

PEAS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

PEAS, as an international child-centred organisation, is dedicated to upholding the rights of children. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 19, which affirms children's entitlement to protection from all forms of harm, including physical and mental violence, neglect, abuse, and exploitation, PEAS is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children under its care.

This policy sets out the overarching principles that guide PEAS’ approach to Child Protection and the rules that PEAS staff and associates must abide by and steps that will be taken to meet our commitment to protect children. This policy extends to students at PEAS schools and PEAS’ partner schools, including those who are over the age of 18 whilst enrolled.

PEAS expects that all its employees and associates¹ have the child’s best interests at the heart of their involvement with PEAS. This policy applies to everyone working for or associated with PEAS.

PEAS Statement of Commitment to Keeping Children Safe

PEAS is committed to keeping children safe from harm and ensuring that children’s rights to protection are fully realised. We take very seriously our responsibility to promote child-safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation in any form. We take a “zero tolerance” approach

¹ An ‘associate’ of PEAS is defined as anyone who is contractually working with or for PEAS, is a volunteer or is a visitor/guest of PEAS. This includes but is not exclusive to media, donors, board members, partner organisations, contractors, consultants or anyone brought into contact with children or child-sensitive data whilst working for/ with or visiting PEAS. Where international posts are accompanied, the post holder’s accompanying dependents are also classified as ‘associates’.

towards any form of harm to children and will actively implement measures to prevent, detect, and address instances of abuse and exploitation. Our decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of ‘the best interests of the child’.

PEAS Child Protection Principles

- **Equal Right to Safety and Protection:** All children are entitled to a safe and secure environment free from harm and abuse.
- **Equal Right to Fulfil Potential:** Every child deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential, unimpeded by threats to their safety or well-being.
- **Non-Discrimination and Equality:** PEAS is committed to ensuring equality and non-discrimination for all children, challenging any form of inequality that may arise.
- **Prioritising safety:** PEAS is dedicated to safeguarding the welfare of children under its care, prioritising their safety above all else.
- **Acting in the Best Interests of the Child:** In all actions and decisions, PEAS will prioritise the best interests of the child, ensuring their needs are paramount.
- **Zero Tolerance for Child Abuse:** Child abuse in any form is unequivocally unacceptable and will not be tolerated within the PEAS community.
- **Shared Responsibility for Child Protection:** Protecting children is a collective responsibility, and everyone within the PEAS community must actively contribute to ensuring their safety and well-being.

PEAS SAFEGUARDING FRAMEWORK: How PEAS ensures our child protection commitments are met

At an organisational level, PEAS upholds our commitment and child protection principles through strong implementation of our Safeguarding Framework.

PEAS Safeguarding Framework

Awareness	We will ensure that all PEAS staff and associates are aware of the need to keep children safe and the problem of child abuse.
Prevention	We will ensure that all staff and associates minimise risks to children through awareness and good practice.
Reporting	We will ensure that all staff understand the procedure when concerns arise regarding the safety of children.
Responding	We will ensure that action is taken to keep children safe where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

Through this, we will ensure that:

- All PEAS staff and associates will sign up to and abide by the Child Protection policy and PEAS Code of Conduct (Appendix 1)
- The PEAS Child Protection policy will be available and accessible to all PEAS staff, associates and students

- Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability of working with children
- All PEAS staff will learn about the Child Protection policy, procedures and issues as part of their induction
- All PEAS students will learn how to identify child abuse, to understand the rights of the child and to report any concerns
- All PEAS staff at secretariat and school level will be trained in the relevant procedures for preventing, reporting and responding to possible child abuse

Reporting child protection cases

Every member of PEAS staff must report all Child Protection allegations, reports or concerns according to reporting procedures laid out in the 'PEAS Child Protection Implementation Guidelines' and in Annex 1. Allegations, reports and concerns could come in many forms, including, but not limited to, a direct disclosure (see more information below on how to manage disclosures), an overheard rumour, or data that comes through PEAS' Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning processes such as PEAS' Student Perception Survey. All forms of allegations, reports and concerns should be reported immediately; delays and failure to report immediately or withhold information will be subject to PEAS disciplinary action.

All reported cases should be taken seriously, and an investigation led locally, by a staff member who has undergone PEAS Child Protection training.

Any action taken in response to the alleged abuse must be based on the best interests of the child.

The child's views must be considered with respect to further action on the alleged abuse and they must be provided with the information required to make an informed decision on this. The objective of any response made by PEAS must be to protect the child from further harm and to support them both academically and emotionally.

Note: If a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, appropriate sanctions will be applied in the cases of false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

Managing disclosures

When a child discloses information about abuse or harm, it is crucial to respond with sensitivity, empathy, and professionalism. Here are key steps to effectively manage disclosures:

- **Listen:** Create a safe space for the child to share. Listen without judgement or interruption.
- **Believe and reassure:** Believe the child and offer reassurance. Validate their feelings and assure them they've done the right thing.
- **Stay calm:** Keep a composed demeanour to reassure the child. Your calmness helps them feel safe.
- **Confidentiality:** Respect confidentiality. Only involve necessary individuals and avoid discussing details unnecessarily.

- **Never pressure a child for more information or interrogate them about the details of their disclosure.** Instead, provide a supportive and non-judgmental environment where they feel safe to share as much or as little as they are comfortable with
- **Document and report:** Promptly document the disclosure and report it following established procedures outlined in Annex 1. Do not investigate independently.

Implementing, Monitoring And Sanctions

The PEAS Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for this policy. The CEO, and Country Directors and senior managers of PEAS are responsible for its implementation. The monitoring and adherence of this policy is made through the mandatory tracking of the 'Child Protection Policy Implementation Guidelines'.

Breaches of this policy and failure to comply with these responsibilities may incur the following sanctions:

- Disciplinary action leading to possible dismissal
- Termination of all relations including contractual and partnership agreements with PEAS
- Appropriate legal or other such action

RULES FOR STAFF: How individuals ensure peas' child protection commitments are met

This Child Safeguarding Policy constitutes a set of standards for appropriate behaviour for guiding people who work for PEAS or may be affiliated to it, whether on a part time or permanent basis. It also gives guidance to avoid situations that increase chances of risk misbehaviour when in the company of children.

The code is applicable to anyone acting as a representative of the organisation, whose work requires them to be in contact with children or may bring children into contact with other adults.

Minimise risky situations:

- **Potential risky situations:** Try to avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position when meeting with children. Always try to meet with a child in a central, public location whenever possible. Try to be accompanied by a second adult when visiting or meeting children. Do not show favouritism or spend excessive amounts of time with one child.
- **Ways to avoid these risks:** Adults are advised not to be alone with a single child, including in the following situations: in a car (no matter how short the journey); overnight (no matter where the accommodation); in your home or the home of a child.
- **What to do if you experience these risks:** Immediately report to the designated School Support Manager the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation. Keep in mind that actions, no matter how well intended, are always subject to misinterpretation by a third party.

Sexual behaviour:

Unacceptable:

- Do not engage in or allow sexually provocative games with pupils/children to take place; games which may involve kissing, hugging, fondling, rubbing, or touching a pupil/child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Do not sleep on the same bed with pupils/children.
- Do not develop a sexual relationship with a pupil/child (including those who are aged 18 or over)
- Do not do things of a personal nature for a child that they can do for themselves, including dressing, bathing, and grooming.
- Do not expose a child to potential sexual abuses (e.g. dressing in front of a pupil/child, or leaving pornographic materials in view).

Physical behaviour:

Unacceptable:

- Do not use any form of corporal punishment as discipline.
- Never hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse a child with your body or any other object
- Initiating physical contact, such as hugging, with a child.

Acceptable:

- Declining physical contact from a pupil/child when it is not socially appropriate, or you feel uncomfortable.

Psychosocial behaviour:

Unacceptable:

- Do not use language that will mentally or emotionally harm any child; suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations or any kind.
- Do not act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate, or degrade a child, not even when punishment is necessary.
- Do not encourage any inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour, such as tantrums, by a child.
- Do not show discrimination of ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion.

Acceptable:

- Be aware of the power balance between an adult and child, and avoid taking any advantage this may provide.

Peer abuse:

Unacceptable

- Do not allow children to engage in sexually provocative or violent games with each other.
- Do not allow children to engage in verbal abuse or bullying.

Acceptable:

- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse; develop special measures / supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children; avoid placing children in high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children).

Physical environment:

Unacceptable:

- Ignoring hazards or potential dangers within the school environment.

Acceptable:

- Develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (e.g. for projects based near water, heavy road traffic, climbing trees, playing with firewood or sharp objects etc).
- Provide an enabling environment for children's personal, physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development.

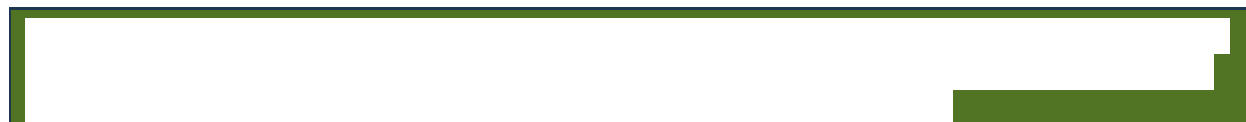
Oral and visual communication with and about children

Unacceptable:

- Do not speak to or about a child in a way which disregards the dignity of the child.
- Do not use inappropriate nicknames and descriptions to refer to a child's behaviour or circumstances.
- Do not use negative visual images to convey the child's situation without also including other, more positive images.

Acceptable:

- Respect the dignity of each child in any oral, written or visual communication about the children and their situation, and adhere to the specific guidelines on communication outlined in the Child Protection Policy.
- Emphasise the intrinsic value of every child in any written, oral or visual communication; and our belief in the child's ability to take his/her future into his/her own hands.
- Get informed consent from the child, parent or person with primary responsibility over the child before taking photographs and videos
- Get permission from parents or person with primary responsibility over the child before interviewing and / or getting statements from a child.



PERSONAL CONDUCT OUTSIDE OF WORK

PEAS is committed to ensuring that PEAS employees apply high standards of behaviour towards children within both their professional and private lives.

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The ability of PEAS to achieve its aims is linked to its reputation. Members of PEAS staff are perceived as PEAS representatives both inside and outside of working hours. All PEAS staff are, therefore, responsible for upholding the PEAS Child Protection policy and Code of Conduct both within and beyond their work.

ATTESTATION OF COMMITMENT TO THE PEAS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

I, _____ (name), have read, understood and agree to abide by the contents of PEAS's Child Protection policy.

Name:

Manager Name:

Signed:

Signed:

Date:

Date:

ANNEX 1: PEAS' Child Protection Reporting Framework

Non-Fast Track Case	1	Individual incidents which schools are able to respond to and resolve without support. Incidents that take place outside of schools that the school does not have control over but is required to report to local authorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bullying - Escapism - Absenteeism - Evidence of corporal punishment at students' homes 	Head Teacher or Senior Leadership Team
	2	Incidents which schools need PEAS' support to respond to, either because they affect multiple students, involve a complex set of stakeholders, or may have an impact on the school's reputation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence of pestering behaviour from community members towards students on their way to and from school - A lack of discipline in school leading to bullying of multiple students - Staff member reported as being too strict on students 	Head Teacher and PEAS Child protection lead (in country of operation) within 24 hours
Fast Track Case	3	Incidents involving criminal activity, or physical or sexual abuse perpetrated by staff or students. This type of incident would have an impact on PEAS' reputation in Zambia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One-off case of sexual abuse by staff member - Sexual relationship between two students - Use of corporal punishment - Organised violent student or teacher strike 	Head Teacher and PEAS Child protection lead (who report on to Country Director and UK) within 24 hours; Police in cases involving criminal activity
	4	Major incidents that have potentially life-threatening consequences for students. Widespread incidents that involve abuse or criminal activity impacting multiple students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repeated sexual abuse by single perpetrator - Widespread use of corporal punishment - Any abuse involving school leaders or where school leaders are aware and have not reported - Disease epidemic 	
	5	Serious incidents that could have an immediate impact on PEAS operations/reputation and/or could have been prevented through proper compliance with PEAS policies and guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Death of a student due to infrastructure collapse - Widespread sexual abuse (particularly if there has been a deliberate or negligent failure to report) 	

