL seeks to recruit staff who are committed to the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. This goes beyond simply complying with protocols and extends to ensuring that individuals have an appropriate set of personal and professional values and are committed to promoting the safety and well-being of children and youth.

Recruitment of Staff

- All staff are required to provide three references (phone and email references), as well as proof of identity and employment eligibility, which includes a copy of an official photo ID, and these items are stored securely in personnel files.
- For staff roles that include contact with children and youth, questions are included in interviews relating to safeguarding.
- Compliance with this Safeguarding Policy is a contractual requirement for each staff member.
- The level of background check is determined by the following:

The type of activity the individual is engaged in at NCL and the level of potential risk this poses to children and youth, and the frequency of unsupervised contact with children and youth at NCL.

Child/Youth Safety Officer (Programs Coordinator)

As a further sign of our commitment NCL has a designated Child/Youth Safety Officer.

The Child/Youth Safety Officer must:

- Have undergone at least one day's training on child abuse and creating a child-safe organization to fulfil this role.
- Attend further training as appropriate and take proactive steps to be kept informed of developments in the field of child abuse prevention. Be the first contact point for anyone involved with NCL who has a concern about a child or young person.
- Confidentially document minor concerns about a child or young person that could build into an Overall concerning picture. Make sure any records are kept strictly confidential and include date and signature.



- Ensure all those involved with NCL are aware of all policies and procedures connected with the NCL Safeguarding Policy.
- Monitor any concerning emails, messages or images on the Internet or via other technology that arise in the course of the NCL programs.
- Proactively promote a culture at NCL that is a welcoming, secure and supportive environment so children and young people will feel comfortable in expressing any difficulties or concerns they may have.
- Oversee the review and changes to the policies and procedures connected with the NCL Safeguarding Policy.
- Arrange training needed to safeguarding or protective behaviors for staff, volunteers, children or young people involved with NCL.

Board of Directors, Board of Trustees, and Committee Members

To support our Boards in understanding safeguarding, this Safeguarding Policy is included as part of the Board Orientation Manual and are invited to attend further training should they wish to. An acknowledgement of receipt of this Safeguarding Policy is included in the onboarding forms that directors/trustees sign when joining the Boards. All directors/trustees/ committee members are required to provide at least one reference (reference names and contact information), as well as a copy of an official photo ID as proof of identity, and these items are stored securely in confidential files.

Staff Training and Support

NCL shall provide training and support designed to ensure that staff and others required to comply with this Policy understand their safeguarding responsibilities and have the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfil their obligations:

- Compliance with this Policy is a requirement for all NCL team members.
- All staff receive an induction on safeguarding within the first three months of work.
- Capacity development on safeguarding is provided across the organization on an annual basis, including mandatory training detailing the new policy changes within three months of the Safeguarding Policy being updated.
- Supervision of staff and volunteers shall be provided where appropriate.



Volunteers and Interns

- All volunteer applicants must complete a volunteer application form, which includes a requirement to provide at least one professional and one personal referee.
- Face-to-face interviews must be conducted with prospective volunteers to understand volunteer motivations and to inform prospective volunteers about the volunteer role, program operations, screening mechanisms and compulsory training.

Associates

- Associates include consultants, contractors and service providers whose work for NCL involves direct or indirect contact with children and youth (to the extent such contractors or providers are legal entities, then the references to Associates shall refer to those individuals whose work for NCL through such entities involves direct or indirect contact with children and youth).
- Associates are provided with a copy of this Policy before work commences, which they must read and sign a commitment to adhere to.
- Expectations about safeguarding are explained in induction before undertaking assignments that involve direct or indirect contact with children and youth.
- Contracts for Associates include a clause requiring compliance with this Policy and the consequences of a breach.
- All Associates whose work involves direct or indirect contact with children and youth must provide GFC with two independent references that are verified by telephone or email. References cannot be family members and must have known the candidate for longer than three years.

Partners

- The NCL expects that shared principles and values will mean that partner organizations will fully support the values and commitments set out in this policy. NCL recognizes that those with safeguarding policies and associated measures already in place will be best equipped to comply with the standards set out in this policy.
- Where NCL works with others - for example, by supporting a project or program or by running collaborative projects or events - legal agreements will include safeguarding requirements (including compliance with policies and legislation, safer recruitment and the appropriate reporting and management of any safeguarding incident or concern).



