



NEPWHAN

Child Safeguarding Policy



SPECIAL NOTE!

The provision of these policies, procedure and manual is to serve as guide in making decisions involving the operations of NEPWHAN Human resources management and for adaptation by Association of Positive Youth Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (APYIN), Association of Positive Women Living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria (ASWHAN), Association of Religious Leaders Living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria (NINERELA+) and Support groups of People Living with HIV in Nigeria. The document is subject to review by Management Board as at when due. Efforts shall however be made by Administration Department to issue due notice when changes and revisions occur and such changes will duly be incorporated in the next issue.

1.0: NEPWHAN Background

NEPWHAN refers to the central coordinating body of all support groups of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) who choose to register with the body throughout the country. Being a central coordinating body implies that it does not execute programs while it assists its member support groups to carry out its stated mission and activities leading to achievement of our goal and objectives. NEPWHAN however is actively involved in the mobilization and capacity development of PLHIV throughout the Federation and organizing them into new or existing support groups thereby broadening its own organizational base.

HIV was given official recognition in Nigeria when the first case was announced in 1986. As in other parts of the world the infection came into Nigeria with its full complement of attending fear, stigma, discrimination and rejection. It is therefore not surprising that PLHIV tended to hide their status. Even when terminally ill, the cause of their illness is rather ascribed to other infections such as Tuberculosis. At that time, government was still in denial and there was therefore no commitment of any sort to HIV response by government and its arms. Responses to the epidemic in the country were mainly by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including faith-based ones and international agencies that were only operating half-heartedly due to the political climate at the time.

Lack of capacity and basic infrastructure however severely limited activities of NEPWHAN. In the year 2000, PLHIV from all over the nation were again called together to fashion a way to move the network forward and invigorate the executive. A new executive was put in place at this meeting. The mission of the network was set at –_To empower, strengthen and coordinate all support groups, state networks, constituencies, associations and organizations of people living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria to contribute meaningfully to the national response.

In terms of directional thrust, the network set itself two main tasks:

- a. Mobilization of PLHIV all over the country, organizing them into support groups and empowering them to join in the national response with the aim of reducing and eventually eliminating further spread of the virus.
- b. Mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS on the life of PLHIV, PABAs, orphans and other vulnerable children.

Values at NEPWHAN

- Empowering individuals and institutions to improve the health status of populations at risk as a positive contribution to social justice.
- Personal integrity, high moral standard, commitment to our shared mission, and excellence in our work are expected.
- Common courtesy in our personal interactions, a collaborative working style, and concern for the rights of others are the chief manifestations of, and basis for, building NEPWHAN's mission.
- Pursuit of public health goals at NEPWHAN is driven by their importance, by the possibility of positive impact, and by technical and financial feasibility, not by potential profitability. Hence, NEPWHAN is constituted as a nonprofit corporation to serve the public interest.
- The immensity of the tasks we face in public health management requires a high degree of humility. Our individual energy, intellect, sense of humor, and dedication can make a difference.
- Management support for development means long-term commitments to our clients and colleagues. It demands that we work for the success of others, promoting their capacity to work more effectively and independently and placing a higher value on facilitating their success than on personal or organizational recognition.

INTRODUCTION

NEPWHAN believes that all forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children are unacceptable. NEPWHAN aims to ensure that all children who come in contact with NEPWHAN's children safe from all forms of abuse and exploitation. The organization is committed to protecting children and seeks to ensure that children we work with are not harmed or abused as a result of our actions. The possibility of staff, donors or partners abusing children is one which the agency takes seriously and is committed to working to prevent.

The child safeguarding policy is vital to the organization and it is expected that all staff and representatives understand why it is important and how to implement it. Child protection is a corporate and an individual responsibility. This policy extends beyond professional role in the workplace to conduct on one's personal life.

NEPWHAN has zero tolerance to child abuse and staff. All staff will be made familiar with the need for a child protection concern in all that we do. Associations with **anyone** found to be engaging in abusive and exploitative relationships with children will be broken.

Office Operations Policy

NEPWHAN will set operation policies in collaboration with the management team,

- Following sound business practices and complying with any applicable Nigerian law and donor requirements where necessary;
- Providing a workplace that is secure, comfortable and efficient;
- Creating policies that treat employees equitably;
- Implementing procedure that safeguard assets and equipment from loss, fraud or misuse.

Standards of Ethical Conduct

Personal integrity is considered to be the most important contribution an individual may bring to NEPWHAN. NEPWHAN expects all employees to adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct in their professional and private affairs. General standards of conduct include avoiding any action that might result in or create the appearance of:

- obtaining personal financial gain from one's position or activities with NEPWHAN;
- facilitating the financial gain of a competitive organization or individual through disclosure of confidential information about NEPWHAN;
- failure to properly account for NEPWHAN fund with which one is entrusted;
- failure to report personal use of NEPWHAN facilities (e.g. vehicles, furniture, and other equipments)
- All employees shall be loyal to the policies, procedure and activities of NEPWHAN above all other considerations.

Fees, honoraria, and gifts of nominal value may be accepted by a staff member. However, acceptance of any gift, meal, or social invitation which is not in keeping with good business ethics, or which obligates the staff member or the recipient, is in conflict with NEPWHAN interest is prohibited.

GOAL

To advocate for the rights of PLHIV in Nigeria and seek to put in place comprehensive HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support services

VISION

A country where PLHIV are given equal rights and privileges like every other member of the society

MISSION STATEMENT

To empower, strengthen and coordinate all support groups, state networks, constituencies, associations and organizations of people living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria to contribute meaningfully to the national response.

Definitions

1.1 Child

For the purposes of this policy, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Child Right Act of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

1.2 Child abuse

Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children or damages their prospect of a safe and healthy development into adulthood (*Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (UK) 1996 , later the Children ‘s Act 2004*)

PROTECTION POLICY, PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

The definition point to five types of abuse:

Physical abuse: This is actual physical harm and may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child including fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately causing, ill health to a child.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development, such as failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, or neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

Emotional abuse: persistent or emotional ill treatment of a child that adversely affects their development, may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate, they are only to meet the needs of another; or where inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. In addition it includes children who are regularly frightened, exploited or corrupted.

Sexual abuse: is the involvement of a child in sexual activity. It may involve forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or nonpenetrative acts. This may also include involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Exploitation: trafficking, sex trade, child labour, drugs smuggling, child soldiers, exchanging sex for other favours

2. Recruitment & Training

2.1 Board members, staff, interns and volunteers will be carefully and properly screened during their recruitment period. This will include:

- ❖ Asking the candidate to sign a declaration of criminal convictions as part of the application process
- ❖ Obtaining a police check where possible.
- ❖ Obtaining a reliable character and professional reference, with particular attention given to any area of concern relating to child protection
- ❖ During the interview, questions bordering on child protection and the candidates attitudes, perceptions and knowledge about keeping children safe would be asked.

2.2 All prospective employees, interns, volunteers, partners and board members will undertake induction and training on the organization's Child Safeguarding policy which is relevant and appropriate to their position. Staff will sign the Child safeguarding Policy at the time they are given their induction or at the same time they sign their contract, agreeing to uphold its principles and values and to comply with its rules.

2.3 Individuals who are hired as independent contractors will be briefed and given a copy of the organization's Child Safeguarding Policy and required to sign a declaration that they have received and understood it.

2.4 Volunteers with the organization will be monitored by the Team Leaders to whom they are assigned to ensure that confidential information concerning children is not misused. Where there are concerns, managers should inform the Head Human Resource department who will investigate further.

3.0 Behaviour Protocols

Behavior protocols are rules of appropriate and proper behavior, which are designed to protect children but are also intended to protect adults from false accusations of inappropriate behavior or abuse. These protocols apply to employees, volunteers, board members, contractors, sponsors and any visitors to the organization's projects.

3.1 NEPWHAN's staff and visitors must not spend unnecessary time alone with children, including in the following situations: in a car, overnight in your home, or the home of a child, in office, in a camp, at activity sites etc. or sleep with beneficiaries in the same house without prior approval by the line manager. Such approval can only be given if there is concern that not doing so might put the children at risk of abuse or exploitation and if there are no other suitable options

3.2 NEPWHAN's staff and visitors should not hire children as "house help" or promote any form of exploitative child labor

3.3 NEPWHAN's staff and visitors must not fondle or kiss children not directly related to them. They must also not hold, hug or touch children in an inappropriate or culturally unacceptable way.

3.4 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. If this is not possible, NEPWHAN staff members are encouraged to look for alternatives such as being accompanied by community members on visits to children. In addition, gender should be considered in the "two-adult" rule, for example an adolescent girl should never be in a situation where she is alone with 2 male staff.

3.5 NEPWHAN staff or representatives must never hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children

3.6 NEPWHAN staff or representatives must not develop physical/sexual relationships with children or develop any form of relationship with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive

3.7 NEPWHAN staff or representatives must not be aware of these and not do anything about it.

3.8 NEPWHAN staff or representatives must not exploit their own position vis-à-vis the beneficiaries by making them run errands, do domestic work or carry out other forms of economic exploitation

3.9 NEPWHAN staff or representatives must not act in ways intended to shame, humiliate or degrade children, or otherwise perpetuate any form of emotional abuse

NEPWHAN staff need to be aware that they may work with children who, because of the circumstances and abuses they have experienced, may use a relationship to obtain "special attention". The adult is always considered responsible even if a child behaves seductively. Adults should avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable position.

