



GonetAfrica Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

Ensuring Safety, Dignity, and Rights of Every Child and Young Person

1. Policy Statement

- a) GonetAfrica, through its Africa Youth Leadership Academy (AYLA), is fully committed to protecting all children and young people participating in its programs, activities, trainings, events, mentorship sessions, and digital platforms.
- b) GonetAfrica maintains zero tolerance for any form of child abuse, exploitation, neglect, trafficking, or harassment—whether physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological.
- c) The protection, dignity, rights, and best interests of every child and young person (ages 5–24) shall be upheld at all times, in line with:
 - I. The Liberia Children’s Law (2011)
 - II. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
 - III. African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
 - IV. Safeguarding frameworks used by global development organizations
 - V. GonetAfrica’s institutional values of Integrity, Respect, Accountability, Innovation, Inclusion, and Empowerment

2. Purpose of the Policy

- a) This policy seeks to:
 - I. Establish strong safeguarding standards across all AYLA programs
 - II. Prevent harm and create safe learning and leadership environments
 - III. Protect children and youth from all forms of abuse, exploitation, harassment, and risk
 - IV. Provide clear guidelines and codes of conduct for staff, volunteers, facilitators, mentors, and partners
 - V. Create effective reporting and response systems
 - VI. Promote child- and youth-friendly learning spaces online and offline
 - VII. Strengthen organizational accountability for safeguarding



3. Scope

a) This policy applies to:

- I. All GonetAfrica/AYLA staff, interns, volunteers, consultants
- II. Youth mentors, trainers, facilitators, and program coordinators
- III. External partners, contractors, and vendors that work with AYLA
- IV. Visitors participating in AYLA events or with access to children
- V. All children and young people enrolled in AYLA programs
- VI. All in-person programs, online platforms, field trips, camps, retreats, and mentorship events

b) This includes the Africa Youth Leadership Academy (AYLA), Youth Empowerment Programs, Vacation Camps, School Leadership Initiatives, and all related youth development activities.

4. Definitions

- I. **Child:** Any person under the age of 18.
- II. **Young Person:** A youth aged 18–24 participating in AYLA programs.
- III. **Safeguarding:** Measures taken to protect children and youth from abuse, exploitation, violence, or neglect.
- IV. **Child Abuse:** Any mistreatment—physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or digital—that harms a child’s well-being.
- V. **Exploitation:** Using a child for personal, political, or financial gain, including forced labor and online exploitation.
- VI. **Child Neglect:** Failure to meet a child’s basic physical or emotional needs.
- VII. **Sexual Harassment & Abuse:** Any sexual contact, gesture, suggestion, comment, or behavior toward a child or youth that is inappropriate, abusive, unwanted, or exploitative.
- VIII. **Digital Abuse:** Any harmful behavior toward a child online, including cyberbullying, grooming, or sharing harmful content.

5. Guiding Principles

a) GonetAfrica upholds the following safeguarding principles:

- I. Zero tolerance for abuse, exploitation, or harassment
- II. The best interest of the child must guide all actions and decisions
- III. No child left alone with an adult without supervision (two-adult rule)
- IV. Do-no-harm—all programs must prioritize child welfare



- V. Child participation—children have a right to be heard
- VI. Equality and nondiscrimination for all children regardless of gender, disability, religion, tribe, socioeconomic status, or background
- VII. Confidentiality and data protection
- VIII. Mandatory reporting—all staff must report concerns immediately
- IX. Accountability and transparency in responding to safeguarding issues

6. Code of Conduct for Staff, Trainers, and Volunteers

All individuals working with AYLA must follow these rules:

a) Staff/Volunteers Must:

- I. Treat every child with dignity, respect, and care
- II. Maintain professional boundaries at all times
- III. Use positive, nonviolent discipline methods
- IV. Dress appropriately during programs
- V. Communicate with children respectfully
- VI. Ensure child-safe transportation and supervision
- VII. Report any safeguarding concern immediately
- VIII. Use youth-friendly and inclusive language
- IX. Obtain consent for photos, videos, and digital content
- X. Maintain a safe learning environment online and offline

b) Staff/Volunteers Must NOT:

- I. Engage in any sexual activity or inappropriate behavior with a child
- II. Encourage romantic relationships with children or youth
- III. Hit, insult, threaten, or emotionally harm a child
- IV. Offer gifts or favors in exchange for affection
- V. Take a child alone into a secluded space
- VI. Communicate privately with children after program hours without approval
- VII. Take photos or recordings without permission
- VIII. Share children's photos publicly without consent
- IX. Use harmful, discriminatory, or abusive language
- X. Ignore signs of abuse

7. Prevention Measures

To prevent harm, GonetAfrica will:



- I. Conduct background checks on staff and volunteers
- II. Provide mandatory safeguarding orientation for all trainers
- III. Use child-friendly and safe spaces for all programs
- IV. Enforce strict supervision guidelines
- V. Include safeguarding messages in all youth programs
- VI. Provide adequate child-to-adult ratios
- VII. Limit access to sensitive data and youth personal information
- VIII. Train children and youth on safety, rights, and reporting
- IX. Develop parent/guardian engagement systems

8. Safe Digital Engagement (Online Safeguarding)

a) AYLA uses digital learning platforms (GA-VLE, Zoom, WhatsApp groups). To protect children and youth:

- I. No private messaging between staff and children
- II. All communication must be through official channels
- III. No sharing of sensitive or inappropriate content
- IV. Activate waiting rooms and controlled access for online platforms
- V. Train youth on safe internet use
- VI. Disable private chat functions during online sessions if necessary
- VII. Keep video-on policies optional for privacy
- VIII. Obtain parental consent for minors joining online classes

9. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

a) Who Can Report?

- I. A child
- II. A young person
- III. Staff, volunteers, mentors
- IV. Parents/guardians
- V. Any member of the public

b) How to Report:

Reports can be submitted through:

- I. Safeguarding & Gender Officer (Primary Contact): Email: safeguarding@gonetacademy.com
- II. Program Coordinator – AYLA
- III. CEO's Office (urgent or severe cases)



IV. Anonymous Reporting Form (if available)

c) What to Report:

- I. Signs of abuse or emotional distress
- II. Suspicious behavior by staff or volunteers
- III. Risk of harm or exploitation
- IV. Inappropriate communication
- V. Any violation of the Code of Conduct

d) Confidentiality: All reports are protected and handled with discretion.

10. Response Procedures

Upon receiving a report:

- I. Acknowledge the concern within 24–72 hours
- II. Ensure the child is safe and protected
- III. Conduct an immediate risk assessment
- IV. Document the incident
- V. Notify relevant authorities for serious cases
- VI. Begin an internal investigation with the safeguarding committee
- VII. Interview relevant individuals
- VIII. Take protective action (suspension, removal, referral)
- IX. Provide psychosocial support or referrals for the survivor
- X. Communicate outcome while maintaining confidentiality

11. Collaboration with Parents and Guardians

GonetAfrica will:

- I. Involve parents in program orientation
- II. Provide safeguarding information to guardians
- III. Obtain consent for field trips, photos, and recordings
- IV. Communicate any safety concerns

12. Working with External Partners

a) Partners collaborating with AYLA must:

- I. Demonstrate commitment to child safeguarding
- II. Sign the Safeguarding Compliance Form



III. Follow GonetAfrica's policy standards

IV. Undergo training where necessary

13. Data Protection for Children and Youth

a) Aligned with GonetAfrica's Data Protection Policy:

- I. Only necessary data will be collected
- II. Photos/videos require consent
- III. Sensitive information is stored securely
- IV. Children's data will not be shared without permission

14. Monitoring & Review

This policy will be:

- I. Reviewed annually
- II. Updated in line with emerging safeguarding standards
- III. Monitored through program evaluations and audits

15. Consequences for Policy Violations

Depending on severity:

- I. Verbal/written warning
- II. Suspension
- III. Termination of employment or volunteer role
- IV. Blacklisting from future programs
- V. Reporting to law enforcement agencies
- VI. Prosecution under national child protection laws

16. Effective Date

a) This policy becomes effective January 2025 and applies to all GonetAfrica and AYLA programs thereafter.