Visitors

NCL will ensure that:

- There is a clear purpose and reason for visits (e.g. donor visiting a project, community members seeking to understand our activities etc.).
- We provide a review of relevant local context and customs.
- Visitors will be provided with a copy of this Safeguarding Policy and briefed on any additional safeguarding measures required.
- NCL will make every effort to ensure that visitors commit in writing to comply with this Policy. We acknowledge that there are certain circumstances where a written confirmation might not be possible (eg. Large events, events open to the public, co-sponsored events where NCL does not manage registration, etc.). In these circumstances, this Safeguarding Policy will still be distributed to all participants.
- Visitors are not left unsupervised at any time with children and youth.



Code of Conduct

NCL seeks to clarify acceptable behavior to enhance the safety and well-being of the children and young people accessing its programs, and to protect staff, volunteers and the organization. This Safeguarding Code of Conduct outlines the behavior we expect of all our directors/trustees, senior leadership team, staff, Associates, volunteers and interns, and others visiting NCL programs or NCL-supported programs at NCL's request or instruction. The code of conduct must be explained and discussed with all new staff and volunteers, who need to read and sign the code before commencing work.

Any breach of this code will be taken seriously and investigated. This may result in disciplinary action (including termination) and/or referrals to relevant authorities such as the police or social services.

Responsibility

- Ensure that you have read and follow NCL policies and procedures at all times.
- Never engage in any action that harms or exploits children or youth.
- Never engage in illegal activities or use illegal substances.
- Never behave in ways that are contrary to the values and mission of NCL or could negatively affect the organization's reputation.
- Never smoke or consume alcohol while on-site at NCL or during an off-site convening session during working hours.

NCL staff, consultants, interns, and volunteers will use their best judgement when consuming alcohol during events where NCL is a host or co-host and where alcohol is provided or sponsored (including fundraisers, celebratory meals, awards ceremonies, etc.).

- It is expected that all NCL personnel behave in a manner that will uphold the reputation and values of the organization at all NCL-supported events.
- Report all allegations or suspicions of abuse immediately, using the NCL reporting procedures outlined in this Policy.

Rights and Respect

- Respect differences and never discriminate on the grounds of gender, religious belief systems, culture, race, ethnicity, or disability.
- Never act in a way that could be perceived as threatening, including the use of physical punishment or physical force to manage children or youth.
- Listen to children and youth and take their contributions seriously.



- Never make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory, or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and youth.
- Respect a child or youth's right to personal privacy and use caution when discussing sensitive topics.

Relationships with Children and Youth

- Ensure that there is more than one adult present during direct interactions with children and youth.
- Avoid spending excessive time with any one child or youth or otherwise showing favouritism.
- Never give money or a gift of any kind to individual children, youth, or their families. If you wish to give a gift to a child or youth, this must be agreed upon with the project staff in advance.
- Never give children or youth your contact details (cell number, email, or address) or have contact with them via a personal email, phone or social media account.
- All email communication with minors must be for a valid work-related reason, must be via your official NCL work email address, and must include at least two NCL team members on the email chain.
- Never take a child or youth to your home, hotel, or any other private space.
- Never engage in any form of sexual contact with a child or youth. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child or youth is not a defence.

Social Media Use and Communicating Online

- The following rules must be followed by all NCL personnel to help ensure behavior is not open to misinterpretation and to safeguard both themselves and the children and youth NCL personnel communicate with:
- Never directly post images or stories about children or youth who are engaged with NCL and/or our partners on your personal social media accounts. Consent, when obtained, is given to NCL as an organization and not to the individual for personal use.
- When posting on behalf of NCL, identifying information about a child or youth (such as their name, address, images of their face, or any other information that could identify the child or youth) should only be posted where express consent has been received and only ever in accordance with this policy, in particular, the below section: 'Safeguarding NCL Storytelling'."
- Never accept contact requests or engage via personal social media with children or youth you have met through NCL or our partners.



