

# **SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

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# A. INTRODUCTION

THIS POLICY AIMS TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE WE WORK WITH, PARTICULARLY CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS, FROM ANY POSSIBLE HARM CAUSED BY LYDIA ACTION EMPLOYEES OR OPERATIONS.

Lydia Action recognizes that most of the people reached and impacted through our work are disadvantaged, vulnerable, or lack access to equal rights, opportunities, and resources. This has the potential to create room for exploitation. Our experience has given us the capacity to be aware ways in which children and vulnerable adults can be abused through positions of power and trust in community development programs and we are committed to providing safety for the communities that we serve.

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# B. POLICY STATEMENT

LYDIA ACTION HAS A ZERO  
TOLERANCE APPROACH TO  
ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION  
OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE.

We recognize that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that we have an obligation to put sound measures in place to create a safe environment that promotes the rights, welfare, and best interests of those with whom we work and those under the care of the organizations we partner with.

# C. DEFINITIONS

**1. Safeguarding** - Safeguarding is about keeping people safe and promoting the health, safety and well-being of the people we work with and for.

**2. Abuse** - The improper use of power or position or any action, in-action or behaviour, which may cause harm to a person in the short or long term.

**3. Harm** - This includes psychological or physical harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, coercion, negligence, any other infringement of a person's health, safety, well-being, development or dignity.

**4. Psychological Harm** - Emotional or psychological abuse, including (but not limited to) harassment and/or bullying, humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name-calling, constant baseless criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.

**5. Sexual abuse** - The term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

**6. Sexual exploitation** - The term 'sexual exploitation' means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another; This definition includes human trafficking and modern slavery.

**7. Negligence** - Failure to act with due care and responsibility for the safety and well-being of others, as explained in this policy. This includes, but is not limited to, failing to act on and reduce risks, or failure to raise a concern through proper channels in a timely and confidential manner.

**8. Do No Harm** - A principle used in the humanitarian and development field which refers to organisations' responsibility to

minimise the harm they may be doing inadvertently as a result of their organisational activities.

**9. Safeguarding Concern** - A feeling or worry that a person may be at risk of harm, or may have been harmed, by the organisation's staff, associates, programmes or operations. A concern may have been directly seen or heard or suspected through hearsay or other information.

**10. Safeguarding Incident** - When an employee or operations verifiably perpetrate abuse or cause harm.

**11. A Child** - A child means every human being below the age of 18 years (UNCRC). Every child is to be treated equally, without discrimination, including, but not exclusive to, ethnicity, religious belief, cultural status, gender identity, sexual orientation, or age.

**12. At-Risk/Vulnerable Adult** - A person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect themselves from harm, or make informed decisions free from duress or influence is significantly impaired.

**13. Staff, partners and stakeholders** - All paid or unpaid staff, volunteers, freelancers, researchers, consultants, contractors, board members, trustees, donors, partner organizations, support groups media representatives, national and international visitors, appointed or recruited by Lydia Action or deemed to be representing Lydia Action in any way worldwide.

**14. Informed Consent** - This is the capacity to give consent based on agency and all available information, according to the age and evolving capacities of the person. The person must fully understand the purpose of the activity for the consent to be informed.

# C. POLICY OUTLINE

## Article 1 – Application

This policy has been created to ensure that:

1. The organization's work does no harm to everyone we work with.
2. Our employees, beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders are protected, especially when they are vulnerable or at risk of harm.
3. Concerns received about the safety and welfare of everyone reached through Lydia action work are dealt with urgency and justice.

This safeguarding policy highlights the measures put in place by Lydia Action in order to:

1. Set clear expectations of behaviour by Lydia Action board, staff, partners and stakeholders to ensure their personal and professional conduct is of the highest standard at all times.
2. Provide guidance on how to apply and implement this policy so that safeguarding is meaningfully integrated into everyday culture and practices across our community.
3. Protect the reputation of Lydia Action, including protecting our board, staff, stakeholders and partners from allegations and incidents that might arise from operating within an ambiguous framework.
4. Enable us to have a common understanding of safeguarding issues across the diverse areas in which Lydia Action operates.
5. Promote a culture of open dialogue and shared accountability for the safety and well-being of all those reached and impacted by Lydia Action work.
6. Support everyone in our community involved in working with children and vulnerable adults.
7. Ensure that our safeguarding practice reflects our statutory responsibilities, and is aligned with guidance from the governments in the jurisdictions where we work, and complies with best practice in the sector.

## Article 2. Context and approach

Lydia Action aims to provide local solutions with a global perspective, referring to the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) as the primary compass. The respect for human dignity is at the heart of our projects. Lydia Action strive to advance human dignity regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, origin, religion, sex, or other status.

