

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. AIM AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THIS POLICY

- a. BETTER (Building East Timor Through Education/ Resources), hereby designated as BETTER is committed to safeguarding and protecting students from harm. We believe that every child and young person has at all times and in all situations the right to feel safe and protected.
- b. It is BETTER's policy to create and proactively maintain an environment that aims to prevent and deter any actions and omissions, whether deliberate or inadvertent, that place children at risk of any kind of child abuse. BETTER strives through awareness, good practice and training to minimize the risks to children and to take positive steps to help protect children who are the subject of any concerns.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

- a. This Policy is aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the recommendations of the International Task Force on Child Protection that has set standards for safeguarding in schools worldwide and Lei #6/2023 Lei de Protecção das Crianças das Jovens em perigo of the Republic of Timor Leste.
- b. BETTER requires all individuals and groups associated with the school community to act with integrity and to take responsibility for keeping students safe. This policy applies to all with contact with the school community including staff, volunteers, associated agencies, contractors, parents and visitors.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

This policy is informed by a set of principles that are derived from the UNCRC. The responsibilities detailed below are compulsory for all members who fall within the scope of this policy as detailed in Clause 2.b above.

- a. Children must be treated with equal rights, respect and provided equal care regardless of race, age, gender, language, religion, political beliefs, physical or mental health, socio-economic and cultural background, any history of conflict with the law, or other status;
- b. Children will be assured the right to express their views freely and this will be given 'due weight' in accordance with their age and level of maturity. We will not discriminate against the child.
- c. All children have a fundamental right to life, survival and development. As such, all children have equal rights to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation;
- d. All children should be encouraged and supported to fulfill their potential and inequality and discrimination should be challenged;
- e. Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children;
- f. Members must not disclose personal conversations or messages whilst interacting with children. Additionally, members must not ask personally



leading or inappropriate questions of children without consent of managers or supervisors;

- g. Children are not to be physically harmed;
- h. Members must adhere to ethical standards (in both their conduct and leading by example), ensuring that inappropriate language, harassment, abusive or sexually inappropriate behavior is not undertaken;
- i. Members must not make any form of physical contact with children, unless it is approved by the appropriate management or supervising authority; This is an issue within school when perceived to be demonstrating favouritism for any particular child or children.
- j. Members must not solicit or engage in any form of sexual activity from or with children;
- k. Members must ensure that other members, authorities or management are present when in the presence of children;
- l. Members must not attempt to build binding or personal relationships with the children, recognising that BETTER aims to support communities holistically;
- m. Members must not invite or remove children from their designated places of activity, or any areas not deemed 'safe' or approved by the appropriate managing authority, unless they reasonably determine that the child is at immediate risk of imminent danger or injury;
- n. Members must be conscious of the socio-economic standing of the community, and thus not 'parade' forms of privilege, such as technology or excessive amounts of money, as to not create a sense of inequality or dismay within the children;
- o. Members must not employ or engage children in any activity that is not either included in the program or approved by appropriate management, such as domestic or other labor;
- p. Members must report any incidents involving conduct that may be in breach of the clauses set out by this code of conduct and must voice any concerns regarding the welfare of children immediately to BETTER managers and relevant local and international authorities (if applicable).

4. IMPLEMENTATION

- a. BETTER will take positive action to prevent those who abuse children from becoming involved with BETTER (Building East Timor Through Education/ Resources) and take stringent measures against any BETTER staff, volunteers, visitors, partner organisations and managers who abuse a child. Our decision and actions in response to child protection, concerns and breaches of this policy will be guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and Lei 6/2023 of the Republic of Timor Leste.
- b. Members are required to provide adequate personal information and a criminal history check (where possible) and/or referee checks are to be carried out by BETTER to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. These checks must be submitted to the Child Protection Officer (hello@bettertimor.org) before commencing employment/activity.



- c. Moreover, each party must read, accept and adhere to the BETTER code of conduct listed above. The provisions of this conduct will be explained in more detail and included in the itineraries of induction sessions prior to the commencement of employment and/or involvement with BETTER by the Child Protection Officer. Annual reviews of this code of conduct are obligatory for all Members of BETTER. Members are required to sign this policy, to signify their adherence, and copies are kept in BETTER headquarters in Sydney and East Timor.
- d. Child protection guidelines are kept available and visible in each office of BETTER and its implementing partners. The guidelines provide procedures on how to implement this policy, when faced with issues of Child abuse.
- e. Reporting of alleged or suspected cases of child abuse is mandatory for all 'members' of BETTER. Reports are handled professionally and confidentially in accordance with the provisions of this policy and Lei6/2023 of the Republic of Timor Leste.
- f. This policy is strictly adhered to during ALL phases of the project cycle. Child Abuse Risk Management strategies are incorporated during projection design, planning, and action.

