

# COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CAMEROON (COHESODEC) BAMENDA- N.W.R. CAMEROON- AFRICA

**MOTTO: COMMUNITY WELFARE; OUR PRIORITY**

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## COHESODEC POLICY ON CHILD PROTECTION

### **FUNCTIONAL AREA: CHILD PROTECTION**

**Related policies:** Code of Conduct and whistle Blowing Policy.

- Sponsored Visits to the Field.

**Procedures:** Child Protection – Say “Yes!” To Keeping Children Safe

Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Issues in COHESODEC.

COHESODEC Child Protection Policy Implementation Standards must be fully respected by all.

**Corporate:** By-Laws of COHESODEC.

**Strategy:** Keeping Children Safe, COHESODEC also aims at Protecting Cameroonian Children from, all forms of abuse.

### **Child Protection Policy**

**Say “YES!” To Keeping Children Safe!**

#### **Summary / Purpose**

As a national Child protection and community development organization whose work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), COHESODEC is committed to promoting the rights of children including their right to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. COHESODEC takes active measures to ensure children’s rights to protection are fully realized.

COHESODEC acknowledges its expectation, that it’s employees and others who work with its structures have children’s best interests at the heart of their involvement with COHESODEC.

This child Protection Policy is COHESODEC’s statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear to all in the organization

and who come into contact with us what is required in relation to the protection of children, and that child abuse in any form is unacceptable to COHESODEC.

## **A) COHESODEC's vision for Child Protection**

### **Vision**

We aim to create child safe' environments within the national territory of Cameroon respected, protected, empowered and active in their own protection, and where Staff are skilled, confident, competent and well supported in meeting their protection responsibilities.

### **STATEMENT**

COHESODEC is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children's rights to protection are fully realized. We take seriously our responsibilities to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we will take positive action to prevent child abusers from becoming involved with COHESODEC in any way and take stringent measures against any COHESODEC Staff and/or Associate who abuses a child. Our decisions and actions in response to 'child protection concerns' will be guided by the principle of "the best interests of the child"

### ***DEFINITIONS UNDER THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY***

- A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years
- Child Abuse is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consist of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their prospects of safe and healthy development into adulthood.
- Child Protection, within the scope of this policy, is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that COHESODEC undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

### **Scope of the 'Child Protection Policy'**

The Child Protection Policy applies to everyone working for or associated with COHESODEC. It encompasses the whole of COHESODEC and includes without limitation.

- Staff at all levels- In the field all over the National territory, National Organizations as well as International Organizations working with COHESODEC.
- COHESODEC Associates- these include Board Members, Volunteers, Community volunteers, sponsors, consultants and contractors. Also the staff and/or representatives of partner organizations and local governments who have been brought into contact

with children or are party to COHESODEC child sensitive data while working for or with COHESODEC.

- COHESODEC Visitors- (e.g. donors, journalists, media, researchers, celebrities etc) who may come into contact with children through COHESODEC are also bound by this policy.

### ***Responsibilities under the Child Protection Policy***

#### **COHESODEC Staff, Associates and Visitors must:**

- Never abuse and /or exploit a child or act/ behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.
- Report any “Child Abuse and Protection concerns” they have in accordance with applicable local office procedures. This is a mandatory requirement for Staff. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
- Respond to a child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local office procedures.
- Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
- Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
- Always ask permission from children (or in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before taking images (e.g. photographs videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Ensure that any images taken of children are respectful (for example: children should have adequate clothing that covers up their sexual organs. Images of children in sexually suggestive poses or that in any way impact negatively on their dignity or privacy are not acceptable. Stories and images of children should be based on the child’s best interest.
- Be aware that where concerns exist about the conduct of Staff or Associates in relation to child protection and/or where there has been a breach of the Child Protection Policy, this will be investigated under this policy either: by consideration of referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under the law of the country and /or COHESODEC in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary sanctions and/or dismissal for Staff.

***N.B -Be aware that COHESODEC will sever all relations with any COHESODEC Associates or Visitors who is proven to have committed child abuse.***

- Be aware that, if a legitimate concern about suspected child is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, any employee who makes false and malicious accusations will face disciplinary action.

***N.B -Be aware that COHESODEC will take appropriate legal or other action against COHESODEC Associates and Visitors who make false and malicious accusations of child abuse.***

### **COHESODEC Staff must not:**

- Disclose information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public unless the disclosure is in accordance with standard COHESODEC policies and procedures.

### **COHESODEC Associates and Visitors must not:**

10. Disclosed information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public without explicit consent from COHESODEC.

### **All Officials of COHESODEC must;**

11. Ensures that each COHESODEC area of intervention has in place local procedures that are consistent with the global Child Protection Policy and with the document Reporting and Responding to Child Protection Issues in COHESODEC to respond to incidents of child abuse. Local procedure should be developed with assistance of local advisers in accordance with the local law. Any deviation from the global policy must have prior formal approval from the relevant Regional Directors or National Director of COHESODEC. Also ensure that local procedures are made available in all official languages.

### **PERSONAL CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK**

We are committed to ensuring that our Staff and representatives apply high standards of behaviour towards children within both their professional and their private lives. COHESODEC does not intend to dictate the belief and value systems by which COHESODEC employees conduct their personal lives. COHESODEC position throughout Cameroon dependent, however, on maintaining good relations and upholding its reputation as a child- focused community development organization with numerous communities and organizations. Unlawful or other conducts by COHESODEC employees which jeopardizes COHESODEC reputation or position whether during or after business hours will not be permitted. Such conduct includes but is not limited to: any unlawful activity related to sexual abuse: any other unlawful activity: sexual harassment: physically/verbally abusive behaviours; and public disorderly conduct.

**Staff and Associates are requires to bear in mind the principles of the Child Protection Policy and heighten their awareness of how their behaviour may be perceived both at work and outside work.**



CHENWIELVIS FUH  
Coordinator