



Life Concern Organisation

The Safeguarding Policy

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1. General Principles

Life Concern Organisation (LICO) Safeguarding Policy is based on the following principles:

1. All Persons have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.
2. All Persons must fulfil their potential and all inequalities must be eliminated.

2. Definitions of Terms

2.1 Person: A human being regarded as an individual

2.2 Person Protection: The processes, measures and structures designed to prevent and respond to personal abuse.

2.3 Safeguarding: The responsibility of an organisation to ensure that employees, volunteers, partners, vendors, operations and programmes do not harm Persons. Safeguarding also refers to the responsibility of the organisation to protect its employees, volunteers, vendors, operations and programmes from abuse.

2.4 Abuse: Anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms persons or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

LICO recognises the following main forms of abuse:

1. **Physical Abuse:** Use of physical force that causes a risk of actual injury or suffering to a person. Physical abuse includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, restraint or otherwise causing physical harm.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** Harm to a Person's emotional, intellectual, mental or psychological development. Emotional abuse includes but is not limited to any humiliating or degrading treatment such as bad name-calling, threats, yelling, screaming, cursing, teasing, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, rejecting, ignoring, terrorizing, isolating or confining a Person.
3. **Neglect:** Failure to meet the Person's basic physical and psychological needs either deliberately or through disregard. Neglect includes failure to provide adequate food and sufficient or appropriate clothing and shelter. It also includes failure to provide a safe physical environment; and failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care.
4. **Financial or material abuse:** Includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits belonging to a Person and that should ensure appropriate welfare of the Person.
5. **Exploitation:** Abuse of a position of vulnerability, power or trust for the benefit of the individual or groups at the expense of Persons' well-being. The exploitation of a Person

may include but is not limited to domestic servitude, forced labour, or forced criminal activities such as prostitution or marriages.

6. **Sexual Exploitation:** All forms of sexual violence, coercion or exploitation including transactional sex, incest, early and forced marriage, rape and defilement, involvement in or exposure to indecent images or pornography and sexual slavery or trafficking of Persons for sexual exploitation. Sexual abuse may include but is not limited to indecent touching or exposure, explicit sexual language.

7. **About Life Concern Organisation**

LICO is a non-profit making non-governmental organization based in Rumphi District in the northern region of Malawi. LICO, established in 2008, is registered under Malawi Trustee Incorporation Act (Certificate No. TR/INC 4822). LICO is also registered with Council of Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA) and the NGO Board. LICO was established by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the local communities in Rumphi District.

LICO's vision is "Empowered communities free from HIV/AIDS and defending the rights of Persons." Thus LICO exists to over-come HIV/AIDS and poverty in communities through education and awareness. Its strategic areas include HIV/AIDS; Health Governance; Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR); Gender and Women Empowerment; Education; Person Protection; Local Governance; and Environment.

LICO strives to achieve the following four goals:

1. Prevent new HIV infections and provide care and support services to people living with HIV/AIDS;
2. Increase access and uptake of quality SRHR services among communities;
3. Provide sustainable economic empowerment to women and vulnerable populations; and
4. Mitigate the impact of climate change.

LICO received the prestigious UNAIDS Red Ribbon Award (2014) under the HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support category in Melbourne, Australia. The award has played a great role in transforming LICO's image globally. This is evidenced in the increase in number of donors and funding base since 2014 from about MK15 million to over MK200 million in 2022.

5. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the activities of LICO are implemented in a safe and protective environment where Personal harm, exploitation and abuse are effectively prevented and responded to effectively.

6. Policy Statement

LICO has zero tolerance for physical, emotional, financial or material, and all forms of human abuse. LICO is committed to implementing programs and operations in a manner that is safe for Persons. We are committed to protecting the rights of all Persons. Thus, all our staff, volunteers, vendors or consultants are prohibited from engaging in any activity that may result in any kind of abuse. This policy serves to create an environment that prevents and deters any actions and omissions, whether deliberate or inadvertent, that place Persons at risk of any kind of abuse. Any violations of this policy will be treated as a serious breach and will result in disciplinary action that may include termination of contract or employment and/or any other available legal remedies.

7. Scope of the Policy

This policy is applicable to all stakeholders including the following:

1. Board of Directors
2. Executive Director
3. Management and Staff
4. Government officers
5. Civil Society Organisations
6. Consultants
7. Community leaders
8. Religious leaders
9. Community members

10. Focus of the Policy

This policy has three focal areas as explained below:

1. **Prevention:** Striving, through awareness, good practice and training, to minimize the risks to Persons and take positive steps to help protect all Persons who are the subject of any concerns.
2. **Reporting:** Ensuring that all employees know the steps to take and whom to contact when concerns arise regarding the safeguarding of all Persons.

3. **Responding:** Engaging in action that supports and protects all Persons when concerns arise regarding their well-being; supporting whistle-blowers who raise such concerns; investigating; and taking appropriate corrective action to prevent the recurrence of abuse.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

1. The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors has the responsibility of providing oversight and policy direction on Person protection. The Board shall ensure the effective implementation of this policy, both within LICO as an organisation and among its stakeholders including the beneficiaries of LICO's programmes. The Board also has the responsibility to address complaints related to this policy especially where the Person abuse is perpetrated by senior management.

2. Executive Director

The Executive Director is the custodian of the policy and is responsible for its effective implementation within LICO and among its stakeholders. The Executive Director shall ensure that all staff members, whether permanent or temporary, including consultants, communities and government officers are aware of and abide by the contents of this policy. He/she is responsible for disciplinary action on contravention of this policy, in line with staff conditions of service, human resources policies and applicable laws.

3. Management and Staff

All senior and middle managers, and operational and support staff, have an obligation to abide by the provisions of this policy. Every member of staff has the responsibility of bringing awareness of personal protection to the communities and other stakeholders. All staff members have the responsibility to report any contraventions of this policy. They also have the duty to report incidences of abuse, cooperate and assist in investigations, including the provision of evidence where necessary. Failure to report abuse, or cooperate, is a breach of this policy and will attract appropriate sanctions.

4. Recruitment and Appointments

All prospective employees will undergo a process of vetting to ensure that they are not prone to abuse Persons. Prospective employees will be required to disclose their criminal records including records about protection and abuse. LICO will not employ individuals with a history of abuse, and any false disclosures will result in the termination of the contract. A successful candidate will be asked to commit to the organisation's Person protection policy and procedures as a condition of employment. Upon recruitment, all employees will be given a copy of this policy and sign for it after they have read and understood its contents.

5. Data Protection

All staff members shall ensure that personal information regarding Persons is kept confidential unless there are agreements with the parents or guardians or where it is necessary to pass the information to the social welfare office or law enforcement agency in relation to safeguarding or protecting the rights of the Person.

6. Social Media

LICO has social media platforms for promoting the visibility of its operations. However, LICO shall not allow the posting of profane pictures or videos or stories on its platform. Any material which is tantamount to personal abuse shall not be tolerated and shall attract sanctions. LICO shall also only post videos, pictures or stories that have a bearing on LICO’s programmes after seeking consent from the concerned persons.

7. Misconduct

Anyone who engages in abuse as defined in 2.4, breaches the provisions of this policy and shall face disciplinary or legal action. Failure to report abuse and to cooperate during investigations or inquiries, or to abide by any provision of this policy is construed as misconduct.

8. Adherence to this Policy

All board members, management and staff including permanent and temporary employees and consultants, shall be required to read and commit to abide by this policy by appending their signatures.

9. Declaration of Commitment

I have read and understood the safeguarding policy and I commit to abide by its provision. I am aware that any contravention of this policy may lead to the termination of my employment contract and I may face criminal prosecution.

Name:

Signature:

Date:



Signed on the 31st December of 2022 by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and curves, positioned above a horizontal line.

Peter Gondwe
The Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large circular loop and several intersecting lines, positioned above a horizontal line.

Ulemu Kumwenda
The Board Chairperson