



Introduction

The Leprosy Mission-Nigeria (TLMN) expects the highest standards of professional practice in all our work and contact with people - particularly with vulnerable adults.

Definitions

- **Vulnerable adult** means any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of care and support (e.g. health care, relevant personal care or social care) and is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect and, as a result of this, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk or experience of neglect or abuse.
- **Abuse and neglect** are forms of maltreatment of a vulnerable adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect a vulnerable adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse of vulnerable adults can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing actual physical suffering. Abuse can be a single or repeated act or omission, which causes harm or distress. Abuse of vulnerable adults can be physical, financial, discriminatory, due to neglect or omission, psychological, sexual, organisational or as a result of self-neglect, modern slavery, domestic violence.
- **Adult Safeguarding** means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

Groups at Risk

TLMN notes that the following groups are at enhanced risk of being vulnerable to neglect, abuse and/or exploitation:

- a person with a physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or emotional impairment, including people affected by leprosy;
- an older person who is particularly frail;
- an unpaid carer who may be overburdened, under severe stress or isolated;

- a homeless person;
- any person living with someone who abuses drugs or alcohol;
- women who may be particularly vulnerable as a result of isolating cultural factors; and internally displaced people and refugees.

NB: The presence of one or more of these factors does not necessarily mean that the adult is vulnerable – age, disability or physical illness for example should not lead to the automatic assumption that the individual is vulnerable. **A key factor in each case is whether the individual is able to take steps to protect and promote his or her interests.** The presumption is that adults have mental capacity to make informed choices about their safety and how they live their lives. Every time we become involved on a safeguarding issue we need to take into account the ability of adults to make informed choices about the way they want to live and the risks they want to take, to the extent that they have sufficient mental capacity to do so. This includes how able they are:

- to understand what is likely to result from or affect their situation;
- to take action themselves to prevent abuse; and
- to take part as fully as they can in making decisions about getting other parties involved.

Policy Statement

- This policy relates to safeguarding of vulnerable adults. However, in the broader context, TLMN and its trustees are also committed to proactively safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the Mission's beneficiaries and staff and taking reasonable steps to ensure that beneficiaries and others who come into contact with the Mission do not, as a result, come to harm.
- TLMN's wider safeguarding and protection measures are also implemented through additional policies and procedures, including its Safety and Security Policy, Child Protection Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Complaints Handling Policy, and Data Protection Policy.
- TLMN recognises its fundamental duties towards all vulnerable adults where its operations necessitate contact with, or have an impact on, them. It is committed to safeguarding vulnerable adults from harm and ensuring their rights to protection are realised.

TLMN believes that:

- The welfare of the vulnerable adult is paramount;
- No individual or group should be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access services which meet their particular needs;
- All vulnerable adults without exception have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, age, race, disability, sexuality, sexual identity, or beliefs.

- Working in partnership with vulnerable adults, their carers and relevant agencies is essential to promoting welfare; and
- We must take positive action to promote safe practices and protect vulnerable adults from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation and radicalisation where reasonably possible.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to:

- **Trustees of The Leprosy Mission-Nigeria**
- **TLMN staff**, which for the purposes of this policy only includes: employees (whether working full-time, part-time and casually), consultants and contractors (including researchers, students and photographers), interns and volunteers (as the case may be) involved in the work of TLMN;
- **All in-country partners** that receive TLMN funds
- All “**relevant others**”, including:
 - visitors to TLMN-funded programmes and projects;
 - TLMN-organised tour group members;
 - and any other individuals or groups working or volunteering for TLMN.
- TLMN requires that each of its partners complies with the objectives of this policy by adopting and effectively implementing this policy or replicating/including on substantially the same terms the expectations and responsibilities contained in this policy document (subject to any amendments to take account of any additional requirements imposed by local legal and/or regulatory requirements in the location in which they are operating).
- TLMN also requires that all partners provide the same, or a higher, level of protection for vulnerable adults provided for in this policy in accordance with applicable law, regulation and best practice.
- Therefore, partners must either have their own Safeguarding Policy or equivalent (which provides the same or a higher level of protection than this policy, in full compliance with relevant Nigerian laws and best practice) or abide by TLMN’s Safeguarding Policy for the duration of the partnership agreement/arrangement.
- This policy is publicly available on the TLMN website and vulnerable adults, carers and local community members will be made aware of it, as appropriate.

Policy Aims

This policy is designed to provide guidance to all those to which this policy applies (as outlined above). Its purpose is to help these parties to:

- Understand the importance of safeguarding issues;
- Know their responsibilities and ensure compliance under legal and policy obligations within and outside their work environments at all times;
- Uphold the dignity and respect of and vulnerable adults;
- Ensure a safe and trusted environment for and vulnerable adults is created through preventative measures; and
- Respond quickly and appropriately to concerns raised.

Expectations of the Policy

TLMN will take all reasonable steps to ensure and encourage:

- All TLMN staff, partners and relevant others are aware of, committed to and implement the policies and procedures set out in this document;
- A culture of openness to enable issues and concerns about safeguarding to be raised and discussed;
- A sense of accountability between staff/representatives so that actual and potential poor or abusive behaviour can and must be challenged; and
- That all concerns and/or allegations of abuse or neglect, including breaches of the
- Safeguarding Code of Conduct, are taken seriously and responded to promptly and appropriately, including that they are reported internally in accordance with the policy and to external authorities, regulators and others as appropriate.

Interaction with vulnerable adults

All TLMN staff, partners and relevant others who are working with or representing TLMN must confirm in writing that they have read and understood this policy and agree to abide by TLMN's Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy.

- All TLMN staff and other representatives, and those of its partners, should be approachable and respectful to and vulnerable adults and act in their best interests.
- Vulnerable adults should be encouraged to give their own accounts as much as possible, rather than letting others speak on their behalf.

- Portrayals of vulnerable adults should be accurate and balanced, with emphasis upon their dignity.
- To the extent that individuals have not been the subject of appropriate background checks as outlined below, they must be supervised at all times by those who have been so checked.
- No personal information (such as location) which could put a vulnerable adult at risk should be posted on a TLMN website or published in public-facing literature.
- Those working for or in connection with TLMN should always ask permission from vulnerable adults (or, in the case of young , their carer or guardian) before taking images (e.g. photographs, videos) of them, and respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Images taken of must be respectful and only used fairly, lawfully and otherwise appropriately in accordance with relevant Nigerian laws. If possible the vulnerable adult/carer should sign an informed consent form, which should subsequently be filed securely.

Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Summary
1.0	26 April 2019	Sunday Udo	New draft created for next revision

Document Approval

Version	Date	Approved by
1.0	9 th May, 2019	TLM-Nigeria Board