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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Building East Timor Through Education/ Resources ("BETTER") is committed to safeguarding and protecting children from harm. Every child and young person has the right to feel safe and protected at all times and in all situations.
- 1.2 BETTER strives through awareness, good practice and training to minimise the risks to children and to take positive steps to help protect children who are the subject of any concerns.
- 1.3 BETTER requires all individuals and groups associated with the organisation and the school community to act with integrity and to take responsibility for keeping students safe.
- 1.4 This policy applies to the Board Directors, permanent or casual employees, suppliers, visitors, sponsors, donors, as well as volunteers and interns at BETTER ("Personnel"), whether based in Australia, Timor-Leste or elsewhere.
- 1.5 This Policy should be read in conjunction with our Child Sponsorship Policy, Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, and Complaints Management Policy (all found on our website www.bettertimor.org).

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to create and proactively maintain an environment that prevents and deter any actions and omissions, whether deliberate or inadvertent, that place children at risk of Harm.
- 2.2 In this Policy, a "child" is any person under the age of 18, regardless of whether a nation's laws recognise adulthood earlier.¹

3. Principles

- 3.1 BETTER is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children who participate in its programs and all Personnel have a responsibility to support the protection of children.
- 3.2 The best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration in all matters relating to child protection and welfare.
- 3.3 Our approach to child protection will be guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the International Task Force on Child Protection's standards for safeguarding in schools worldwide, and Timor-Leste's Law No. 6 of 2023 on the Protection of Children and Young

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) definition of a child

People at Risk.²

- 3.4 BETTER will conduct rigorous screening of all Personnel to minimise the risk to children.
- 3.5 BETTER will ensure that our in-country staff and any employees working with children complete mandatory child protection training annually..

4. Rights of Children

- 4.1 All children have a fundamental right to be protected from harmful influences, discrimination, abuse and exploitation.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 Children have the right to express their views freely and this will be given proper consideration in accordance with their age and level of maturity.

5. Prohibited Behaviour

- 5.1 Children are not to be physically harmed nor subjected to emotional or psychological abuse.
- 5.2 Personnel must not solicit or engage in any form of sexual activity with children.
- 5.3 Personnel 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.
- 5.4 Personnel must not ask personally leading or inappropriate questions of children without consent of appropriate management.
- 5.5 Personnel 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 labour.

6. Marketing & Photography

- 6.1 When choosing images and content for promotional materials, BETTER will endeavour to uphold the rights of the child or children. Photographs or videos of children must present them in a dignified light: not as vulnerable or passive.
- 6.2 Photographs must be honest representations of the context and facts.
- 6.3 Children must be adequately clothed and in appropriate stances (those which could not be seen as sexually suggestive)
- 6.4 Before photographing or filming a child, Personnel must:
 - i. Enquire into and act in accordance with any local traditions or restrictions regarding the photographing and filming of children;

² Lei No 6/2023. Lei de Proteção das Crianças e Jovens em perigo, Timor-Leste: Art 4.1(b) “«Criança ou jovem», a pessoa com idade inferior a 17 anos”.

- ii. Have previously obtained written consent from a child's parent or guardian; and
 - iii. Ensure the child is not objecting to their being photographed or filmed.
- 6.5 Any photographic subject may ask to see the image taken of them, and request that it be deleted.

7. Managing Breaches and Reporting

- 7.1 Complaints or allegations of breaches of this Policy may be submitted to the BETTER Chief Executive Officer, any member of the BETTER Board, or in accordance with BETTER's Complaints Management Policy.
- 7.2 Any serious alleged or suspected case of child abuse or other inappropriate behaviour involving children must be reported immediately to the BETTER Chief Executive Officer, who must inform the BETTER Board Chairperson and/or Chair of the Education Committee.
- 7.3 Where BETTER's investigation indicates a criminal offence or another breach of law is likely to have been committed, it will immediately notify relevant local law enforcement authorities.
- 7.4 Upon receiving a report of a breach of law or this Policy, BETTER may immediately suspend any Personnel involved and prevent their access to children involved in BETTER programs, until an investigation has been completed.
- 7.5 Medical attention and support shall be offered to those affected by the reported behaviour, if needed.
- 7.6 Reports will be handled in accordance with the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy, except where disclosure is required to law enforcement authorities or to protect a child from further harm.
- 7.7 No complainant, witness, or person assisting in an investigation shall suffer retaliation or adverse consequences for doing so. These protections are detailed in BETTER's Whistleblower Protection Policy, which includes specific provisions for whistleblower confidentiality and non-retaliation.
- 7.8 Should an allegation be substantiated, BETTER may take any of the below actions against the perpetrator.
- i. Performance management, which may include additional training;
 - ii. Formal warning and monitoring;
 - iii. Transfer to other duties;
 - iv. Any other disciplinary action detailed in the Complaints Handling Policy; and/or
 - v. Dismissal.