

SAFEGUARDING POLICY



Implemented July 2025| Version 1.1

I. Introduction

As Yeryüzü Çocukları Association (YEÇED), we are committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment for everyone we work with, particularly children and vulnerable adults. Our safeguarding policy outlines our approach to preventing and responding to harm, abuse, and exploitation. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect children and vulnerable adults whom we are serving,
- Ensure all staff, volunteers, and representatives understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding,
- Provide clear procedures for reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns.

II. Policy Scope

- This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, partners, donors and board members associated with YEÇED.
- Unless specified otherwise, this policy is not contractual and does not constitute a part of the employment contract. It is subject to modification or amendment at any time.
- YEÇED reserves the right to adjust, modify, or deviate from the application or enforcement of this policy and procedure, including any time constraints, to accommodate the specifics of individual cases and uphold overarching principles. Any adjustments, modifications, or deviations from this policy require prior approval from the Board of Directors of YEÇED
- It is the duty of organizations to ensure that their staff, representatives, operations, and programs take necessary measures to prevent harm to children and vulnerable adults, as well as to refrain from subjecting them to

abuse or exploitation. Furthermore, organizations must respond appropriately in cases where harm does occur.

iii. Policy Principle

- YEÇED considers every person under the age of 18 as a child. In this context, it complies with all relevant child protection laws, including the Turkish Civil Code, the Child Protection Law No. 5395, the Turkish Penal Code (relevant articles on child abuse and exploitation), and the Law on Social Services No. 2828. YEÇED also adheres to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and all internal policies and procedures related to the protection and well-being of children.
- YEÇED respects and adheres to the fundamental human rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the internationally recognized human rights set forth in the International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including non-discrimination, the prohibition of child labor, and the prohibition of forced labor.
- **Best Interests of the Child:** The welfare and well-being of the child are of utmost importance and take precedence over all other considerations. Every decision, action, and policy implemented by our organization is guided by the fundamental principle that the best interests of the child must always be prioritized. This means that we are committed to creating a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment where children can thrive, ensuring their physical, emotional, and psychological needs are met to the highest standard. Our focus on the best interests of the child underscores our dedication to protecting their rights and promoting their overall well-being.
- We understand that reporting abuse, neglect, or exploitation can be challenging and distressing for those affected. YEÇED aims to make the process of reporting safeguarding incidents as stress-free as possible for victims/survivors. While our staff and representatives are required to report safeguarding concerns, this policy does not compel or obligate victims/survivors to disclose their experiences of abuse or exploitation if they do not wish to do so.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Every individual, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religious belief, or identity, and relationship status, is treated with respect and dignity. This policy promotes a culture within YEÇED that guarantees

non-discriminatory and respectful behavior among everyone we serve and work with, ensuring that harmful conduct is not tolerated.

- **Zero Tolerance:** YEÇED firmly upholds a zero-tolerance approach to any exploitation, abuse, neglect of individuals participating in our activities, those with whom we cooperate, our staff, and representatives.
- We acknowledge that certain individuals, both adults and children (under 18), may be particularly vulnerable. There is an extra obligation to assist those who lack capacity, are marginalized, or encounter additional obstacles to their safety and well-being, whether due to mental, physical, or situational factors, or because of their previous experiences of harm or exploitation.

Iv. Policy Commitment

- We confirm our commitment to protecting all individuals who participate in or work within our programs or other operations from any form of abuse and exploitation, and to providing suitable care and protection when abuse and exploitation are suspected.
- We ensure that every program, operation, and activity is designed to prioritize the safeguarding and well-being of all individuals who are expected to interact with our work, mission, or program delivery.
- We commit to informing all participants in our activities, as well as those we collaborate with, about the behavior standards they can expect from our staff and representatives, and how to raise any concerns.
- YEÇED commits to offer assistance to individuals who have experienced abuse, exploitation, or harassment, either through the Program department or a suitable partner agency.
- We are committed to ensuring that all staff and representatives are knowledgeable about our policy and expectations concerning the prevention, reporting, and handling of allegations pertaining to all forms of abuse outlined within this policy.
- It is imperative that all staff and volunteers fully comply with the safeguarding policy and procedures at all times. This includes being vigilant and proactive in identifying any potential safeguarding issues or concerns.
- They must promptly report any incidents, suspicions, or allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation to the designated safeguarding officer. Additionally, staff and volunteers are encouraged to foster an environment of openness and support, where everyone feels safe to share their concerns.

