

NextGEM Foundation

A future for every orphan.

CODE OF CONDUCT & CHILD SAFEGUARDING AGREEMENT

— For All Staff, Volunteers, and Partners —

PREAMBLE

NextGEM Foundation was established in 2026 in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria, with one unwavering conviction: losing a parent does not mean losing a future. Guided by the love, care, and dignity modelled by Jesus Christ, we exist not to manage orphaned children — but to raise them.

We do not see orphans. We see children. We see future doctors, engineers, teachers, builders, and community leaders. Every child in our care is a whole person deserving of respect, ambition, and the full dignity of their humanity.

This Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Agreement exists to protect that conviction. Every person who works with, volunteers with, or partners with NextGEM Foundation must uphold these standards without exception.

SECTION 1: OUR FOUNDATIONAL VALUES

1.1 The Dignity of Every Child

Every child in NextGEM Foundation's care is made in the image of God and deserves to be treated with full human dignity. We reject any language, attitude, or practice that reduces a child to their circumstances. Children will never be referred to as charity projects, objects of pity, or defined by the loss they have experienced.

Staff, volunteers, and partners are expected to speak about and to children in a manner that affirms their worth, their potential, and their belonging.

1.2 Children as Children

Children in our programs are to be treated first and foremost as children — not as symbols of suffering, not as fundraising content, and not as beneficiaries to be managed. They are to experience the joy, play, education, discipline, and love that every child deserves.

We actively work against the stigmatisation that orphaned children often face in society. Our internal culture must model the external world we want to create for them.

1.3 Christian Ethics of Love and Care

NextGEM Foundation operates according to the ethics of Jesus Christ: radical love, unconditional acceptance, servant leadership, and sacrificial care. These are not decorative values — they are the operational standard by which all decisions and relationships within the Foundation are measured.

This includes how we speak, how we correct, how we celebrate, and how we protect.

1.4 Our Purpose

The goal of everything we do is to produce well-mannered, ambitious, capable adults who can make meaningful contributions to their families, communities, and nation. Every programme, policy, and interaction should be evaluated against this purpose.

SECTION 2: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

2.1 General Standards

All persons associated with NextGEM Foundation are required to:

- Maintain honest, transparent, and professional conduct at all times.
- Treat every child, colleague, volunteer, and community member with respect and courtesy.
- Carry out their responsibilities with diligence, integrity, and accountability.
- Refrain from any behaviour that brings the Foundation or its beneficiaries into disrepute.
- Disclose any actual or perceived conflicts of interest immediately to Foundation leadership.
- Comply with all applicable laws and regulations of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

2.2 Language and Communication

- Use affirming, constructive language when speaking with or about children.
- Never label or describe children using derogatory, pitying, or stigmatising terms.
- Communicate policies and expectations clearly and respectfully with children, using age-appropriate language.
- Respond promptly and professionally to communication from colleagues, partners, and the community.

2.3 Social Media and Public Communication

- No child's image, name, story, or identifying information shall be shared on any public platform without explicit written consent from Foundation leadership and, where applicable, legal guardians.
- Children must never be photographed in a manner that is demeaning, exploitative, or reduces them to their circumstances.
- Staff and volunteers must not make public statements on behalf of the Foundation without authorisation.
- Any social media content involving children must preserve their dignity and tell a story of hope and potential, not suffering.

SECTION 3: CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY

3.1 Our Commitment

NextGEM Foundation has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm against children in our care. This commitment extends to physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological safety. The welfare of the child is always the highest priority.

3.2 Prohibited Conduct

The following behaviours are strictly prohibited and constitute grounds for immediate dismissal, reporting to authorities, and legal action where applicable:

- Any form of physical abuse, including hitting, pinching, shaking, or any other physical punishment.
- Any form of sexual abuse, harassment, grooming, or exploitation.
- Emotional abuse, including persistent belittling, humiliation, intimidation, or verbal cruelty.
- Neglect of any child's physical, emotional, educational, or spiritual needs.
- Developing inappropriate personal or romantic relationships with children.
- Spending time alone with a child outside of supervised, approved activities.
- Inviting a child to your home or personal spaces without prior approval and supervision.
- Giving a child gifts, money, or special favours outside of Foundation-approved programmes.
- Using or sharing a child's image, story, or information for personal gain.
- Exposing children to inappropriate content, language, or situations.
- Using alcohol, narcotics, or any impairing substances while working with or near children.

3.3 Safe Interactions

To protect both children and staff, all interactions must follow these protocols:

- All one-on-one interactions with children should take place in open, observable spaces.
- Multiple staff or volunteers should be present during all group activities involving children.
- Children should always be informed of activities, schedules, and any changes in a clear, reassuring manner.
- Physical contact with children must be appropriate and limited to what is necessary (e.g., a comforting hand on the shoulder, guiding a child in an activity). No contact of an intimate nature.
- Any situation in which a child expresses discomfort about a person or interaction must be taken seriously and reported immediately.

3.4 Discipline Policy

Discipline within NextGEM Foundation programmes shall be:

- Constructive, restorative, and consistent with Christian love.
- Age-appropriate and focused on teaching and growth, not punishment.
- Never physical, humiliating, or emotionally harmful.

Children are to be corrected with the same care and gentleness with which any good parent would raise their own child.

3.5 Reporting Obligations

All staff, volunteers, and partners have a mandatory duty to report any suspicion, concern, or disclosure of child abuse or unsafe behaviour. Reports must be made immediately to the Foundation's designated Child Safeguarding Lead. Reports will be treated with confidentiality and urgency.

Failure to report a safeguarding concern is a serious violation of this Agreement and will result in disciplinary action.

3.6 Responding to a Disclosure

If a child discloses abuse or harm to you:

- Listen calmly and do not express shock, disbelief, or alarm.
- Affirm the child and make clear they have done the right thing by telling you.
- Do not promise confidentiality or make commitments you cannot keep.
- Do not investigate or ask leading questions.
- Report immediately to the Child Safeguarding Lead.
- Record what was said as accurately as possible.

SECTION 4: SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE

4.1 Child Safeguarding Lead

NextGEM Foundation shall designate a Child Safeguarding Lead responsible for receiving reports, coordinating responses, liaising with authorities, and reviewing safeguarding policies annually. The name and contact details of the Safeguarding Lead will be displayed at all Foundation premises.

4.2 Recruitment and Vetting

All persons working with children through NextGEM Foundation must:

- Provide valid identification and references prior to engagement.
- Sign and return this Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Agreement before commencing any work.
- Undergo orientation on child safeguarding policies before any direct contact with children.
- Consent to any background verification process required by the Foundation.

4.3 Training

NextGEM Foundation is committed to training all staff and volunteers on child safeguarding. Safeguarding training shall be completed:

- Upon onboarding for all new staff and volunteers.
- Annually for all existing staff and volunteers.
- Whenever significant changes in safeguarding policy are made.

4.4 Review

This Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Agreement will be reviewed annually or following any safeguarding incident, whichever occurs sooner. Updates will be communicated to all staff and volunteers.

SECTION 5: DECLARATION AND AGREEMENT

By signing below, I confirm that:

- I have read, understood, and agree to comply with this Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Agreement in its entirety.
- I understand that any breach of this Agreement may result in immediate termination of my role, removal from Foundation premises, and referral to the appropriate authorities.
- I am committed to the dignity, safety, and flourishing of every child in the care of NextGEM Foundation.
- I will report any concern or suspicion of harm immediately, without hesitation.

Full Name (Print)

Signature

Role / Position

Date (DD/MM/YYYY)

For Official Use

Received and Verified by (Foundation Representative)

Date