NEPWHAN is committed to creating a child friendly environment and to ensure that how we work is safe and don't put children at risk of harm Inappropriate behavior towards children is grounds for discipline.

4. Procedures for Reporting Suspected or Actual Abuse of Children

4.1 Should a member of NEPWHAN receive any information about, or observe actual or suspected child abuse by a staff, volunteer, visitor or any other representative he or she must immediately inform the designate Child Protection focal person. If the concern involves the CP focal person, the concern must be reported to the organization's Director of Human Resources. If the concern involves the Director of HR, the concern should be reported to the National Coordinator (or any such top placed positions as available in the organization) and when the concern involves this person, it should be reported to the Management board.

Note: The reporter is not required to investigate or try to find "more proof" before making the report. They must just make the report, and the process of investigation will be handled confidentially by trained senior staff member.

4.2 Reporting of child abuse is a requirement of the organization and should be undertaken by staff, volunteers and other representatives. Non-reporting is considered to be a breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy.

RISK ASSESSMENT:

All NEPWHAN's staff, volunteers and interns must conduct and document a risk assessment when planning a new activity or event that would involve the participation of children. Taking children out of their primary environment e.g. for excursions, state level activity etc. in particular is considered to be a high risk activity.

A Risk Assessment Matrix is provided and should be completed well in advance of the activity or event. **(Refer to Appendix I – Risk Assessment Matrix)**

Use this Matrix to identify any risk to the safety and wellbeing of children, assess the level of risk, and develop strategies to reduce this risk.

To do a risk assessment one must:

1. Consider any risk factors in the program or activity taking into account:
 - The age, race, social background, gender, skin color, disability, religion, beliefs, citizenship or sexual orientation of the children
 - The setting or environment (e.g. is it outdoors, in a Shelter Home, one-on-one, at night, etc.)
 - What is involved in the program or activity (e.g. workshops)
 - The level of supervision and ratio of adults to children
 - Any other risk factor you can identify
2. Evaluate the level of risk of each of the identified factors as HIGH, MEDIUM or LOW.
3. Prioritise the factors according to their level of risk.
4. Develop strategies to minimise the risk in order to reduce the likelihood of harm or abuse occurring.
5. If a child will be physically present at an activity, the child as well as her or his parents/guardians must complete:
 - a Parental / Child Consent form (annex 2 and 3);

5. Communications about Children

5.1 Photographs or videos of children must be decent and respectful, and not presenting them as victims. Children should be adequately clothed and poses that could be interpreted as sexually suggestive must be avoided. Language that implies a relationship of power should also be avoided. However, we also recognize there are times when children are in reality victims, for example, of famine. In such cases the child's dignity should still be preserved whilst presenting the reality.

5.2 No NEPWHAN staff or partners is allowed to scan images of children on to Web sites nor can any child's photo or video be used for promotional materials without formal permission of the organization responsible for the project, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child, and where the child is old enough (e.g. over the age of 10years and above), the child must also give his/her permission. This permission should be in writing.

5.3 Child's personal and physical information that could be used to identify the location of a child within a country should not be used on NEPWHAN web sites or in any other form of communication about a child.

5.4 Individuals or organizations requesting the use of NEPWHAN's resources such as videos or photographs should be required to sign an agreement with the organization as to the proper use of such materials, in line with the Child Safeguarding Policy. The agreement will include a statement that any use of such materials for purposes other than what is agreed upon could subject the borrowing individual or organization to legal action. Furthermore, failure to adhere to the agreed upon use of the material will result in the immediate termination of the organization's permission to use the subject materials and/or require immediate return of all materials provided by the agency as well as any copies of such materials.

6. Partner Organizations

6.1 Any agreement between NEPWHAN and partners which provide services to children will require assurance that child safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, acknowledging that lack of such policies can place children and the agency at risk.

Statement of Commitment to the NEPWHAN's Child Safeguarding Policy

1. I, _____ have read, have been given a briefing/induction and I **understand** the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Protection Policy.
2. I agree with the principles contained herein and accept to conduct myself, and my work, in line with the standards and rules laid out in the Child Safeguarding Policy. I agree to do so both in my professional and private life. I understand that these rules include a mandatory requirement for staff to report all concerns.

3. I have not been accused or convicted of any offence involving any form of abuse or exploitation of children.
4. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding a breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy while engaged by NEPWHAN, the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities;
5. I agree to co-operate with any investigation that involves an allegation of a breach of the Child Safeguarding Policy, whether that allegation has been made against me or against another representative of the organization.

(Print name)

(Job title/role)

(Signature)

(Date)