

# Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy

## Background

Scottish Love in Action (SLA) works with vulnerable groups in Scotland and in India. We have a duty of care to ensure the safety of:

- the children and young people in India we serve i.e. beneficiaries. We must hold our partners to account, supporting them to uphold standards and work towards best practice.
- our staff, volunteers (including Trustees) and supporters in Scotland, and while they visit our partners in India. We are responsible for upholding standards and working towards best practice.

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for interactions with vulnerable groups in Scotland and India.

## 1. Introduction

Vulnerable children and young people are the core beneficiaries of projects supported by SLA. Through improving welfare and education opportunities, we improve the lives of children and young people who suffer from poverty and inequality, and we recognise their vulnerability. We are committed to the rights of children in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and strive to ensure that the needs, dignity and safety of vulnerable groups regardless of gender, faith, ability, caste or culture are protected in any project we support.

This policy has multiple purposes. It is intended this policy:

- will guide staff, Trustees and volunteers working in the UK and while on overseas visits
- will be a reference for Indian partners, beneficiaries and the public
- will provide protection from harm, primarily to vulnerable children and young people, and to SLA staff, Trustees, and volunteers and SLA itself.

This policy is guided by the principles below and is reviewed regularly and the procedures and their implementation are regularly monitored. A report on any incidents relating to vulnerable children and young people is made to the Board of Trustees annually. Staff, trustees and volunteers must agree with this policy. Any organisation we work with will be expected to have an equivalent policy.

## 2. Principles

- 2.1** Vulnerable groups have an equal right to development and their welfare is always promoted.
- 2.2** Vulnerable groups are protected from any form of sexual, physical, verbal or emotional abuse or exploitation from young people or other children.
- 2.3** Vulnerable groups' health is always paramount.
- 2.4** Vulnerable groups are empowered to participate freely in decisions which affect their lives, recognising the importance of parents, families and other carers in their lives.
- 2.5** Vulnerable groups are treated with respect and valued as individuals and equals with respect to the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity.
- 2.6** Vulnerable groups are empowered to raise and discuss any concerns and are always listened to.
- 2.7** Any allegation of abuse is treated seriously and dealt with appropriately and promptly. Victims and other involved parties are supported and perpetrators held to account.

- 2.8** Investigation of any safeguarding concern is conducted with reference to the national laws and employment rights and immediately referred to the relevant authorities where appropriate.
- 2.9** Staff, Trustees and volunteers visiting projects abroad are recruited, trained and supported with respect to this Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy.

### **3. Raising Awareness**

- 3.1** This Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy can be viewed on request from the SLA office.
- 3.2** This policy applies to SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers who come into contact with vulnerable groups in Scotland or in India. They are expected to be familiar with this policy. This can be demonstrated by regularly acquainting themselves with this policy, especially in light of any updates.
- 3.3** SLA volunteers involved in the UK may be required to participate in training on this Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy.
- 3.4** SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers who come into contact with vulnerable groups are required to follow SLA's Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy and sign that they have undertaken the training and agree to follow the Policy.
- 3.5** SLA engages with overseas partners on the protection of vulnerable groups, explaining our commitments and requiring partners to develop safeguarding and protection of vulnerable groups' policies and procedures, which are relevant to their local context and compatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. SLA will help Indian partners if required.

### **4. Recruitment**

- 4.1** SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers who are engaged in regulated work with children will also be required to be members of the PVG Scheme.
- 4.2** ASLA (ACTIVE FOR SLA) The recruitment process for volunteers based in the UK includes;
- Completion of an Application Form with two referees
  - Being made aware of SLA's Safeguarding and Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy
  - When relevant, applying for PVG membership and undergoing SLA Safeguarding training.
- 4.3** Where staff and volunteers work with groups of children such as schools or a uniformed youth organisation, responsibility for these children remains with their teacher/leaders who will have PVG membership
- 4.4** Indian volunteers Recruitment Process includes;
- Completion of an Application form which includes two references, one of which is not associated with SLA.
  - Undergoing the application process for PVG membership
  - Undergoing Safeguarding training as part of pre-visit briefing sessions.

### **5. Guidelines for Volunteers**

- 5.1** Treat everyone with respect and never use discipline which frightens or humiliates children and/or young people. Always use positive reinforcement rather than criticism.
- 5.2** Avoid singling out a child for special treatment or developing a personal relationship with an individual.
- 5.3** Avoid situations where a volunteer is alone with a child.

- 5.4** Volunteers in India will find themselves in situations where they have physical contact with the children; be careful to avoid any contact which might be seen as inappropriate.
- 5.5** Always listen to vulnerable children and young people and their concerns.
- 5.6** Avoid giving personal details to any child; do not communicate with individuals through social media.
- 5.7** At SLA-funded projects, volunteers should not smoke, use illegal drugs, consume alcohol, or use inappropriate language.

## **6. Reporting of incidents**

- 6.1** SLA staff, trustees and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that the SLA guidelines are adhered to throughout the organisation.
- 6.2** An Incident Report form is freely available to all staff, Trustees and volunteers.
- 6.3** SLA will ensure that all parties are aware of the reporting procedures for actual or suspected incidents or concerns
- 6.4** SLA has a named Safeguarding Officer with clearly defined duties roles and responsibilities. We will inform staff, Trustees and volunteers of their identity and how to contact them.
- 6.5** SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers should respond sensitively to any Safeguarding issue that they witness or is disclosed to them and treat the issue confidentially. If a vulnerable child or young person discloses that they are being abused, SLA staff, Trustees and volunteers should;
- Stay calm
  - Listen carefully and take the allegation seriously
  - Not promise to keep it secret but explain that they need to tell someone else
  - Stress that the individual was right to tell them, that they have taken it seriously and that they have understood what they have been told.
  - Only ask questions to clarify and not ask for explicit details
  - Reassure the individual that they will take steps to help them and tell them what will happen next.
  - Not undertake an investigation independently.
- 6.6** Any volunteer in India who has concerns about the conduct of a colleague should inform their Group Leader immediately. They will be required to complete an incidence report form. The Group Leader will inform the SLA Safeguarding Officer and the Chief Executive will consider appropriate action. The two parties will agree on how the investigation should be conducted and what the subsequent steps should be. Each will keep the other informed of ongoing progress.
- 6.7** Where the alleged incident relates to individuals not connected with SLA, the matter should be reported to the Group Leader, who will refer it to the agreed point of contact in India. In this case, it is expected that the Indian partner will follow the procedures set out in their policy, and taking into account the requirements of the Juvenile Justice Act. They will be expected to report to SLA the outcome of their investigations.
- 6.8** SLA will expect its partner to inform SLA of any safeguarding issues which occur within projects that SLA funds.

## **7. Communications and Media**

- 7.1** SLA ensures that the welfare of vulnerable groups is paramount
- 7.2** The impact and possible consequences of any material which involves a vulnerable child or young person is considered carefully before and after publication and broadcast

**7.3** SLA endeavours to ensure that images and/or stories about vulnerable children or young people will not be misused or exploited.

**7.4** Any material featuring SLA is suitable for a general audience including children.

**7.5** Communications about vulnerable children and young people always respects the individual's dignity and identity and is never degrading.

**7.6** SLA staff, trustees and volunteers in UK and overseas will

- Seek consent of parents or guardians (in the SLA funded projects permission is granted by project leaders in loco parentis) before interviewing, filming or taking photos and for their use in publicity and fundraising for their projects.
- Seek consent of the vulnerable child or young person for their participation and respect their refusal to take part.
- Obtain permission from the Head Teacher/Principal for any filming or interviewing on school premises during school time.

## **8. Safeguarding Officer**

**8.1** SLA's Safeguarding Officer can be contacted at [safeguarding@sla-india.org](mailto:safeguarding@sla-india.org)

## **9. Document History**

<b>Distribution</b>	This policy will be made available to all Trustees, all staff, Indian partners, and to funders (where relevant)
<b>Original Policy Date</b>	Historically, we had 2 policies – Safeguarding Policy (last reviewed in 2017) and Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy (last reviewed in 2020), which have been combined into this one Policy
<b>Date of Approval</b>	This policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in August 2022
<b>Date of next scheduled review</b>	This policy is due to be reviewed by the Board of Trustees in August 2025