- Always think twice about what you post/share and what implications this may have for the organization.
- Never upload or post any racist, defamatory, obscene, or abusive content.
- NCL personnel may only communicate with children and youth through pre-authorized channels of communication.
- NCL personnel should set appropriate online communication boundaries with partner organizations – including but not limited to channels of communication, hours of communication, and content of communications. Personnel should use their best judgment or ask their supervisor when there is a question.

Children and Youth Participation

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes children's right to participate and to have their views taken into account in matters that affect them. For this Policy, participation is understood to be activities or initiatives where NCL invites children or youth to take an active role in the delivery of our initiatives or to share their views, ideas, and experiences as part of our work.
- Risk assessments are conducted before any long-term participatory activities involving children or youth that address all aspects of child safety, including digital safety.
- No participant will be obliged to participate in any NCL event where they (or in the case of children or youth, their parent(s)/guardian(s)) have concerns about their health or safety.

Participation

- To safeguard their needs, children and youth (and their parents/guardians) are provided with information in advance that explains the initiative and the role they are being asked to fulfil. They are given time to consider the request, and it is made clear that their participation is voluntary.
- Children and youth volunteers should be reminded that they can withdraw their participation at any time.
- Where children or youth agree to participate, a written agreement is produced outlining NCL's expectations of them, the support they can expect from NCL, and the extent/limit of their ongoing involvement. The agreement is signed by the child/youth and their parent/guardian, confirming their informed consent to
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- participate. Separate consent is obtained for the use of any information provided by children and youth.
- Children and youth should not incur costs as a result of their participation (e.g., travel, materials, meals, refreshments). They are reimbursed for any costs related to participation.
- Children and youth are given clear feedback on the impact of their involvement, the outcome of any decisions, the next steps, and the value of their involvement. Feedback is sought about their satisfaction with the participation process and ways in which it could be improved.

Facilitators of Children and Youth Participation

- Staff and consultants facilitating participation by children and youth are provided with appropriate training and tools to enable them to work effectively with children and youth. This includes, at a minimum, training on the safeguarding measures to be implemented throughout the initiative.
- Staff and consultants are expected to review this Policy before any involvement in child or youth participation to ensure they are confident in their knowledge of the reporting procedures.
- NCL personnel and facilitators should take special consideration for events where children and youth are participants to ensure that, to the best of our abilities, content does not cause unintended harm. Specifically, content should be age-appropriate and consider the possibility of re-traumatization.



Safeguarding NCL Storytelling

In our marketing and communications, NCL believes in:

- **The best interests of the child/youth:** The public use of images and stories of children and youth inevitably poses potential risks. Where there is a risk of potential negative consequences for children and youth, we make decisions that favour their safety and protection.
- **Dignity:** In our communications, we uphold the rights and dignity of the child or youth, their family, and the wider community. We do not use language or images that stereotype, degrade, or shame children and youth.
- **Privacy:** NCL upholds every child and youth's right to privacy. The sharing of information is kept to the minimum necessary to achieve wider goals, and we never share information that could put a child or youth at risk.
- **Accuracy:** The organization's portrayal of individuals or groups must not be manipulated or sensationalized in any way, but instead should provide a balanced depiction of their life and circumstances.

We keep children and youth safe in our storytelling by following these guidelines:

- Where children or youth are survivors of violence or human rights violations, both the child/youth (and, if they are under 18, their parent/guardian) must give informed consent to their story being told. Where consent is given, photos may be taken of the child or youth and used only where the child or youth's safety should not be jeopardized if identified.
- Use an alias for children and youth featured in stories or photographs, unless you have gotten informed consent from the child and parent to use the child's real first name. When using an alias, include a footnote such as *Names have been changed. Always use an alias if the child is a survivor of violence or abuse, or if their safety could be in jeopardy if identified. One exception is for survivors over the age of 18 who give written consent to use their real first names.
- Consent must be obtained before taking photographs of children and for images to be used on social media, in recognition of the specific risks associated with posting imagery on the internet. Consent via partner is acceptable if the partner has consent for images to be taken from participants and/or their parents/guardians.



- All content, publications, and presentations featuring children or youth are reviewed by at least one staff member on the communications team, to ensure that no child or youth is put at risk.
- Images that could be considered sexually provocative or where children or youth are not fully clothed are not used.
- Consent documentation is stored by the Programs Coordinator.
- If we receive a request to remove a photo from our archives, we will do this promptly.



Reporting a Concern

Any safeguarding concerns, including concerns about the conduct of a member of staff, directors/trustees, volunteers, or contractors should be reported to info@natubengelibrary.org in line with this Safeguarding policy.

- NCL wants to be presented with any information, from any source, where there is reason to believe that someone involved with or connected to NCL/its activities has (1) harmed and/or presents a risk of harm to any children, youth, or (2) engaged in poor practice.
- It is the responsibility of all to take seriously any concerns, complaints, allegations, suspicions, or incidents involving children and youth. Reporting these concerns to NCL is a mandatory requirement. Failure to report will be considered a serious breach of NCL's Safeguarding Policy and could result in termination. There shall be no retaliation of any sort against any NCL personnel reporting in good faith following the policies of the NCL in effect from time to time.

NCL Internal Safeguarding Procedures

Concerns about harm or abuse must be internally reported where:

- You observe concerning behavior/abuse to a child or youth.
- The alleged perpetrator is a NCL staff member, visitor, associate, or a member of the staff of a partner organization etc.
- The alleged perpetrator is a member of the child's family or community or is unknown to the child.
- The alleged perpetrator is also a child, although responses should take into account the protection and safety of both the child victim and the alleged child abuser.
- The abuse is historical. Most abuse is not disclosed until many years after it has occurred, but the risks of harm to children or youth may persist and require investigation.
- The report is anonymous, as this does not automatically mean that it bears less substance but may indicate fear of reprisal, shame, or other barriers to disclosure.



Duty of Care

- NCL has a legal and moral obligation to respond to cases of harm and abuse when these are identified through our engagement with children and youth. We must not, however, initiate interventions or offer advice that requires specialist child protection expertise as this is outside our area of competence and could inadvertently result in further harm to the child. Details of concerns are treated with the highest degree of confidentiality and only shared with the minimum number of people necessary to ensure the safety of the child and consistent with our legal obligations.

The responsibility for decisions and actions rests with NCL as an organization and not with any individual. Staff, Associates, volunteers and interns must not act in isolation but must consult with the child/youth safety officer or their direct supervisor before taking any action in response to child protection concerns (except in the case where a child or youth is in immediate danger, in which case call the police and/or relevant authorities immediately).

Managing Disclosures

NCL staff may find they are the recipient of a disclosure by a child. These bullet points should offer some direction on how to receive this disclosure safely and appropriately and follow the correct next steps:

- Is the child safe? If not, how can we ensure their safety?
- Reread the Safeguarding Policy.
- Think about what you might say/do and how you might present before it happens.
- Try to be available to be spoken to. The child/youth may not be ready when you are.
- Listen carefully without interrupting. When it is appropriate, ask questions to clarify the allegation, but remember you are there to clarify facts, not to conduct an investigation.
- Take any disclosures seriously, even if you cannot see any injury that would support the story.
- Be sensitive—arrange a safe and private environment.
- Stay calm—don't show shock or horror.
- Be reassuring—tell the child/youth that they were right to tell and have done nothing wrong.
- Be responsive—acknowledge how difficult it was for the child/youth to tell, explain what needs to happen next.
- Be honest—don't make promises that you can't keep.
- Be supportive—put arrangements in place for initial support.



- Don't promise confidentiality.
- Don't delay action in response to a disclosure.
- Don't be afraid of being wrong or be concerned about starting an investigation.
- Don't pre-judge what you are told or make assumptions.
- Before taking any further action, immediately contact your supervisor to discuss the next steps. They will work with you to decide who should be informed in the child's network.
- At the earliest opportunity, make a written record.
- Decisions about referrals of the child/youth to wider agencies (e.g., for counselling or psychosocial support) should be led by the child/youth, and/or a trusted adult they identify, not NCL. NCL will, however, provide details of support services that have been vetted as child-friendly by either NCL, our consultants, our partners, or a recognized child protection agency (e.g., UNICEF, Save the Children)

Acknowledgements:

Information contained in this resource is sourced from the following locations:

- Global Fund for Children Global Safeguarding Policy, September 2020
- Commonwealth Sport safeguarding policy, June 2022
- Sample Child Protection Policy, 2011