



## YOUTH HARVEST FOUNDATION GHANA POLICY ON PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE AND CHILD PROTECTION

### **1. Introduction**

The Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana (YHFG) is a youth focused Non-Governmental Organization. Its guiding believe is that helping the deprived youth of the north of Ghana to conserve and develop their physical and mental strength through education, entrepreneurial training and improved living conditions is the right way to ensure their viability to society and fight poverty. YHFG therefore engages with young people in- school and out of school as well as farmer groups at the community level who could be vulnerable at any point. It however, places human dignity at the Centre of its work.

### **2. MISSION & VISION**

**2.1 Vision:** Enable self-reliant and self-sufficient youth living in healthy society

**2.2 Mission:** Support and empower young people to achieve their full potential:

1. In their personal life,
2. Professional development,
3. As active advocates of the rights of young people
4. And contribute to a sustainable environment

### **3. YHFG MAIN STRATEGIC AREAS**

1. To support and promote the sexual and reproductive health of young people by providing appropriate education and supporting rights-based advocacy activities
2. To support and promote skills development in young people, with a focus on entrepreneurship, employable and social skills
3. To support young people to chart their career paths through formal education
4. To strengthen young farmers' forces in the production and marketing of farm produce in an environmentally sustainable manner.

### **4. POLICY STATEMENT/AIM**

This policy defines YHFG commitment to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable adults involving Employees and related personnel. In recognition of the special vulnerability of children, this policy also affirms YHFG commitment to the welfare and

protection from sexual exploitation and all forms of abuse of children, involving Employees and related personnel.

YHFG has a zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse. It takes seriously all concerns and complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse involving Employees and related personnel. YHFG initiates investigations of complaints that indicate a possible violation of this policy and takes appropriate disciplinary action as warranted.

## **5.0 Scope of Application**

The policy applies to all YHFG Employees and its Related Personnel

## **6.0 Definitions of terms under this policy**

### **6.1 Children and vulnerable adults**

A child is any individual under the age of 18, irrespective of local country definition of when a child reaches adulthood.

Vulnerable adults are defined as those aged over 18 years and identify themselves as unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation; or who, due to their gender, mental or of physical health, disability, ethnicity, religious identity, sexual orientation, economic or social status, or as a result of disasters and conflicts are deemed to be at risk.

### **6.2 Sexual Exploitation**

Sexual exploitation is defined as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

### **6.3 Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of sexual nature, whether by force or coercive conditions.

### **6.4 Child exploitation and abuse (involves one or more of the following)**

#### **a. Physical abuse**

Physical abuse occurs when a person purposely injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This may be in the form punching, slapping, kicking, burning, grabbing or shaking. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fracture.

#### **b. Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child's self-esteem or social competence.

#### **c. Child Sexual Abuse**

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he/ she does not fully comprehend, give informed consent to, or for which he/ she is not developmentally prepared and

cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. It is evidenced by an activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. It may include, but not limited to, the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other lawful sexual practices or the exploitative use of pornographic performances and materials.

#### **6.5 Sexual Exploitation and abuse**

Use of the term "Sexual exploitation and abuse" throughout this policy refers to children as well as vulnerable adults.

#### **6.6 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel**

The term "YHFG Employees and Related Personnel includes all employees of YHFG and our target beneficiaries. The term also includes Board of Trustees, Volunteers, interns and international and local partners, in addition to individual and corporate contractors of these entities and related personnel.

### **7. Core Principles**

YHFG is committed to the Six Core Principles of the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13). In order to protect the most vulnerable population particularly vulnerable adults and children the six core principles must be adhered to:

7.1 Sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse by YHFG Employees and Related Personnel constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.

7.2 Sexual **activity** with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of the majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defense.

7.3 Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior by YHFG Employees and Related Personnel is prohibited. This includes the exchange of assistance that is due to programme participants.

7.4 Sexual relationship between YHFG Employees/Related Personnel and programme participants are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of YHFG's work.

7.5 Where an Employee of YHFG or Related Personnel develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation and child abuse by fellow worker, whether in YHFG or not, he or she must immediately report such concerns through the established agency reporting mechanisms.