As a progressive non-profit, Lydia Action commits to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Human Rights Law, the International Bill of Human Rights, and the Malawi Human Rights Commission Act of 2016. As we implement practical and evidence based community-led projects, Lydia Action intends to be proactive in eradicating inequalities.

Our board of trustees is accountable to the Malawi Government, CONGOMA, and the Malawi NGO Board for good practice and standards, so Lydia Action, its partners, and stakeholders have an ethical and legal obligation to care for and keep the people we work with safe. As a result, we take all safeguarding concerns very seriously.

We recognise that safeguarding issues are diverse in nature hence our approach to frame safeguarding in neutral terms and recognise the need for active, flexible and practical implementation of this policy.

## Article 3. Scope of policy

This policy is binding for all Lydia Action staff, international and local, associates, representatives and implementing partners which include: staff, volunteers, trustees, visitors, researchers, donors, consultants and for anyone else representing Lydia Action in any capacity



# D. PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE POLICY

As we work to overcome vulnerability in conditions of extreme poverty, inequality and insecurity, we recognise that the nature of circumstances in our line of work can create power imbalances in regards to our operations, staff, partners, stakeholders and the people we work with. Lydia Action has an ethical and legal responsibility to ensure that this power is never abused in a way which causes or risks harm and that all people who receive or deliver development support do so in a Secure, respectful and ethical manner.



## **Secure**

We have a zero-tolerance stance on abuse and believe that all people, especially children and vulnerable adults, who benefit from our support, or through partner-driven initiatives, should have access to secure, inclusive programs in an environment that fosters good physical and mental well-being.



## **Respectful**

Our belief is that all people, regardless of age, sex, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin, have an equal right to protection and development. We work with the highest respect for human dignity; we value diversity, confidentiality and do not discriminate against any person for any reason.



## **Ethical**

We are committed to creating a system that enhances our staff's ability to act with high standards and uphold to good principles in their practice. To have personal responsibility and pride in their work and advocate for decent treatment of the people we work with. We instil the confidence to speak out about abuses, listen and trust information that arises, treat this information confidentially and always feedback to people affected.



## **Inclusion**

We enable all staff and stakeholders to participate in the development and implementation of this policy and safeguarding procedures.



## **Holistic**

Our approach is to work with safeguarding lens, to everything we do, across all levels of operations.



## **Accountability**

We uphold accountability for staff and management and instil a strong sense of individual and organisational responsibility to act on any concerns that arise.



## **Impartiality**

We remain objective, never judge or discriminate against people and respect the beliefs and perspectives of others.

# E. ORGANIZATION COMMITMENT

Lydia Action is committed to listen to all complaints in regards to abuse and harassment of any kind and take necessary action. We protect the welfare of people involved in the delivery or receipt of humanitarian aid and development assistance by offering a safe environment.



## **Response**

Lydia Action will promptly respond to all concerns raised, keeping the interests and well-being of those affected at the heart of our approach, and according to agreed procedures and legal obligations. Any person found in breach of this policy will be subject to disciplinary procedures, and, may be suspended during an enquiry. We will offer support to any person who has experienced harm caused by staff or associated employee.



## **Confidentiality**

We will maintain discretion at all stages of the process when responding to safeguarding concerns or incidents. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need-to know basis only, it should be kept secure at all times, and anonymised when included in reports or learning documents.



# F. CODE OF CONDUCT

## Article 4. Employee conduct

All Lydia Action employees are obliged to:

- i. Work in a way which does not abuse or cause harm as defined in this policy.
- ii. Uphold our code of conduct and support a safe, respectful and nurturing environment that keeps people safe and promotes well-being across all Lydia action programs and partners.
- iii. Raise any concerns, suspicions or incidents relating to abuse or harm caused by Lydia action staff member or associated employee to the safeguarding and well-being committee, your line manager or another senior manager.
- iv. Stay up to date and informed of safeguarding policy and procedures at Lydia action and, where possible, promote safeguarding messages and feedback channels to stakeholders.

All Lydia Action staff, partners and stakeholders are expected to uphold the highest standards of behaviour and Code of Conduct at all times, and must not engage in the activities below.

## Article 5. Child safeguarding

All Lydia action staff, partners and stakeholders must not:

- i. Subject a child to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.
- ii. Engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children including child labour or trafficking.

## Article 6. Adult safeguarding

All Lydia Action staff, partners and stakeholders must not:

- i. Sexually abuse or exploit at-risk adults.
- ii. Subject an at-risk adult to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect.

## Article 7. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

All Lydia Action staff, partners and stakeholders must not:

- i. Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual activity. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance.
- ii. Engage in any sexual relationships with beneficiaries of assistance

# G. IMPLEMENTATION

Lydia Action has put in place some detailed implementation procedures that will support the policy and its objectives.



