

# Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults



**StreetChildrenLeedo**

(An Organization Helping The Most Vulnerable And Less Fortunate street children)

**Local Education and Economic Development Organization-LEEDO**

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## Scope

This policy applies to the following actors LEEDO's Executive Board Members. LEEDO's Team:staff, volunteers, interns, trainees and people on work experience External services providers Local partner organizations that have a formal contractual relationship with LEEDO Suppliers Other people related to LEEDO: when they have contact with children in the context of the organizational work, or access to information about them Sponsors, donors and supporters. Journalists and other media professionals People who visit projects, including anyone that accompanies them. All these actors accept the obligation to respect the policy and the responsibilities arising from a failure to comply.

With Warm Regards

**Forhad Hossain**

Executive Director

LEEDO

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## **Introduction**

Local Education and Economic Development Organization (LEEDO) is a not-for-profit, voluntary-based development organization founded in 2000. The organization was initiated by a group of educated social and human rights activists and educators aiming to improve the life chances of children forced to live in extreme difficulties on the streets and also to address the needs of the growing number of vulnerable street children in Bangladesh. LEEDO is registered with Office of the Prime Minister, and People's Republic of Bangladesh. Registration Number: 1466. LEEDO is also registered, with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, People's Republic of Bangladesh

## **Our Vision and Mission**

### **Vision**

Through raising awareness of the plight of highly vulnerable street children, all members of society will take responsibility for ensuring the protection of street children and thereby allow them to have a bright future.

### **Mission**

1. To educate and empower people throughout the world so that they can help to bring about positive, lasting differences in their communities through holistic missions.
2. To transform communities through the implementation of programmes that affect all areas of community life including: health, education, economic empowerment, rehabilitation and advocacy.
3. To protect and bring back into the mainstream community, highly vulnerable street children, whose lives are being shattered by poverty, domination, exclusion, abuse and conflicts, and to provide suitable opportunities for the betterment of their future.

## **Policy statement**

LEEDO believes that all forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children are unacceptable. Safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of children as direct beneficiaries and indirect beneficiaries is an integral component of all LEEDO's programmes. The possibility of staffs, donors or partners abusing children is one that the organization takes seriously. The Executive Director and Executive Members of LEEDO are committed to working for the prevention of the violence by creating a culture of positive treatment, in which relationships with children promote their dignity and favour their full development and well being in an emotional environment that is positive and caring. LEEDO is also committed to "Do no harm" which will inform all actions in relation to management of suspected / alleged abuse or exploitation. However, the best interests of the child will always remain paramount.

LEEDO is committed to ensure protection for all children regardless of their nationality, religion, race, ethnicity and gender.



### **1) Non-discrimination:**

The rights of the child apply to all children without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other status.

### **2) Best interests of the child:**

LEEDO is performing all its activities according to the principle of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) where best interests of the child will be primary consideration.

### **3) Right to life and development:**

Children have an inherent right to life and to protection from violence and suicide. Development should be interpreted in its broadest sense, embracing the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development.

### **4) The right to be heard:**

Involving children in decision-making at individual, family, organisation and policy level in society is key to realising their rights. Children should be empowered to understand and enjoy their rights. They should be made aware of what is acceptable and what is not and what they can do if there is a problem or a concern.

### **5) Do no harm principle:**

In line with the International Child Safeguarding Standards 8 , the "do no harm" principle refers to minimising any harm that may be caused inadvertently as a result of activities of the Children's Rights Division. **Keeping Children Safe**

Safeguarding children will be the responsibility of every person working directly or indirectly or associated with LEEDO. Specifically, this Policy will apply to the following:

- Staff
- Board Members
- Volunteers
- Interns
- Consultants
- Caregivers & Interpreters
- Partner organizations of LEEDO
- The representatives of government and non-PLEASE COMPLETE



- **Key definitions**

The following definitions aim to assist in the understanding of this document and guide the behaviour and work of all the actors included in its scope.

**Children-** In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'child' means every human being below the age of 18 years. ... This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

**Adolescents:** As children reach their teens, they can become more vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and online. Threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. This is sometimes known as contextual risk.

**Vulnerable Adults-** For the purpose of this policy, “vulnerable adult” refers to an adult who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or exploitation. Such vulnerable adults may be at greater risk of abuse and exploitation due to a variety of risk factors, such as (without limitation) gender, gender identity or expression, health issues (including mental health), disabilities, age, sexual orientation, ethnic, geographic or national origin, family status, race, religion or belief, economic background and particular trade or profession, or as a result of the impact of conflict and crisis.

**Children with disabilities:** Children that present long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensorial impairments, which, when interacting with a range of existing barriers in a given context, can prevent their full and effective participation in society, and from enjoying the same conditions as other children.

**Discrimination/non discrimination:** Discrimination is the denial of equal rights to a social group or its members, on the grounds of prejudice and stereotypes. Discrimination especially affects children, because they are the population group most vulnerable to its negative effects. Therefore, the principle of non-discrimination carries with it a responsibility to ensure that excluded persons or social groups have access to their rights on an equal basis with the rest of the population.

**Child Protection:** LEEDO understands child protection as preserving children’s integrity and promoting safe environments for children to develop in, in which both the Rights of the Child and Children’s best interests are respected. This includes implementing actions for the prevention of detection of and response to any form of violence, abuse, negligence or exploitation.

**Child Safeguarding:** It is the organization's responsibility through the application of a set of procedures, guidelines and practices, to ensure that its programs, projects and other interventions do not cause any harm or expose the children who participate in the activities we develop to any risk of violence and/or harm.

**Child Positive Treatment:** LEEDO understands positive treatment of children as the existence of relationships between children and between adults and children which are based on a profound respect for others and recognition of their value and their rights. They are balanced and empathetic relationships which create a positive context of affection and care and promote the full development and wellbeing of children.

**Child Wellbeing:** LEEDO understands child wellbeing as the realisation of the Rights of the Child and the fulfilment of the opportunity for every child can be all she or he can be in the light of their abilities, potential and skills.

**Best Interests of the Child Principle:** The principle establishes that every decision or measure that is adopted and concerns or involves a child or a group of children, must be made by prioritising their rights, interests and needs. It promotes the dignity of all children without exception, and guarantees their integrity, their holistic development and the full and effective enjoyment of all the rights they are entitled to. The application of this principle involves an ongoing process of assessment of the effects of a given situation on the rights of children, taking into consideration the context, the moment and of course, their opinion and any special needs they may have.

**Violence against Children:** The deliberate use of physical force or power de facto or in the form of a threat. Against or between children that causes or is likely to cause injury, death, psychological harm, developmental disorders or deprivation.

**Child Abuse:** There are several forms of child abuse such as Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Bullying, Cyberbullying. There are also Corporal punishment- "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting ("smacking", "slapping", "spanking") children, with the hand or with an implement in addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment that are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the Convention. These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats(make the child a scapegoat), threatens, scares or ridicules the child".

**Physical Violence against Children:** To cause, in any way, real or potential physical harm to a child.

**Emotional/Psychological Violence against Children:** To cause, in any way, real or potential psychological or emotional harm to a child. It includes acts such as restricting movement, degrading, humiliating, intimidating, harassing, ridiculing and other forms of hostile treatment or rejection, whether in person, in a family, school or community setting, or through the use of technology.

**Sexual violence against children:** Forcing or reciting a child to participate in sexual activities, either by adults or other children, with whom he or she has an unequal relationship owing to age, maturity or power imbalances. It includes acts which involve physical contact, consummated or attempted, with or without penetration as well as sexual harassment, exposing children and adolescents to the observation of sexual activities or inciting them to behave in a sexually inappropriate manner. Another form of sexual violence is sexual exploitation, i.e. the use of children in any sexual activity in exchange for cash or in kind (gifts, food, accommodation etc.) or any other compensation (status etc.), which is given to the child or to third parties. It includes smuggling children for the purpose, sexual tourism, the production, promotion and distribution of pornography featuring children and distributing it via a range of channels, like the internet, and the use of children in sexual performances (public or private).

**Child Abuse:** A type of violence which we use to describe any action, omission or negligent treatment which deprives children and adolescents of their rights and wellbeing, which harms or could harm their physical, psychological, emotional or social development, and the perpetrators of which can be adults, other children, institutions or society. In particular, we use the term abuse when referring to especially severe/intense acts or those which are repeated over time.

**Harmful Practices:** Harmful practices constitute a form of child abuse. There are a denial of children's dignity and integrity and a deprivation of their rights and fundamental liberties. They can be traditional or newly created practices rooted in social norms and are normally imposed on children and adolescents by their families, members of the community or society as a whole. These include child marriage, female genital mutilation and physical or corporal punishment. The latter is defined as any punishment in which physical force is used and the aim of which is to cause pain or discomfort, however slight. In most cases this involves hitting a child or adolescent using the extremities of the body or an object. Physical or corporal punishment is still widely accepted by society, rooted in erroneous beliefs, traditions and practices in which it is seen as an indispensable disciplinary tool.

**Neglect and Negligent Treatment:** A form of violence consisting in the persistent omission or failure to satisfy the physical and/or psychological needs of children or adolescents despite having the means to do so, which will most likely result in the severe deterioration of the physical and/or psychological development of the children or adolescents concerned. It includes not adequately supervising or protecting children and adolescents from possible harm as well as not providing the conditions for their healthy and safe development (nutrition, health care, shelter, access to education). It can include negligence during pregnancy as a result of drug or alcohol abuse or any other substance that represents a risk to their health.



**Intimidation/bullying (includes cyberbullying):** Aggressive behaviour and intentional and continuous violent acts carried out on a child or adolescent by another child or adolescent or group of children or adolescents in which there is a real or perceived imbalance of power. It causes physical, psychological and/or social harm on a repetitive basis, and often takes place in education centres and other places in which children and adolescents gather as well as online.

**Child Commercial Exploitation/Labour:** Forcing a child to work and engage in other activities intended for the economic benefit of a third party which are detrimental to the child's physical or mental health, education or psychological, emotional and social development.

**Institutional Violence against Children:** Any act of violence or denial of Human Rights (including discrimination) against a person or a given social group on behalf of public authority members or institutions. Institutional violence contributes to the revictimization of children and adolescents instead of providing the necessary attention required for their best interests, to strengthen their resilience and promote their development.

**Gender Violence:** Any act of violence based on the biological sex or a particular gender identity of an individual, which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, psychological or sexual harm or suffering.

**Revictimization:** A process which involves additional suffering for people who have been victims of violence or whose rights have been violated. Revictimization occurs when a person has to remember an event in a traumatic way, and be or feel stigmatized blamed or rejected during contact with institutions (in the framework of an investigation or the application of protective measures) or during contact with society (media, community, their own social circle, etc.) Revictimization increases a person's vulnerability, and as a consequence, their risk of suffering from recurring violence over time.

- **Roles and Responsibility**

Safeguarding children is the responsibility of every person working at LEEDO irrespective of individual job roles. In addition there are additional responsibilities assigned to specific job roles as outlined below.

LEEDO's Senior Management Team is responsible for the implementation of the policy across all areas of LEEDO's operations. All LEEDO's staff and Trustees will be briefed on child protection so that they feel confident in implementing the policy in accordance with their responsibility.

**Overall accountability:** The Executive Board will be fully responsible for the review and execution of the safeguarding policy.

**Overall implementation:** The Executive Director and Senior Management will be responsible for the overall implementation of this policy and its related procedures. The key responsibilities of the Management will include the following:

- o Ensure effective implementation of the Safeguarding policy and its procedures by creating a safe environment in the office and community where LEEDO works
- o Raise awareness about the Safeguarding Policy and its procedures and establish a 'culture of safety' in the organisation
- o Show leadership in making Safeguarding of children a priority and lead by example
- o Prioritise safety and protection on the agenda of all work at LEEDO
- o Plan for the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- o Ensure necessary support and resources are available for the implementation of the Policy and Procedures
- o Deal appropriately with safeguarding concerns and issues

- **Prevention**

Preventing abuse will be the cornerstone of LEEDO's safeguarding policy and procedures. This will be done by putting in place systems and practices towards this goal.

- Ensure all staff have access to, are familiar with and know their responsibilities concerning our Safeguarding policy;
- Undertake our operations in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with LEEDO.
- Implement appropriate safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel;
- Ensure staff receive orientation on safeguarding at a level commensurate with their role in the organization;

**Risk assessment and management:** Prior to start any project, we must sit together and identify the risks and find the mitigation of the risks. After identifying the risk, administrative steps must be taken to mitigate the risk. The risks and mitigation plans will be documented in a risk register that will be monitored, reviewed and updated regularly.

**Staff Recruitment:** Safe recruitment and pre-employment checks will be undertaken through references from most immediate employers on the potential applicant's attitude and behaviour towards children. During the interview the candidates will be questioned specifically on their understanding of child rights, child abuse, attitudes towards violence against children, disciplining children. Upon appointment the employee has to mandatorily sign the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct through a declaration stating they have read, understood and agree to follow by LEEDO's safeguarding policy.

**Staff training:** Every staff member will be oriented on the Safeguarding Policy and the code of conduct they are responsible to adhere to and uphold. In addition training will be organised to ensure staff members, especially those working directly and regularly with children are aware about the different forms of abuse and risks to children and how to report and respond to safeguarding concerns as per policy and procedures at LEEDO.

**Code of Conduct:** We will use for our Permanent Shelter LEEDO Peace Home and Transitional Shelter the following Codes.

All the honourable visitors are requested to follow the following code of conduct.

- Not to utter the word "Street Children" while talking to them.
- Be human and affectionate to children.
- Not to do anything what causes hurt physically and mentally to the children.
- Not to use harsh & unpleasant words and gestures to the children.
- Not to ask any child about his/her past.
- Taking permission from the concerned authority if anybody wants to know more information about a child.
- Not to touch the body of a child.
- Not to take any photo or selfie of any child without permission.
- Be positive and affectionate to the children.
- If any abnormality is seen in a child, please inform it to the concerned authority.
- Not to do and tell anything which hampers the personal life of the children.
- Not to give money or any kind of gift to the children. In this regard anybody can take the help of the concerned authority.
- Not to enter the place where the children sleep and take rest.
- Avoid smoking.
- Not to speak or shout loudly.
- Not to go in close touch with the children.



### **What I will Do (For all staff members):**

- I will treat children and young people with care, respect and dignity regardless of their class, caste, race, creed, parentage, lineage, religion, faith, sex, disability, ethnic origin and sexual orientation.
- I will secure a safe, spontaneous and friendly environment for all children, their parents, staff and the volunteers.
- I will avoid physical contact with children and young people except for reasons of training, health and safety.
- I will refrain from physical punishment or discipline of children.
- I will immediately report concerns or allegations of child maltreatment in accordance with appropriate procedures.
- I will comply with all relevant local, national and international legislations, including labour laws in relation to child protection.
- Wherever possible, I will ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children.
- If there is a possibility to misunderstand any organizational activity by community people, I will share the issue with my supervisor or manager.
- If I become accused for any incident of child abuse where investigation will be needed, I will talk with my supervisor or manager.

### **What I will not Do:**

- I will not use language or gestures towards children that are inappropriate, harassing, sexually provocative, abusive, demeaning, belittling or culturally inappropriate.
- I will not marry any girl or boy who are not eligible for marriage (girls under 18 years and boys under 21 years old)
- I will not engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts.
- I will not touch any child in inappropriate manner.
- I will not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- I will not show any discriminatory attitude to any child.
- Without any official or important reason, I will not spend time with any child who has direct relation with LEEDO.
- I will not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury.
- I will not perform any activity that hampers child's education and amusement.
- I will not be involved in the activities which can be done by children like using toilet, wearing cloths etc. (except Child with Disability)

- I will not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible (not applicable for own children)
- I will not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger.
- In images, children should always be dressed appropriately and should never be depicted in any poses that could be interpreted as sexually provocative.
- I will not use technology such as computers, social media, mobile phones, or video and digital cameras inappropriately, and never to exploit or harass children or to access child pornography through any medium.
- I will not take or post or publish any photograph or video without any oral or written permission from the child or parents.
- I will not expose any information that could be used to identify a child or put them at risk.

- **Reporting and Response Framework**

Who will receive the report for any safeguarding incident – this is usually the designated focal point/safeguarding officer

List what actions will be taken to support the 'victim' and the person who reports

All allegations and concerns raised will be taken seriously and it is the mandatory duty of all those covered under the scope of this Policy to report any concerns to the designated Safeguarding Focal Point even if it is a suspicion.

### **Reporting:**

- LEEDO will ensure that safe, appropriate, accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to children, young persons, vulnerable adults and staff and others who come into contact with LEEDO
- To enable this, LEEDO has appointed a Safeguarding Officer who is responsible for ensuring the safeguarding is given high priority within LEEDO and that all safeguarding concerns reports are dealt with in a timely manner.
- The contact details of the Safeguarding Officer will be made available across LEEDO's programme sites and included in relevant communication material to ensure there is awareness and accessibility to all stakeholders of LEEDO.
- Reports may be made verbally but must be followed up with a written report including description of abuse, name of accused, victim, date, place, circumstances and names and contacts of others who may have knowledge of the alleged abuse.
- Reports may also be made anonymously.

## **Response**

- When a report comes in to any staff they will share with the Safeguarding Officer or the report may also come directly to the safeguarding officer.
- Upon receiving the report, Safeguarding officer will investigate this with the support of Safeguarding Committee members consisting with 2-3 persons.
- After proper investigations, appropriate action will be taken according to state law. In that case, the judgment will be unbiased and strict confidentiality will be maintained.
- If any staff accuses a person intentionally for such a crime, disciplinary action will be taken against him/her.
- Safeguarding Officer will make all possible contacts with the higher authorities (Executive Director and Senior Management (designated person) and submit the reports accordingly.
- A disciplinary action will be taken against the staff if it is a case of sexual abuse then lead to dismissal or report to appropriate authorities.
- Immediate necessary counselling support will be provided to the victim.
- Follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to policy and procedure, and legal and statutory obligations;
- Apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of policy. It is LEEDO's policy to report all crimes to the relevant law enforcement; authorities unless doing so may pose a risk to anyone involved in the case.
- Within its means, LEEDO will offer support to survivors of harm caused by staff or associated personnel, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation).

**Monitoring and Review of the policy:** Report on safeguarding reports, response, progress against the implementation plan at meetings of the Executive Board at least once every year. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the application of the relevant action plans, conduct safeguarding self audits with the participation of staff across the organisation and review the policy and accompanying procedures at least once every three years. This review should take into account the learning from safeguarding implementation experience including reports, responses extended.

## **Communication Protocol for communicating about children**

- o Never use manipulated, stereotyped or sensationalized text and/or images
- o Never employ discriminatory or degrading language
- o Never use images of inappropriately clothed children
- o Never feature children in reports, publications, websites, social media sites without the consent of the child and their parents or guardians to use their story, image, disclose identity
- o Communications between donors/sponsors and children must be monitored to ensure these interactions are safe



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