5. MEASURES FOR BREACH OF THE POLICY

The following measures will be applied for all 'members' of BETTER who breach the Child Protection Policy:

- a. Meeting with the Member' to discuss the alleged breach and opportunity for the person to provide their account/understanding of the situation
- b. Performance management
- c. Further education on this Policy
- d. Formal warning and monitoring
- e. Transfer to other duties
- f. Suspension pending investigation
- g. Internal investigation
- h. Report to authorities
- i. Dismissal

These measures will apply alongside any criminal investigation where relevant.

6. CHILD SAFE RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

BETTER conducts rigorous screening processes of all 'members' to minimize the risk to children. This includes:

- a. Criminal history check (where applicable)
- b. Working with Children check (where applicable)
- c. Child protection interview question
- d. Two reference checks from former employers or equivalent authorities.
- e. Signing of the Child protection policy.
- f. Attendance of Child Protection Policy training session during induction.

7. REPORTING PROCESS

- a. If child abuse is a direct violation of the Child protection Policy, or of an illegal nature, then the 'member' involved will be suspended immediately and appropriate authorities in the country of operation will be informed. If the accusation is not in breach of the law or Child Protection Policy, then the Community Welfare Officer and/or Child Protection Officer is to devise appropriate plans to resolve the issue, as well as report the incident to the Chief Executive Officer.
- b. If a solution is not reached immediately or as soon as practically possible following a., the incident will be reviewed by the Chief Executive Officer and appropriate plans designed to mitigate this impact, as well as incident being reported to the Board of Directors. If a solution is not reached immediately or as soon as practically possible following b, the incident will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and appropriate plans put in place.
- c. If a solution is not reached immediately or as soon as practically possible following c, the matter will be referred to and handled by appropriate authorities in the country of operation.
- d. If a solution is found in clauses a-d, the matter will be considered resolved, feedback will be provided to those directly or indirectly involved whilst protecting privacy and confidentiality. A review of the incident will be conducted by BETTER and appropriate procedures put in place to ensure the matter is not repeated. Debriefing/counseling to be offered, if needed.

8. CHILD SPONSORSHIP

- a. Please refer to BETTER child sponsorship policy (found at www.bettertimor.org under the 'policies' tab) for a detailed outline of organisational standards.

9. PHOTOGRAPHY

- a. BETTER actively obtains images and footage of children from management on-site. The use of children's images is solely for fundraising purposes. The use of social media is not strictly for fundraising purposes. When any member photographs or films a child, the following guidelines must be complied with:
- b. Before photographing or filming a child, one must investigate and act in accordance with any local traditions or restrictions regarding the photographing and filming of children.
- c. Prior to photographing or filming a child, consent must be obtained not only by the child, but also by a parent or guardian.
- d. All photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and honest light: not as vulnerable or passive. Children must be adequately clothed and in appropriate stances (those which could not be seen as sexually suggestive).
- e. Images must be honest representations of the context and facts.
- f. BETTER must ensure that file labels do not reveal identifying information

about a child, as this is a particular concern in instances where files are sent electronically.

10. DEFINITIONS

- a. **Child:** BETTER uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) definition of a child, which is any person under the age of 18, regardless of whether a nation's laws recognize adulthood earlier. For the purposes of the Policy, the definition also includes an unborn child. It is noted that Lei 6/2023 of the Republic of Timor Leste defines a Criança ou jovem as "a pessoa com idade inferior a 17 anos".
- b. **Child Protection:** The procedures and policies to prevent and respond to cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children.
- c. **Members:** All volunteers, visitors, partner organisations, contractors, Board members, interns, consultants and staff who work with BETTER.
- d. **Child Abuse:** the deliberate act of ill treatment that can harm or is likely to cause harm to a child's safety, wellbeing, dignity and development. Abuse includes all forms of physical, sexual, psychological or emotional ill treatment.
- e. **Physical Abuse:** involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actually or likely physical injury or suffering (e.g. hitting, shaking, burning, female genital mutilation, torture).
- f. **Emotional or psychological abuse:** includes humiliating and degrading treatment such as bad name-calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement and isolation.
- g. **Sexual abuse:** includes all forms of sexual violence including incest, early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography and sexual slavery. Child sexual abuse may also include indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child and showing children pornographic material.
- h. **Neglect:** deliberately, or through carelessness or negligence, failing to provide for, or secure for a child, their rights to physical safety and development.
- i. **Exploitation:** refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development.
- j. **Violence:** "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an individual or group, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity" (WHO in the World Report on Violence and Health 2002).
- k. **Harm:** the result of the exploitation, violence, abuse and neglect of children and can take many forms, including impacts of children's physical, emotional and behavioural development, their general health, their family and social relationships, their self-esteem, their educational attainment and aspirations.