- Training and ongoing education on safeguarding practices are also essential responsibilities to ensure they are well-equipped to protect the well-being of children and vulnerable adults under their care.
- YEÇED pledges to take necessary measures against staff and representatives who are involved in any form of abuse, exploitation, or violation of this policy. This includes reporting cases to law enforcement agencies when necessary, which could lead to severe disciplinary actions, up to and including termination of employment.
- YEÇED is dedicated to taking strong measures to prevent perpetrators of abuse from being hired or rehired by YEÇED or any other organization that works with vulnerable individuals. This commitment includes obtaining and providing accurate references in accordance with the Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and reporting cases to relevant statutory or law enforcement agencies.
- All staff and representatives maintain appropriate boundaries when interacting with individuals participating in our activities, including their use of social media and digital media, in accordance with the Social Media Policy.
- YEÇED reports and shares information regarding any allegation, concern, or suspicion of abuse. Staff and representatives must understand that withholding information about someone's abuse can interfere with necessary care and protection for the victim and delay efforts to minimize the risk of harm to others. Failure to report, withholding information, mishandling abuse allegations, or failing to maintain safeguarding confidentiality can result in disciplinary action.
- YEÇED confirms that all staff and representatives never attempt to engage in any sexual activity with individuals under the age of 18, irrespective of the local age of consent. Misunderstanding or being unaware of a child's age is not an acceptable excuse
- YEÇED confirms that all staff and representatives never attempt to engage in any sexual activity or inappropriate behavior with individuals involved in our activities or those we work with. Staff and representatives must adhere to the Code of Conduct and this policy.
- YEÇED confirms that all staff and representatives never suggest that payment, protection, assistance (goods or services, including financial services), employment, or any opportunity is granted in exchange for engaging in any exploitative or harmful behavior, including sexual activity.

- YEÇED never negotiates any settlement (financial or otherwise) between a victim/survivor of abuse (or their family) and an alleged perpetrator. Such incidents should be reported in accordance with this policy.
- YEÇED never fails to report or delay reporting safeguarding concerns as required by this policy; a lack of evidence is not a valid reason to withhold or postpone reporting concerns about exploitation or abuse.

V. Roles And Responsibilities

- The Director of Safeguarding is responsible for overseeing all safeguarding procedures. All staff members are required to report any concerns to the Safeguarding Officer.
- The program officer is tasked with the responsibility of addressing safeguarding complaints and supporting the safeguarding culture and implementation across all organizational functions.
- Staff assigned to YEÇED Central Office or Programs are expected to adhere to the safeguarding reporting protocols established by YEÇED in addition to complying with this Policy.

Vi. Incident Reporting And Responding

- In Türkiye, any member of staff and or a representative who believes that anyone is at imminent risk of significant harm should contact the police by ringing 112.
- You can report the situation to the YEÇED Headquarters for support (as specified below).
- Staff and representatives must report any concerns about staff and representatives or the welfare of anyone to the YEÇED Central Office within 24 hours, either by emailing complaint@yeced.org.
- YEÇED will conduct an internal investigation in line with its safeguarding policy and disciplinary procedures. If the concern is substantiated, and depending on the nature and severity of the incident, YEÇED will refer the matter to the relevant legal or regulatory authorities for official action, including prosecution where applicable. This ensures that all safeguarding violations are addressed not only internally but also through the formal legal framework where required.

- Any concerns regarding the safety and well-being of children or vulnerable individuals in Türkiye will be handled in accordance with national **statutory guidance**. Such concerns will be reported to the relevant **government agency or authority** responsible for child protection and social welfare. This ensures that appropriate action is taken by the competent public body in line with Turkish law.
- YEÇED will provide support to individuals who raise concerns and will not tolerate harassment, bullying, or victimization of staff members for doing so, regardless of the outcome of the concern. Any staff member or representative reporting a valid concern under this policy will not face adverse consequences in terms of their employment, involvement, or opportunities for future advancement or training. Any instance of victimization will be treated as a disciplinary matter.
- When deemed necessary, YEÇED will notify the Department of Associations under the Ministry of Interior, which regulates charitable organizations in Türkiye and ensures their lawful and ethical operations. Additionally, YEÇED will fulfill its responsibility to inform relevant donors and stakeholders about serious safeguarding incidents as appropriate.

Vii. Support For Victims/Survivors

- YEÇED will offer support to adults who have experienced abuse, as outlined in the procedure for Supporting Victims/Survivors of Sexual Exploitation & Abuse, irrespective of whether they choose to be involved in an investigation.
- Victims/survivors have the autonomy to choose whether they want to participate in an investigation. If a victim/survivor opts not to take part in an investigation, YEÇED will evaluate the circumstances and determine if an investigation should still proceed. In essence, the organization respects the wishes of the victim/survivor while also ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to address the situation effectively.

Viii. Training And Awareness

- All staff and representatives must complete their Safeguarding Induction Training, in addition to other training relevant to their role and within appropriate timescales, as stipulated by YEÇED.

Ix. Recruitment

- The hiring process for all staff and volunteers must adhere to safer recruitment principles. This includes, but is not limited to, securing suitable references, verifying identity, and completing pre-engagement checks, such as criminal records checks, appropriate to the level of contact with children or vulnerable individuals in the role, before they start.
- YEÇED's recruitment processes must rigorously ensure that individuals who exploit or abuse others are not hired or re-hired by YEÇED or affiliated organizations working with vulnerable populations. This involves a commitment to obtaining and providing accurate references and reporting incidents to relevant authorities.

X. Partnership Agreement

- YEÇED chooses to collaborate exclusively with partners, individuals, groups, or organizations that uphold similar principles to prevent exploitation and abuse in their policies. These principles must include clear requirements ensuring their staff and representatives are suitable to work with YEÇED, demonstrate their commitment to maintaining safeguarding compliance. If partners, individuals, groups, or organizations do not have their own written policies, or do not meet YEÇED's standards, they must formally agree to and implement the standards outlined in YEÇED's policy.
- Staff responsible for managing any formal or contractual relationships between YEÇED and partners, individuals, groups, or organizations that involve contact with our beneficiaries (including handling data and/or working with images of our beneficiaries, particularly children) must ensure that these contracts require the partner to uphold robust and effective safeguarding measures in line with this policy.

Xi. Policy Review And Accountability

YEÇED is committed to ensuring that this Safeguarding Policy remains relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs and rights of affected populations, in line with the **IASC Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) framework**. Regular reviews will ensure alignment with evolving national legislation, international standards, and best practices in safeguarding and accountability.

This policy will be **formally reviewed every two years** or earlier in the event of:

- Major safeguarding incidents or allegations;
- Legislative or regulatory changes;
- Significant organizational changes affecting safeguarding responsibilities;
- Feedback from stakeholders, including affected communities, survivors, staff, partners, and auditors.

Community participation will be a central part of the review process. Feedback and input from affected populations—especially those at risk—will be collected through safe, accessible, and culturally appropriate channels. This feedback will be documented, analyzed, and used to guide policy adjustments.

The review process will be led by the **Director of Safeguarding**, in collaboration with relevant departments, community representatives, and partner organizations, and will be approved by the Board of Directors.

All revisions to this policy will be **clearly communicated** to staff, volunteers, partners, and affected communities through both internal and public channels. Updated versions will be made available in accessible formats and languages, ensuring inclusivity.

Staff and representatives are responsible for familiarizing themselves with and adhering to the most recent version of this policy. **Training materials and operational tools will be updated accordingly**, and refresher training will be provided to ensure understanding and application.

Alignment with IASC AAP Commitments

IASC AAP Commitment	How This Policy Review Process Meets the Commitment
1. Provide information	Updated policy versions are shared through internal and public channels, in accessible formats and languages, ensuring all stakeholders are informed.
2. Consult with and listen to communities	Policy review includes structured feedback collection from affected populations, especially those at higher risk.
3. Promote community participation	Community representatives are directly involved in the review process alongside YEÇED staff and partners.
4. Establish and act on feedback and complaints	Feedback from stakeholders, including survivors, is documented, analyzed, and used to guide policy changes.
5. Learn and improve	Regular reviews incorporate lessons learned from incidents, evaluations, and audits to strengthen safeguarding practices.

Children of Earth Association

Karagumruk. Viran Odaları St. Nu: 15 Fatih/İstanbul, 0(212) 909 20 45
yecedorg@gmail.com - www.yeced.org/en