



Ishyaka Swim Club Safeguarding Policy

This policy is available in English & Kinyarwanda

Our commitment

- ≈ Every swimmer has the right to be safe, respected, and treated with dignity at Ishyaka Swim Club.
- ≈ Every adult in our club shares responsibility for protecting children.
- ≈ Any concern raised will be taken seriously and acted on.

1. What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding means protecting children from harm. It is the practical way we put Rwanda's child protection laws into action — in our coaching, our travel, our messages, and how we treat each other.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and Rwanda's Law N°71/2018 on the Protection of the Child all recognise every child's right to be free from violence, abuse, and neglect. This policy is how we honour that right at the pool.

2. Who This Policy Covers

This policy applies to everyone at Ishyaka:

- ≈ All swimmers, including those under 18
- ≈ All coaches, assistants, and volunteers
- ≈ Club leaders and committee members
- ≈ Parents and guardians
- ≈ Visitors, officials, and guests at club events

3. Types of Harm We Prevent

Type	What it means
Physical abuse	Deliberately causing physical pain or injury to a child, or allowing others to do so. ≈ Includes hitting, kicking, and giving extra exercise as punishment.
Emotional abuse	Persistently mistreating a child in ways that damage their emotional wellbeing or development. ≈ Includes repeatedly shaming, threatening, ignoring, bullying, or name-calling.
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse is committing, or allowing others to commit, any sexual act, contact, comment, or threat directed at a child, including unwanted touching or sharing sexual images. Sexual abuse requires more secrecy than other forms of child abuse, so is more difficult to report. Some victims, through the process of grooming, are taught that sexual activity is a form



Type	What it means
	of love, so may be protective of their abusers because of this perception. ≈ <i>Sexual abuse is a crime under Rwandan Law N°059/2023 of 04/12/2023. Any disclosure must be taken seriously and reported immediately.</i>
Neglect	Intentionally denying a child adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care, or education. ≈ <i>Includes ignoring a health concern or leaving a minor unsupervised.</i>
Bullying	Repeated behaviour meant to hurt, scare, or exclude someone. ≈ <i>Includes messages sent online (cyberbullying).</i>

4. Everyone's Responsibilities

Club leadership must:

- ≈ Hold the Club President responsible for safeguarding, with the authority and training to act
- ≈ Make sure all staff read and sign this policy before working with swimmers
- ≈ Act on concerns promptly and review this policy every year

Coaches and staff must:

- ≈ Treat every swimmer with respect — never use punishment, shame, or threats
- ≈ Follow all the rules in Section 5 of this policy
- ≈ Report any concern about a swimmer's safety (see Section 6)
- ≈ Sign the Code of Conduct in Appendix A

Parents and guardians must:

- ≈ Read this policy and sign the acknowledgement form
- ≈ Tell the Club President if they have concerns about their child
- ≈ Teach their children that they can always speak to a trusted adult

Swimmers should:

- ≈ Treat teammates and coaches with respect
- ≈ Tell a trusted adult — a coach, parent, or club leader — if something feels wrong or unsafe

Swimmers ***always*** have the right to say no to any touch that makes them uncomfortable, and will not be in trouble for speaking up

5. Rules That Keep Swimmers Safe

Coaching and physical contact

- ≈ Coaches may only touch a swimmer to correct technique or for safety, and only where others can see

- ≈ Coaches must tell a swimmer what they are about to do and check the swimmer is comfortable
- ≈ Physical punishment is not allowed — no hitting, and no extra training given as punishment
- ≈ If a swimmer asks a coach to stop, the coach must stop immediately

Alone with a child

- ≈ Coaches must not be alone with a minor swimmer in a private space
- ≈ One-to-one training sessions with a minor are only allowed in a visible place, with a parent or second adult nearby

Messages and social media

- ≈ All messages between coaches and minor swimmers must include a parent or be sent in a club group
- ≈ Coaches must not send private messages to a minor's personal phone or social media
- ≈ Photos or videos of swimmers may only be shared with written permission from parents

Travel and competitions

- ≈ A minor must not travel alone with a single unrelated adult — a second adult must also be present
- ≈ Minors must not share a room with an unrelated adult at overnight events
- ≈ Any adult taking a minor in their personal vehicle must have written permission from the parents first

Changing areas

- ≈ Adults must not enter the changing area used by minors of the opposite gender
- ≈ No photos or videos may be taken in or near changing areas

Bullying

- ≈ Bullying — whether verbal, physical, or online — is not allowed
- ≈ Coaches who see bullying must act on it and report it

6. Warning Signs

These signs may mean a child is being harmed — at the club or at home. One sign alone may not mean much, but take it seriously and speak to the Club President.

Changes in behaviour	Physical signs
• Goes quiet or seems anxious • Repeatedly doesn't want to come to training • Flinches at movement or touch • Seems afraid of someone at the club	• Bruises or injuries not explained • Always tired or poorly fed • Covers arms or legs with clothing • Mentions pain that has no clear cause
In what they say	Around adults at the club
• Talks about a 'secret' with an adult • Mentions getting gifts from an adult	• An adult singles one child out a lot • An adult tries to be alone with a child



- Asks to hurt themselves or says they want to
- Uses sexual words you wouldn't expect

- An adult breaks these rules
- A swimmer seems frightened of a specific person

If a swimmer tells you something

- ≈ Stay calm. Your reaction matters.
- ≈ Listen. Don't interrupt or ask leading questions.
- ≈ Do NOT promise to keep it secret.
- ≈ Tell them: 'You were right to tell me. I will help you.'
- ≈ Write down what they said, in their words, as soon as you can.
- ≈ Report it to the Club President straight away. Do not confront anyone yourself.

7. How to Report a Concern

You do not need to be certain that harm has happened. If something worries you, report it. You can speak in person, by phone, or in writing.

Role	Contact
Club President	Ms. Elise Deeqa Mugabo +250 248 196 · +250 781 255 118 elise@ishyakasports.org

If the concern involves club leadership, go directly to the authorities below.

Where to go	Who they are and what they do
Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) · 116	Call in any emergency or if you think a crime against a child has been committed.
Isange One Stop Centre	Free, private support at all referral hospitals. Medical care, counselling, and legal help.
NCDA (National Child Development Agency)	Rwanda's government body for child protection. Report through them or your district child welfare officer.
Inshuti z'Umuryango (IZU)	Community volunteers — two per village. They can hear a concern and connect you with professional help.

Mandatory reporting

Under Rwanda's Law N°71/2018 on the Protection of the Child, everyone who knows a child has been harmed or is at risk must report it. All Ishyaka coaches and staff are required by law to report. Failing to report is an offence.

8. What Happens After a Report

- ≈ The Club President will listen and write down a private record of the concern.
- ≈ If a child is in immediate danger, the police (112) are called straight away.
- ≈ For other concerns, the Club President will decide whether to involve outside agencies or handle it within the club. Sexual abuse must be reported directly to the Isange One Stop Centre and the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB).
- ≈ The club will work with the police, NCDA, or other agencies as needed. The person accused will not be named publicly while the matter is being looked into, but may be asked to step back from their role.
- ≈ Reports are kept private. Information is shared only with those who need to know — but if a child's safety requires it, we will share information with the authorities.
- ≈ If a swimmer has been harmed, the club's first priority is their safety and recovery. They will be believed, supported, and helped to reach outside services.

9. Code of Conduct for Coaches and Staff

All coaches, assistants, and volunteers must sign this code before working with swimmers.

I will:	I will not:
• Treat every swimmer with respect and dignity • Coach in ways that are encouraging and right for their age • Follow all rules in this policy • Report any safeguarding concern straight away • Only message minor swimmers in a group or with parents included • Take safeguarding training seriously	• Use physical punishment, shame, or verbal abuse • Be alone with a minor in a private space • Send private messages to a minor's phone or social media • Take or share photos of swimmers without parents' written permission • Drink alcohol or use illegal substances around swimmers • Ignore bullying among swimmers

10. Screening, Training, and Review

Screening:

Before any coach or volunteer starts, the club will interview them, check two references, and ask about any prior record involving children or violence. They must sign this policy before starting.

Training:

All new coaches will be introduced to this policy before they start. The club will hold at least one safeguarding session per year for all coaches, staff, and parent representatives.



Review:

This policy will be reviewed every year (next: June 2027), or sooner if there is a serious incident or a change in Rwandan law. Club leadership leads the review and approves any changes.



Appendix A: Acknowledgement of Policy

Coach / Staff / Volunteer

I, _____, confirm that I have read and understood the Ishyaka Swim Club Safeguarding Policy and agree to follow it.

I understand that breaching this policy may result in removal from my role and referral to the authorities.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Role at club: _____

Parent / Guardian

I, _____, parent or guardian of _____, confirm that I have read the Ishyaka Swim Club Safeguarding Policy and understand my responsibilities.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



Appendix B: Safeguarding Concern Report Form

Complete this form as soon as possible and give it to the Club President. In an emergency, call 116 (RIB) first.

Date and time of concern:	
Your name:	
Your role at club:	
Name of swimmer (if known):	
Age of swimmer:	
Name of person concerned about:	
What happened — use the swimmer's own words:	
What did you do immediately?	
Any witnesses?	
Signature:	

After submitting

In an emergency — call 116 (RIB) first.

Give to the Club President. If unavailable, contact another club leader.

Do not share what is in this form with anyone who does not need to know.