

GUIDELINES FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Introduction:

Youth With A Mission (YWAM) is a volunteer organisation committed to functioning as a relational network. YWAM operations are therefore to be coordinated and regulated primarily by common vision, values and principles, and supported by servant leadership, recognising spiritual oversight.

Students and staff members are our most valued asset in Youth With A Mission. Therefore the recruitment and acceptance of both staff and students must reflect biblical values of honesty, openness and fairness.

Any corrective action deemed necessary should be examples of loving and pastoral communication benefiting the individual, the YWAM ministry and the body of Christ.

The Global Leadership Team (GLT) of YWAM encourages the following guidelines to be distributed and made known to all staff throughout the mission for the facilitation of healthy staff relationships and correct procedures where needed in cases of complaints, grievances and conflicts.

Within the YWAM family we are called to live and work together in humility and harmony exemplifying right relationships. This requires a lifestyle of openness and transparency with each other. When there is a conflict with an individual (including a leader) it should be taken care of on an individual basis with that person, quickly and quietly.

However, when there is relationship breakdown then the following guidelines based on Biblical principles should be followed. These can be applied within the appropriate YWAM structure, and are culturally adaptable. All mediation and arbitration should be processed within the local legal context.

These guidelines should be made available to all YWAM students and staff in order for the just and timely settlement of disputes and conflicts, with a minimum exposure beyond the immediate parties.

Appeals should normally be made as close to the local situation as possible. The goal is to see justice attained and relationships restored.

I. GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT/STAFF RECRUITMENT, ACCEPTANCE & CORRECTIVE ACTION.

A. Recruitment of staff and students

1. Recruiting of both students and staff should be conducted in an ethical and responsible manner, giving a fair and accurate presentation of study and work conditions.
2. Applicants should have opportunity to read and assess the mission's vision, values, policies and procedures before joining.
3. Expectations regarding work and roles in the mission should be shared with clarity and integrity.
4. Fees paid for course and programmes not delivered as announced should be refunded where requested and appropriate.

B. Acceptance of staff and students

1. During the acceptance process, the policies and procedures of the mission and its local team or centre should be made clear again for the new student/staff member. This would include the process for handling grievances and for situations of conflict as outlined in section 11.
2. Staff members or students should be informed that they can communicate or take a grievance to the leader immediately above their direct leader.
3. In countries where appropriate, staff and students should sign a mediation declaration stating that, in the case of grievance, they would seek mediation and not pursue litigation.

C. Corrective action involving staff and students

1. All corrective action, including dismissal, requires justifiable reason and fair procedure. It is assumed that students and staff have understood and accepted the purposes and values of the school or ministry in which they are involved. Should the behaviour of an individual consistently conflict with these purposes and values, leadership should

reevaluate with the individual their continued involvement with the school or ministry.

A normal process would begin with seeking understanding whether or not the individual is prepared to accept the conditions of continued involvement in the school or ministry. This may be followed by a written communication, for the record. A suspension period or 'time out' may be helpful to allow for a change of heart or to consider conditions required to be met. If the individual is not prepared at this stage to accept the conditions of continued involvement, this amounts to a decision on their part to leave.

After such departure there should be communication explaining to those associated with the individual (pastor, parents, leaders, fellow students/ staff...) the reasons and the processes involved that have led to the individual's departure. This would include mention of principles and values at issue.

2. In the case of students, this normally should be handled by the school staff. School staff should communicate with the next level of YWAM leadership, as well as with the appropriate spiritual leadership of the student (e.g. pastor, parents...). The student may request a refund of a portion of unused fees.

3. In the case of staff, immediate, unilateral dismissal would only occur in exceptional circumstances, for example, as when required by law. In cases of clear and gross misconduct, offending staff can be put on immediate suspension, pending further inquiry. Proposed corrective action should be communicated to and supported by the next level of leadership before being acted on. The staff person should understand the right of appeal, as listed below, and the freedom to be heard in an unbiased context. Any further corrective action should have first followed the reconciliation procedure outlined in section 11.

4. Dismissal from a particular YWAM ministry does not automatically mean dismissal from every operating location or from YWAM International. In cases of gross misconduct, e.g. child-abuse, due warning should be passed on in an appropriate manner.

5. More normally, leaders at operating locations are encouraged to pray quietly and privately that, where necessary, individuals be led of God to leave, rather than be required to. In all cases, leadership should seek the most loving course of action for all parties involved.

II. PRINCIPLES FOR HANDLING GRIEVANCES.

A. Wisdom for How We Approach Grievances

The Word of God says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18). When conflicts arise, often there is an accuser and an accused. We need to remember to hold each in equal esteem before the Lord. We must not pre-judge either side but be open to each "striving to maintain the bonds of peace" Ephesians 4:1-3. In the vast majority of situations, no one has acted with malice. Rather, one or more believers have acted unintentionally or foolishly and brought hurt to one or more people.

In the YWAM family, we are called to live and work together in humility and harmony. When conflicts arise, our goal is to bring reconciliation and release for both parties for further service in God's kingdom. We should not enter into conflict resolution seeking someone to blame or punish. We should seek restoration.

From the beginning of this Mission, we have learned to ask God to show us our own hearts, sins and hidden faults. We have been taught "openness and brokenness" that is, "to confess our faults before one another that we might be healed" James 5:16. (Also see Matthew 7:3) Therefore, the following recommended steps for handling grievances should be enacted as an exception, for use only when our attempts to walk in right relationship do not bring resolve to the situation.

We should take care of conflicts on the individual level, quickly and quietly, remembering the Bible's words, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" Ephesians 4:26-27. (Also see Matthew 5:23.) We need to extend patience and forbearance to one another when we have different opinions or priorities.

B. We All Need To Forgive

The grievance process given below is not meant to remove the need for forgiveness. If people have been offended, even deeply wounded, they have to forgive the offender. This is necessary for their own healing and restoration. Joseph serves as a model for how to forgive when terrible things are done to us. Joseph was greatly wronged by his family, his employer, and his government. Yet he was able to forgive and allow God to use the situation to bring blessing. Even if efforts toward reconciliation follow the guidelines of this paper, all those involved will need to forgive one another.

As Christian brothers and sisters we must follow all that we understand of Biblical teaching to reconcile ourselves in a Christ-like fashion. And while we attempt to take Biblical steps of reconciliation, we must remember our own weakness. We cannot find God's wisdom independent from one another, nor can we find reconciliation with each other without the grace of God.

Most grievances involve issues of disagreement as well as problems of relationship. Sometimes the issues leading to the conflict may themselves not be fully resolved. In such cases parties should be encouraged to disagree agreeably, according to the Word of God which says "...maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God..." (Ephesians 4:3,13 RSV). Our supreme concern is to restore relationship, even though it may be impossible to resolve all of the specific issues that led to the disagreement.

In all but the most extreme circumstances, the immediate and humble application of the "Matthew 18 Model" should bring about peace (Matthew 18:15-17). The primary purpose of guidelines and process outlined below is to ensure that all staff and students are treated justly and with respect, and to see relationships reconciled.

C. Biblical Principles Regarding Justice

In scripture, we see that justice is a very, very important issue to God. It is one of the most mentioned issues in the Bible. Justice metered out by human beings must be related to an absolute. An absolute is a fixed point of reference.

Our absolute for justice must be the character of God. The character of God is described both in His word as well as in nature itself. The character of God related to justice will include truth; God is truth. It will include love; God is love. It will be long-suffering; God is not hasty. It will include wisdom, mercy, forgiveness, and many other character traits of God.

D. Reconciliation is always a goal of God's justice

The goal of God in sending Jesus to the world was reconciliation to Himself and to one another. In the case of Jesus on the cross receiving God's judgment for sin, He took our place. So any judgment we have, in order to be a righteous judgment, must always include reconciliation as a goal.

Reconciliation may be achieved through: *see definitions in footnote 1

1. Teaching: the Holy Spirit uses teaching a) to convince of a new way, a new heart attitude, new principles not learned before and/or b) to convict of wrongdoing.

2. Mediation: i.e. wise counsel.

3. Arbitration: when teaching and mediation do not bring resolution to the situation, then arbitration may be needed. Arbitration requires the involvement of an objective, unbiased individual/team to 'hear the arguments' and come up with a decision. It requires that all parties involved in the dispute agree in advance upon the arbitrator(s), and they agree to abide by the decision after that person/team has heard all of the perspectives and points of view.

Lastly, when all avenues for reconciliation have been pursued and failed, the only option is judgment. Judgment requires a cutting off and a severance of the relationship, as described in the later portion of Matthew 18.

It is important that in all of pursuits of reconciliation, we first recognize that most issues take a lot of time to build, and require much time and patience to resolve.

III. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING GRIEVANCES

A. Definition of terms

Different terminology is used in different regions to define the levels of reporting relationships in YWAM, both for transnational and geographic structures. The order of the use of these terms varies from country to country. An example would be:

- Individual staff member
- Team leader
- Base leader
- National leader
- Area leader
- Regional leader
- Field leader
- Global Leadership Team*

Cases of conflict involving issues with Mission-wide implications and consequences should be handled at the field, or if necessary, the GLT level, at the discretion of and initiated by the Regional Leader.

* Note: other than cases involving Mission-wide implications, the GLT would be involved only in dealing with issues related to a violation of principle or the agreed-upon process. It would not be involved in trying to resolve specific grievances, other than in the case of conflict between GLT members, in which case the vice-chairman would be the first level up.

A situation involving a grievance could emerge at any one of these levels. Therefore, for the purpose of understanding the sequence in the process outlined below, we will simply use the terms Level A, Level B and Level C.

- Level A = the level at which the grievance occurred
- Level B = one level above Level A
- Level C = two levels above Level A

The goal should be to keep the resolution of any grievance at the lowest level possible, to lean into wise and godly counselors close to the situation, who understand the surrounding circumstances, and to involve as few people in the process as possible.

We will also refer to two different types of teams that may be required to assist in the resolution of a grievance:

1. a Mediation Team (at the informal level),
2. an Arbitration Team (at the formal level).

(See footnote 2 for definitions of terms: Mediation, Arbitration and Reconciliation.)

B. INFORMAL MEDIATION (starting at Level A, where the grievance took place)

1. Go one-on-one

First, apply Matthew 18 at the individual stage. If someone has a conflict with another person, they should go to that person to make their feelings and concerns known. They must take responsibility for their part in the grievance as God has shown them through conscience, scripture or conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The highest result would be that the other person would also recognize and acknowledge before God and the first person their part in the grievance, as God has shown them through conscience, scripture or conviction of the Holy Spirit.

2. Go with a friend

Should the above step to seek resolution not result in satisfactory resolution, the person(s) should go again with a friend or colleague who will assist in helping both parties listen to and hear one another.

3. Consult with Level A Leader

If Step 2 does not result in satisfactory resolution, the Level A leader, or a delegated mediator, should be brought into the process and try to help the parties hear each other and work out their grievance. At every level, both parties should be presumed "innocent" unless proven otherwise.

Here is a suggested process for the leader/mediator to follow:

- a. Mediator hears Person #1 as long as necessary, then asks "what do you feel is the solution?"
- b. Mediator hears Person #2 as long as necessary, then asks "what do you feel is the solution?"

- c. Mediator communicates to Person #1 the concerns and desired solution of Person #2.
- d. Mediator communicates to Person #2 the concerns and desired solution of Person #1.
(Steps a - d should be one-on-one sessions)

This extended process allows ample time for a process of clarification of issues and to help diffuse the emotion related to the situation, as the individuals feel "heard."

- e. After allowing time for situation to settle, the mediator asks each person if they would feel comfortable to meet together.
- f. While both parties are together, the mediator asks if he/she may have permission to share the frustrations and solutions each party expressed to him/her. This should not be an "edict," but a request.
- g. After the mediator has shared both sides, he/she asks both party's help in coming to a resolution that each can accept, realising that there must be a willingness to compromise, and that it is unlikely that either will get 100% of what they want.

Both parties must feel that they have been "heard" and that their ideas have contributed to the proposed compromise/resolution.

4. Level A Leader creates an informal (local) Mediation Team

If Step 3 does not result in satisfactory resolution, the Level A leader should work with both parties to draw together an informal Mediation Team comprised of the Level A leader/or delegated mediator, plus two other mediators. Each party should choose a mature, trusted, impartial individual to serve as a "witness" (Matthew 18:16). Generally these individuals might be team leaders/ department heads or other leaders, but they could also include a pastor or counselor who is a friend of YWAM. Again, both parties should be considered "innocent" unless proven otherwise.

The role of this three-member Mediation Team should be carefully and prayerfully to help the people in disagreement to listen and understand each other's viewpoint. They may share scriptures and godly principles that apply to the situation, and they should encourage each party to acknowledge and repent

of their part in creating the conflict, taking an attitude of humility and forgiveness (Matthew 6:14). Mediators should be reminded of the importance of confidentiality. We are cautioned not to broadcast hurts or offenses to anyone who is not directly involved (Ephesians 4:29). This phase should be completed within one month.

The Mediation Team may walk through a similar process to that in Step 3. If there is still an impasse, the person with the grievance may bring a request for formal intervention. It becomes a formal process when it is required to move beyond Level A.

C. FORMAL MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION

1. Petition for formal intervention

If all informal means of settling the matter are unsuccessful, the individual with a grievance may bring it to the Level B leader by submitting a formal written request for intervention. Within one week of receiving this request, the Level B leader is required to send a copy of this written request to the Level A leader, notifying him/her that the grieved party was unsatisfied with the results of the informal process and is requesting formal intervention, and to the Level C leader.

The written request should include the following:

- a. Give names, addresses and telephone numbers of all parties involved in the grievance.
- b. Identify the date(s) the grievance arose.
- c. Briefly state the circumstances of the grievance.
- d. Briefly recount the steps already taken to resolve the situation.
- e. State the resolution desired.

2. Formation of formal Mediation Team

At the earliest opportunity, but within two months of receiving the written request for formal intervention, the formal Mediation Team should meet together with both parties and begin a similar process to the one described above in Step 3 of the informal process.

All national, regional, area and field leaders should have a roster of 3-4 individuals who have agreed to serve on an "on call" basis to help resolve formal grievances. The Level B leader should allow each party in the dispute to choose one individual either from the roster, or another mutually acceptable person, to serve on the Mediation Team. The Mediation Team is made up of the two members chosen by the involved parties, plus a third member selected from the roster by the Level B leader, whose role is that of facilitating the process. The YWAM line leader is not part of the Mediation Team.

Where local laws permit, the Level B leader should ensure that a complete record of the request, the proceedings, plus all pertinent documentation be kept. (This is confidential information that needs to be handled discreetly.)

If further resolution is needed, the Level B leader must make this information available to the Level C leader and his/her Arbitration Team.

Note: at any level in the process, if the leader's relationship is too close to the individual(s) involved in the grievance or if there is a conflict of interest, the leader should ask to excuse himself/herself and should appoint another leader to facilitate at this level of the grievance process.

3. Formation of Arbitration Team

If the Mediation Team is unable to bring the issue to resolution, the Level B leader is to refer the formal grievance to the Level C leader. It is his/her responsibility to pull together an Arbitration Team from their roster. The Arbitration Team should meet together with both parties to begin the arbitration process within one month of the time they receive the formal request from the Mediation Team.

The decision of the Arbitration Team is the final step in the grievance process, and their decisions, judgments and steps of action to be taken by either/both parties are binding to bring closure to the situation.

4. Informing process

In every case, and at whatever stage it is concluded, an appropriate process of informing should take place. If the parties are reconciled, it is important to communicate this with everyone who has been involved in the grievance process up

to that point (other YWAMers, parents, pastors, etc), giving glory to God and erasing past negative comments and images, so that full restoration of both parties can take place.

In the case of a judgment requiring suspension or dismissal, the conclusions should be clearly but discreetly laid out, making reference to the Biblical principles violated - both in precept and in process as well as the YWAM values or guidelines that were violated. The consequences and/or requirements for restoration should also be clearly stated.

Remember, in no instance does the Bible allow for gossip or de-valuing of people. All matters should be kept in confidence held within the circle of those who were involved or those who need to be informed to prevent further violation.

Conclusion:

Most conflicts involve issues of disagreement as well as problems of relationship. Sometimes the issues leading to the conflict may themselves not be fully resolved. In such cases parties should be encouraged to disagree agreeably. However the primary purposes of the process and guidelines outlined here are to ensure all staff and students are treated justly and with respect, and to see relationships reconciled.

Footnotes:

1. Definitions:

Following are the definitions for these terms from New Websters Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language:

- **Mediate:** to act as an agent in conveying, communicating, etc. To be in the middle.
- **Reconcile:** to bring together again in love or friendship; to induce someone to accept something disagreeable; to reach a compromise agreement about differences.
- **Arbitrate:** to decide a dispute by involving an arbitrator (an impartial judge), or one of a number, whose decision both parties to a dispute agree to accept.

2. Suggestions for setting up a roster

Because grievances may arise at any level, all base, national and area leaders need to prepare a roster of 3-4 people who are qualified and willing to serve in resolving formal grievances (written requests that have not been resolved through the informal process outlined above). These individuals would be "on call" for a two year time period. They would need to agree to see through any case that begins within their two-year commitment, and they could extend the term of their availability if both they and the convening YWAM leader so desire.

Wise and godly character traits are necessary in such peacemakers, who must understand the need for confidentiality and impartiality. They must have a broad understanding of YWAM and its values, and should have no vested interest in the case at hand. They should understand the principles of conflict resolution and arbitration and be capable of guiding the process through to reconciliation. They also need to be qualified to consider issues of culture, gender, and age. These individuals could be wise pastors, YWAM leaders known for their wisdom, etc. There are many people within YWAM who would be highly qualified to serve in this capacity that hold no geographic or transnational leadership positions; the same is true of local pastors, counselors and other godly Christians who know and are committed to YWAM.

The "higher" the level within YWAM's structure the grievance is required to go to, the more "senior" the leaders on the mediation/arbitration team need to be.

All who agree to serve on the roster should be trained and equipped to serve in this capacity.