7.6 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse and promotes the implementation of this policy. YHFG Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems, which maintain this environment.

## **8. Commitments**

YHFG is dedicated to fulfilling the six Core Principles through implementation of the following commitments. This include time-bound, measurable indicators of progress to enable entities of YHFG and others to monitor YHGF performance.

8.1 YHFG will incorporate standards on sexual exploitation and abuse and child protection in relevant codes of conduct and in induction materials and training courses for YHFG Employees and Related Personnel, including specific provisions for child sexual exploitation and abuse.

8.2 Ensure that complaint mechanisms for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse are accessible and that YHFG focal points for receiving complaints understand how to discharge their duties. This should include a documented reporting procedure in a relevant local language for sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse allegations and policy for non-compliance in, including available sanctions for breaches.

8.3 YHFG will investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse in a timely and professional manner. This include the use of appropriate interviewing practices with complainants and witnesses, particularly with children. Engage professional investigators or secure investigative expertise as appropriate.

8.4 YHFG will provide support and assistance to complainants of sexual exploitation and abuse or child abuse. This may include medical treatment, legal assistance and psychosocial support as appropriate and according to the wants and needs of the survivor whilst also taking account of confidentiality, cultural sensitivity and survivor safety.

8.5 Take swift and appropriate action including legal action when required, against YHFG Employee and Related Personnel who commit sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse. This may include administrative or disciplinary action, and/or referral to the relevant authorities for appropriate action, including criminal prosecution, in the abuser's country of origin as well as the host country

8.6 Take appropriate actions to the best of YHFG's abilities to protect persons from retaliation where allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse or child abuse are reported involving YHFG Employees or Related Personnel.

## **9. YHFG Employee and Related Personnel Standards**

YHFG ability to achieve its vision and mission depends upon the individual and collaborative efforts of all YHFG Employees and Related Personnel. Therefore, all YHFG Employees and Related Personnel must uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct and abide by YHFG policies. This policy sets the minimum standards to be followed by all YHFG Employees and Related Personnel to protect programme participants and communities from sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse by YHFG Employees and Related Personnel. Any violation of these standards is a serious concern and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in accordance with disciplinary procedures of each YHFG International

Member or Affiliate and applicable laws. All YHFG Employees and Related Personnel must sign these standards

9.1 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel will not request any service or sexual favor from participants of YHFG programs, children or others in the communities in which YHFG works, in return for protection or assistance, and will not engage in sexually exploitative or abusive relationships.

9.2 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel will not exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior. This prohibition against exchange of money for sex means YHFG Employees and Related Personnel may not engage the services of sex workers.

9.3 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel must refrain from sexual activity with any person under the age of 18, regardless of the local age of consent, i.e. the local or national laws of the country in which the employee works. Ignorance or mistaken belief of the child's age is not a defense. Failure to report such a relationship may lead to disciplinary action pursuant to YHFG's policies and procedures.

9.4 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel will not support or take part in any form of sexual exploitative or abusive activities, including, for example, child pornography or trafficking of human beings.

9.5 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel will treat all children with respect and not use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.

9.6 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel will protect, manage and utilize YHFG human, financial and material resources appropriately and will never use YHFG resources, including the use of computers, cameras, mobile phones or social media, to exploit or harass participants of YHFG programs, children or others in the communities in which YHFG works.

9.7 When photographing or filming a child for work-related purposes, YHFG Employees and Related Personnel will:

- Comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images,
- Obtain informed consent from the parent or guardian of child, before photographing or filming a child, explaining how the photograph or film will be used.
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner.
- Ensure file labels do not reveal identifying information about a child.

9.8 Wherever possible, YHFG Employees and Related Personnel should work with another adult present when working with children.

9.9 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel must immediately disclose charges, conviction and other outcomes of an offence that relates to child exploitation and abuse including those under traditional law.

9.10 YHFG Employees and Related Personnel must undertake to create and maintain an environment that promotes implementation of this policy.

9.11 Directors, Program Managers and Project Supervisors at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems that maintain an environment that facilitates implementation of this policy and which is free of sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse.

Signed,  
The Executive Director  
Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana.