

Electoral Guidelines

For the National Coalition of Civil Society Organisations to End Child Marriage in Nigeria

Prepared for:

Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage
and

The National Coalition of Civil Society Organisations to End Child Marriage in Nigeria

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1. Introduction

These Electoral Guidelines provide the framework for conducting leadership elections for the National Coalition of Civil Society Organisations to End Child Marriage in Nigeria.

The guidelines are designed to ensure that elections are transparent, credible, inclusive, democratic, peaceful and consistent with the Coalition's improved governance structure.

The elections will help the Coalition strengthen member ownership, clarify leadership authority, promote accountability, ensure gender-balanced leadership and provide fair representation across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones.

These guidelines should be read together with the Coalition's Operational Framework or Constitution, Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Policy, Membership Register and Governance Strengthening Roadmap.

2. Purpose of the Electoral Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

1. Define the positions to be elected.
2. Clarify who is eligible to vote.
3. Clarify who is eligible to contest.
4. Establish a transparent nomination and screening process.
5. Provide rules for campaigns and candidate conduct.
6. Guide the voting, counting and announcement of results.
7. Provide a mechanism for complaints and appeals.
8. Support peaceful leadership transition and handover.

3. Guiding Principles

The election process shall be guided by the following principles:

3.1 Member Ownership

The Coalition belongs to its member organisations. Elections shall therefore be conducted in a way that gives eligible members a fair voice in choosing their leaders.

3.2 One Organisation, One Vote

Each Full Member organisation in good standing shall have one vote, exercised through its authorised voting representative.

3.3 Transparency

All key election steps, including membership re-validation, voter register publication, nominations, screening, voting and results announcement, shall be properly documented and communicated to members.

3.4 Inclusion

The election process shall promote gender balance, zonal representation, organisational diversity and meaningful participation by member organisations.

3.5 Fairness

All candidates shall be treated equally. No candidate shall be given unfair advantage because of organisational size, donor relationship, current leadership position, geography, religion, ethnicity, gender or personal relationship.

3.6 Safeguarding and Ethics

All candidates, voters, election officials and observers shall comply with the Coalition's Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy.

3.7 Conflict-of-Interest Management

Actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest shall be declared and managed throughout the electoral process.

3.8 Peaceful Transition

The election process shall promote unity and continuity. Candidates and members shall accept credible outcomes and use approved complaints and appeals channels where concerns arise.

4. Positions to Be Elected

The following positions shall be elected:

1. Female Co-Chair

2. Male Co-Chair
3. North Central Steering Committee Representative
4. North East Steering Committee Representative
5. North West Steering Committee Representative
6. South East Steering Committee Representative
7. South South Steering Committee Representative
8. South West Steering Committee Representative
9. State focal persons

Who is a secretariat?

The Secretariat is not an elective governance organ and shall not vote or control the election process.

Each state shall conduct elections to elect their focal persons.

5. Electoral Committee

An Electoral Committee shall be established **by the General Assembly** to manage the election process.

5.1 Composition

The Electoral Committee should consist of five persons agreed by members or appointed through an approved process.

Members of the Electoral Committee shall not contest for any elective position.

The Committee may include representatives with experience in governance, elections, safeguarding, member engagement, documentation or civil society coordination.

The committee shall be constituted for each election and disbanded after the electoral process. The electoral committee should not disband the steering committee. Their role should be to conduct elections only.

5.2 Responsibilities

The Electoral Committee shall:

1. Prepare and publish the election timetable.
2. Receive nominations.
3. Screen candidates.

4. Publish the list of qualified candidates.
5. Confirm the voter register.
6. Manage campaign rules.
7. Coordinate voting.
8. Count or verify votes.
9. Announce provisional results.
10. Receive and review election complaints.
11. Recommend final results for confirmation.
12. Prepare an election report.

5.3 Neutrality

Electoral Committee members must remain neutral. They shall not campaign for any candidate, endorse any candidate, influence voters, disclose confidential information or manipulate the process.

Any Electoral Committee member with a conflict of interest shall disclose it and step aside from handling the affected matter.

6. Membership Re-validation and Voter Register

A credible election requires a credible voter register. The Coalition shall therefore conduct membership re-validation before elections.

6.1 Membership Re-validation

Each member organisation shall provide or confirm:

1. Name of organisation.
2. State and geopolitical zone.
3. Contact address and email.
4. Name of head of organisation.
5. Name of authorised Coalition representative.
6. Name of authorised voting representative.
7. Membership category.

8. Acceptance of the Coalition's governance framework.
9. Acceptance of the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy.
10. Confirmation of continued interest in Coalition membership.

6.2 Voter Register

The voter register shall contain only **Member organisations verified by the coalition.**

The voter register should include:

1. Name of organisation.
2. State.
3. Geopolitical zone.
4. Authorised voting representative.
5. Contact details.
6. Membership status.

6.3 Publication of Voter Register

The Electoral Committee shall publish a provisional voter register for review by members.

Members shall be given a reasonable period to request corrections, raise objections or update information.

After corrections and objections have been addressed, the Electoral Committee shall publish the final voter register.

Only organisations listed in the final voter register shall vote.

7. Voting Eligibility

A member organisation shall be eligible to vote if it:

1. Is a Full Member organisation.
2. Has completed membership re-validation.
3. Is listed in the final voter register.
4. Has nominated an authorised voting representative.
5. Has accepted the Coalition's governance framework.

6. Has accepted the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy.
7. Is not under suspension or unresolved disciplinary restriction.
8. Is not under unresolved safeguarding restriction.

Each eligible member organisation shall have only one vote.

No individual shall vote on behalf of more than one organisation.

An organization must be a member for six months to have the right to vote. Only organizations who have being members for a minimum of 12 months can contest for elective office.

8. Candidate Eligibility

A candidate shall be eligible to contest if:

1. The candidate represents a verified Member organisation.
2. The candidate's organisation is listed in the final membership register.
3. The candidate has been formally nominated by their organisation or in accordance with the approved nomination process.
4. The candidate accepts the Coalition's governance framework.
5. The candidate accepts the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy.
6. The candidate has no unresolved safeguarding, fraud, corruption, abuse, harassment or serious misconduct issue.
7. The candidate has declared any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.
8. The candidate demonstrates commitment to ending child marriage.
9. The candidate is available to serve.
10. A candidate must submit a letter from the ED if the person is not an ED. If an ED, a letter from the organization on their letterhead.
11. The candidate agrees to respect the outcome of a credible election.
12. Two Youth members (male and female) of the steering committee will be nominated by the youth congress of the national coalition to represent them. They will also need to get confirmation and commitment letters from the head of their organizations.

9. Additional Eligibility for Co-Chair Positions

A candidate for Co-Chair should demonstrate:

1. Leadership experience.
2. Commitment to the Coalition's mandate.
3. Capacity to represent the Coalition responsibly.
4. Ability to work collaboratively with members and partners.
5. Safeguarding awareness.
6. Integrity and accountability.
7. Availability to attend meetings and support Coalition activities.
8. Commitment to gender equality and inclusion.
9. Must be a senior program manager or the ED of the member organization.
10. Must have served in the national steering committee

There shall be two Co-Chair positions of different genders.

10. Eligibility for Steering Committee Representatives

A candidate for zonal representative must belong to a Full Member organisation in good standing from the geopolitical zone they seek to represent.

Each geopolitical zone shall elect one representative to the National Steering Committee.

The six zones are:

1. North Central.
2. North East.
3. North West.
4. South East.
5. South South.
6. South West.

A candidate shall not contest to represent a zone where their organisation does not operate or is not registered in the Coalition's membership record.

11. Tenure and Term Limits

Co-Chairs and Steering Committee members shall serve for a term of **three years**, non-renewable term.

A person who has served as Co-Chair shall not be eligible to contest for the office of Co-Chair again.

12. Nomination Process

12.1 Opening of Nominations

The Electoral Committee shall announce the opening of nominations and provide the nomination form, eligibility criteria and submission deadline.

12.2 Nomination Requirements

Each candidate shall submit:

1. Completed nomination form.
2. Letter of endorsement from their organisation.
3. Brief candidate profile.
4. Statement of interest.
5. Conflict-of-interest declaration.
6. Safeguarding and Code of Conduct commitment.
7. Evidence of membership status of the nominating organisation, where required.

12.3 Nomination Deadline

All nominations must be submitted within the approved timeline.

Late nominations shall not be accepted unless the Electoral Committee formally extends the deadline for all candidates.

13. Screening of Candidates

The Electoral Committee shall screen candidates based on the approved eligibility criteria.

Screening shall consider:

1. Membership status.
2. Position contested.

3. Gender requirement for Co-Chair positions.
4. Zonal eligibility for Steering Committee positions.
5. Organisational endorsement.
6. Code of Conduct and Safeguarding acceptance.
7. Conflict-of-interest declaration.
8. Availability and willingness to serve.
9. Any unresolved disciplinary or safeguarding concerns.

The Electoral Committee shall publish the list of qualified candidates after screening.

Candidates who are not cleared shall be informed of the reason and given an opportunity to appeal within the approved timeline.

14. Campaign Rules

Campaigns shall be respectful, peaceful, issue-based and focused on the Coalition's mandate.

Candidates may share their vision, experience and priorities with members.

Candidates shall not:

1. Buy votes or offer inducements.
2. Threaten, intimidate or harass voters.
3. Spread false information.
4. Defame other candidates.
5. Use ethnic, religious, regional or political sentiments to campaign.
6. Misuse Coalition platforms.
7. Claim endorsement by Girls Not Brides, the Secretariat or Electoral Committee unless formally authorised.
8. Use safeguarding information, confidential records or member data for campaigns.
9. Promise access to funding, visibility, travel or opportunities in exchange for votes.
10. Engage in any conduct that brings the Coalition into disrepute.

A candidate who violates campaign rules may be cautioned, sanctioned or disqualified, depending on the seriousness of the violation.

15. Voting Procedure

The Electoral Committee shall determine the voting method and communicate it clearly to members before election day.

Voting may be conducted:

1. In person.
2. Virtually.
3. By secure electronic ballot.
4. By any other transparent method approved by the Electoral Committee and accepted by members.

The voting procedure shall ensure:

1. Only eligible organisations vote.
2. Each organisation votes only once.
3. The authorised voting representative casts the vote.
4. Votes are counted transparently.
5. The secrecy of the ballot is protected where applicable.
6. Results are documented.

16. Election of Co-Chairs

The Co-Chairs shall be elected separately.

Each eligible voting organisation may cast one vote each for the Co-Chair position.

The candidate with the highest number of valid votes in each category shall be declared winner.

Where there is a tie, a run-off election shall be conducted between the tied candidates.

17. Election of Steering Committee Representatives

Each geopolitical zone shall elect one representative to the National Steering Committee.

Voting for zonal representatives may be conducted by eligible Full Member organisations from that zone.

Each eligible organisation shall vote only in the zone where it is listed in the final voter register.

The candidate with the highest number of valid votes in each zone shall be declared winner.

Where there is a tie, a run-off election shall be conducted between the tied candidates.

18. Unopposed Candidates

Where only one eligible candidate is nominated for a position, the candidate may be declared elected unopposed, subject to confirmation by eligible voters or by the General Assembly, depending on the approved election procedure.

The Electoral Committee may require a confirmation vote to ensure legitimacy.

19. Vote Counting and Results

The Electoral Committee shall count or verify votes immediately after voting closes.

The results shall show:

1. Position contested.
2. Names of candidates.
3. Number of valid votes received by each candidate.
4. Number of invalid votes, where applicable.
5. Total number of votes cast.
6. Winner of each position.

The Electoral Committee shall announce provisional results within 24 hours and provide a period of 72 hours for complaints or appeals after the elections. Complaints should be written and via email.

After complaints and appeals are resolved, final results shall be confirmed and documented.

20. Complaints and Appeals

20.1 Grounds for Complaint

Complaints may relate to:

1. Voter eligibility.
2. Candidate eligibility.
3. Campaign misconduct.
4. Irregular voting.
5. Miscounting of votes.
6. Conflict of interest.
7. Breach of safeguarding or ethical rules.
8. Any conduct that may affect the credibility of the election.

20.2 Submission of Complaints

Complaints shall be submitted in writing to the Electoral Committee within the approved timeline.

Complaints should include:

1. Name and organisation of complainant.
2. Issue being complained about.
3. Evidence or supporting information.
4. Remedy requested.

20.3 Handling of Complaints

The Electoral Committee shall review complaints fairly and promptly.

Where necessary, the Committee may invite responses from affected persons, review records or consult neutral advisers.

The Electoral Committee shall document its decision and communicate the outcome to the complainant and affected parties.

20.4 Appeals

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the Electoral Committee, an appeal may be submitted through the approved appeals mechanism.

The decision of the appeals process shall be final.

21. Safeguarding During the Election

The election process shall be conducted in a way that protects members, candidates, voters, staff, volunteers and participants from harm.

The Electoral Committee shall ensure:

1. Safe reporting channels.
2. Confidential handling of safeguarding concerns.
3. Protection from intimidation and retaliation.
4. Respectful communication.
5. Safe participation of youth advocates and vulnerable persons.
6. Immediate response to serious safeguarding concerns.

Any candidate with an unresolved safeguarding concern may be suspended from the election process pending review.

22. Conflict of Interest During the Election

All candidates, Electoral Committee members, Secretariat staff and observers shall declare actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

A conflict of interest may arise where a person has a personal, organisational, family, financial, political or professional interest that may affect their role in the election.

Where a conflict exists, the person shall step aside from the affected decision or process.

All conflict-of-interest declarations shall be documented.

23. Role of the Secretariat During Elections

The Secretariat may provide administrative and technical support to the Electoral Committee.

This may include:

1. Sharing election notices.
2. Maintaining records.
3. Supporting voter register preparation.
4. Providing meeting support.
5. Supporting virtual or electronic voting logistics.

6. Keeping election documents.
7. Supporting preparation of the election report.

The Secretariat shall not control the election, favour any candidate or interfere with the independence of the Electoral Committee.

24. Role of Observers

The Coalition may invite observers to promote transparency and confidence in the process.

Observers may include Girls Not Brides representatives, neutral civil society actors or other persons approved by the Electoral Committee.

Observers may watch the process and provide comments, but they shall not vote, campaign, interfere with voting or determine results.

25. Handover After Elections

After final results are confirmed, outgoing leaders shall conduct a formal handover to incoming leaders.

The handover shall include:

1. Governance documents.
2. Membership register.
3. Voter register.
4. Election report.
5. Meeting minutes.
6. Financial records.
7. Communication platform access.
8. Partner and stakeholder records.
9. Safeguarding records, handled confidentially.
10. Workplans and pending commitments.
11. Ongoing advocacy or programme activities.
12. Any legal registration documents or updates.

The handover should be completed within one month after the election.

26. Election Report

The Electoral Committee shall prepare a final election report.

The report should include:

1. Background to the election.
2. Electoral Committee membership.
3. Election timetable.
4. Membership and voter register summary.
5. List of positions contested.
6. List of candidates.
7. Voting method used.
8. Results by position.
9. Complaints received and how they were resolved.
10. Safeguarding or conduct issues, where relevant and appropriate.
11. Lessons learned.
12. Recommendations for future elections.

The report shall be submitted to the General Assembly, National Steering Committee and Secretariat for record keeping.

27. Indicative Election Timetable

The election process should be completed within two weeks, beginning with membership re-validation. The timetable may be adjusted by the Electoral Committee where necessary, provided that all members are informed promptly and the process remains fair, transparent and credible.

Activity	Responsible Body	Timeli ne
Begin membership re-validation and circulate re-validation form	Secretariat / Electoral Committee	Day 1
Receive completed membership re-validation forms	Secretariat / Electoral Committee	Days 1–3

Activity	Responsible Body	Timeli ne
Review membership submissions and prepare provisional voter register	Secretariat / Electoral Committee	Day 4
Publish provisional voter register for member review	Electoral Committee	Day 5
Receive corrections, objections and updates to voter register	Electoral Committee	Day 6
Publish final voter register	Electoral Committee	Day 7
Open nominations for Co-Chairs and zonal Steering Committee representatives	Electoral Committee	Day 7
Close nominations	Electoral Committee	Day 9
Screen candidates and verify eligibility	Electoral Committee	Day 10
Publish list of qualified candidates	Electoral Committee	Day 11
Campaign and candidate engagement period	Candidates / Electoral Committee	Days 11–12
Conduct elections	Electoral Committee	Day 13
Announce provisional results	Electoral Committee	Day 13
Receive election complaints or appeals	Electoral Committee	Day 14
Resolve complaints, confirm final results and issue election report	Electoral Committee	Day 14

28. Handover After Election

Formal handover should begin immediately after final results are confirmed and should be completed within one month after the election.

The handover should include governance documents, membership records, election report, meeting records, financial records, communication platform access, partner records, safeguarding records handled confidentially, and pending tasks or commitments.

29. Adoption and Review

These Electoral Guidelines shall take effect after adoption by the General Assembly.

The guidelines may be reviewed after each election to reflect lessons learned and improve future electoral processes.

Any amendment to the electoral guidelines shall be approved through the General Assembly.

30. Conclusion

These Electoral Guidelines are intended to support a credible, transparent and peaceful leadership transition for the Coalition.

The election process should strengthen trust, protect member ownership, promote gender-balanced leadership, ensure zonal representation and help the Coalition remain focused on its mandate of ending child marriage in Nigeria by 2030.

All members, candidates, election officials and partners are expected to act in good faith and place the collective interest of the Coalition above personal or organisational ambition.