## **Prevent**

The first act is to ensure that no risk or abuse happens at all. There should be risk prevention through zero tolerance, safe recruitment, self-declaration, supporting a culture of good code of conduct, relationship disclosures and safe content and information sharing guidelines.



## **Action**

We are committed to respond to complaints through an impartial safeguarding committee, open and secure reporting and feedback channels that are available at all times.



## **Empower**

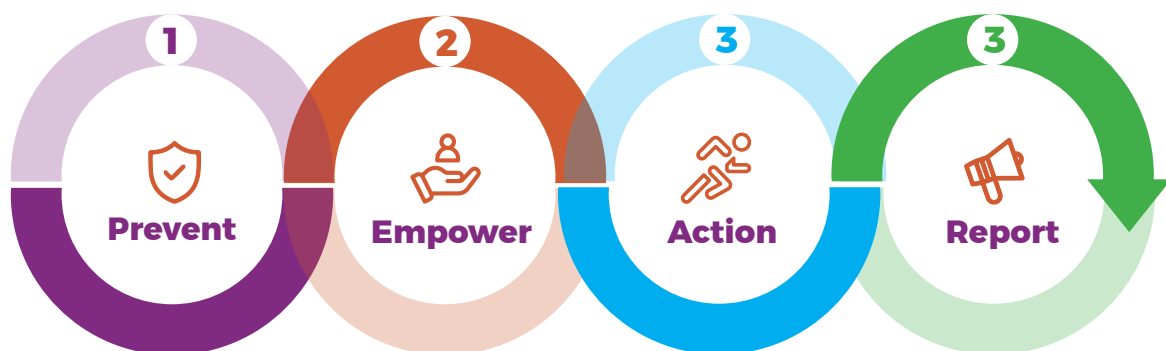
All staff and projects of Lydia Action must have the necessary training on safeguarding issues to make sure there is a safe project cycle and all partners and stakeholders support the implementation of the policy in all of our projects.



## **Report**

We are committed to documenting safeguarding issues for monitoring and evaluation and good learning. We are also mandated to share the experiences with the general public to encourage disclosure of abuse and accountability.

### **Lydia Action safeguarding model**



## Article 8. Implementation objectives

The following objectives are designed to support the implementation of Lydia action's safeguarding policy and procedures and are designed to achieve our overall goal.

### 1. Structural strengthening

To consolidate efficient, accessible and adaptable safeguarding policies & procedures across Lydia action.

### 2. Safe Communities

To foster a safe and thriving culture where all staff and stakeholders understand safeguarding and have the social confidence to raise concerns and manage associated distress.

### 3. Institutional learning

To contribute to and collaborate with best practice through a dynamic safeguarding learning and support network, both internally and externally.

### 4. Strengthening Partnerships

To reciprocally strengthen, support and capacitate our partner's commitment to safeguarding.

member of our Safeguarding Committee.

They may do so by:

1. Requesting to meet a member of the safeguarding committee in person at any of our offices.
2. Reporting directly through the secure safeguarding committee email address ([safe@lydiaaction.org](mailto:safe@lydiaaction.org)), or 01 759 509.
3. We will also accept complaints from external sources such as our digital users on any of our online and social media pages using direct messages.

If the person does not feel comfortable sharing information using the ways described above due to reasons that the staff mandated to enforce the policy are implicated they should raise their concern to another appropriate staff member, for example, National Coordinator or Executive Director.

## Article 9. Enabling reporting

1. Lydia Action will ensure that safe, appropriate and accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and the communities we work with. Any staff reporting concerns or complaints will be protected by Lydia Action *disclosure of malpractice (Whistleblowing)* policy.

### Reporting process

Any individual or a group who are concerned about the health, safety or well-being of a person or group, caused by Lydia Action staff, representatives or operations, should raise this immediately to a

## Article 10. Adherence

Adherence to this policy is mandatory for all Lydia Action staff and board members. It also covers all donors', grantee partners whom we fund, consultants, and all other stakeholders who work for or on behalf of Lydia Action, who we expect to work under the policy as part of their agreement and partnership with Lydia Action.

## Article 11. Linkage and relevance

1. Lydia Action anti-fraud, bribery, and corruption policy
2. Lydia Action disclosure of malpractice and complaints policy
3. policy
4. Lydia Action Inclusion policy
5. Information Management and IT Policy
6. Child care. Protection and justice Act No. 22 of 2010
7. Human rights commission Act 2016

## Article 12 - Entry into force

This Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy comes into effect after approval by the Chairperson of the board of trustees of Lydia Action on 21 day of 09 20 21

Chairperson:

Samuel S. Mbiri

Signature:

