

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES



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1. Glossary

- **Girl, boy, minor:** Anyone under age 18, as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **Children's rights:** Girls and boys have the “right to life, survival and development”, taking into account that the term “development” encompasses physical, psychological, cognitive, social and cultural.
- **Child safeguard:** The policies, procedures and practices used to protect children who come into contact with LDA Mostar and with all the people associated with our work execution against any form of harm, abuse or exploitation, as well as the responsibility of all staff members to integrate them into their activity to ensure that LDA Mostar is a safe organization for girls and boys.
- **Child protection:** The prevention of harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children and the response to them. Child protection programming is an activity or initiative designed to protect girls and boys from all forms of violence. This includes integrating child protection into all thematic areas of programming to improve protective environments for children in the community.
- **Child abuse:** Child abuse implies children's rights violation and includes all forms of violence against them: physical and psychological abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, kidnapping and child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, involvement of a minor in child sexual exploitation on the Internet or in child labor, as defined below.
- **Physical abuse:** When a person deliberately mistreats or threatens to mistreat a minor, among others: pushing, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching or kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. Physical abuse is also considered cultural practices that can physically alter minor's body causing suffering, damage and/or causing lasting sequelae to health, such as female genital mutilation.
- **Inattention:** Persistent omission, having the means to do so, or deliberate denial of providing the child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care, to the extent of putting their health and development at risk.
- **Psychological abuse:** Persistent attack on the self-esteem of a girl or boy. Some examples are, among others: insulting, threatening, ridiculing, embarrassing, intimidating or isolating the child.
- **Child sexual abuse:** When a girl or boy is used by another minor, adolescent or adult person for their own sexual stimulation or satisfaction. Sexual abuse refers to activities with or without physical contact, encompassing all forms of sexual activity involving minors, including exposing a child to sexually exploitative content on the internet or taking images for exploitative purposes.
- **Domestic violence:** Includes verbal, physical, sexual or psychological violence within home or family, which the girl or boy usually witnesses.
- **Child sexual exploitation on the internet:** Includes any act of sexual exploitation carried out against a child that is related at some point to the Internet environment. It also includes any use of information and communication technologies (ICT) that results in the sexual exploitation or causes the sexual exploitation of a girl or boy, or that

results in or causes the production, purchase, sale, possession, distribution or transmission of images or other materials that documents sexual exploitation.

- **Child marriage:** Formal marriage or informal union before the age of 18 exists for both boys and girls, although girls are disproportionately more affected. Child marriage is widespread and can lead to a life of disadvantage and deprivation.
- **Minors' corruption:** In general, it refers to behaviors that make it easier for the aggressor to procure sexual favors from a girl or boy. For example, an offender may develop a relationship of trust with the child and then try to introduce sex into that relationship.
- **Online child sexual abuse:** The act of sending a message by digital means to a recipient knowing that he or she is under 18, with the intention of procuring that he or she commit or agree to have sexual relations with another person, who may be the sender, but not necessarily; or the act of sending a message by digital means with indecent content to a recipient knowing that he or she is under 18.
- **Child labor:** It is usually defined as work that deprives girls and boys of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and psychological development. It refers to harmful and dangerous work from a psychological, physical, social and moral point of view for girls and boys and that interferes with their schooling and leisure.
- **Minors' trafficking:** Related to any form of participation in the recruitment, transfer or reception of children for exploitation purposes, by threats or any other form of coercion. Includes power abuse.
- **Contact with minors:** Working in an activity or position that involves or may involve direct (including internet contact) or indirect (such as the use of images) contact with minors. It can be part of the duties of the position or be a result of exercising them, for example, being in contact with girls and boys when working in the communities.
- **Work with minors:** Working with minors means engaging in activities with minors where contact can reasonably be expected to be a natural part of the activity and not incidental. "Work" also refers to volunteer work or other forms of unpaid work.

2. Principles declaration

At LDA Mostar, we believe in the inalienable rights: freedom, dignity and equality for all, including girls and boys. Child population can be extremely vulnerable, especially in relation to discriminating factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, different capacities or displaced status. These factors can further increase the vulnerability of girls and boys to abuse and discrimination.

Although LDA Mostar is not an organization specifically focused on children, much of our daily work takes place in contact with children every day. LDA Mostar is committed to defend children rights during the execution of its work, and to protect girls and boys from actions (deliberate or not) that may put them at risk of any kind of violence or harm.

LDA Mostar's policy is to proactively create and maintain an organizational culture and operating environments that prevent and discourage actions or omissions, whether deliberate or accidental, that put girls and boys at risk of any kind of child abuse. It is expected of all the people associated with the execution of LDA Mostar's work that they promote that children's voice is heeded when it comes to a safe space for them and that, where appropriate, mechanisms are created so that their voice is heard. In addition, they are expressly prohibited from engaging in any activity that could result in child abuse of any kind. Special measures will be taken to prevent those who assault or abuse minors from having any kind of collaborative relationship with LDA Mostar, and we will not tolerate any kind of child abuse. Under this policy, everyone who works on behalf of LDA Mostar has a responsibility to report any concerns they have or have brought to their attention.

Any violation of this policy will be treated as a serious matter and will result in disciplinary action, including contract ending or other legal remedies.

3. Objectives

The objective of this policy is to demonstrate LDA Mostar's commitment to protect girls and boys from all kinds of harm or abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse, physical or psychological abuse, and neglect. This policy, as well as the accompanying implementation guidelines and toolkit, have been developed to provide practical guidance to prevent abuse and enhance the safeguarding of girls and boys in LDA Mostar's work.

Its goal is to create an open and conscious environment in which concerns about children safety and well-being can be communicated and managed in a fair and equitable manner, always putting the best interests of the child first. All people associated with the execution of LDA Mostar's work share the responsibility of maintaining safe environments for children and, therefore, of transferring this policy to the daily culture and practice of the organization in terms of:

- **Child abuse prevention:** Strive to raise awareness, apply good practices, provide training and carry out safer selection and recruitment processes to minimize risks for the girls and boys with whom we work or come into contact. All personnel associated with the organization are expected to abide by the Children Protection Policy in relation to minors.
- **Training to promote knowledge of the obligations regarding the protection of minors:** Ensure that this policy is communicated to all people associated with the execution of LDA Mostar's work and that they are aware that they are expected to comply with it.
- **Child abuse reporting:** Ensure that all people associated with the execution of LDA Mostar's work are aware of their specific reporting responsibilities (including mandatory reporting responsibilities in jurisdictions where they apply), as well as the steps to follow and who to contact when related concerns arise with the protection of minors. All people associated with LDA Mostar are expected to report any suspicion that any minor is suffering harm.
- **Child abuse response:** Take action to support and protect girls and boys when concerns about their well-being arise; support those who report such concerns; investigate or cooperate with any resulting investigation; and take any necessary corrective action to prevent such activity from reoccurring.

The policy defines the guiding principles, the approach and the standards to be met in the different aspects of our work to ensure that LDA Mostar is a safe organization for children.

4. Statement of commitment

LDA Mostar is a social entity that designs and develops citizen participation processes. Made up of a multidisciplinary team, LDA Mostar collaborates with the various actors involved in local human development, and in particular with public administrations that seek innovative formulas for transparency and democratic strengthening.

LDA Mostar collaborates with the public administration and citizens in promoting participatory democracy processes with technical support and linking local and international experiences. Its main objective is to promote the articulation of innovative participation practices, generating knowledge exchange between communities, organizations and administrations that seek a new democratic institutionalality.

As an organization whose employees or partners are directly or indirectly related to children and adolescents, we have a legal and moral duty to do everything possible to protect them from possible harm. LDA Mostar team is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all children and adolescents and promoting their rights, including their participation in matters that affect them. LDA Mostar aims to act in accordance with national and European child protection laws, as well as to create a safe and healthy environment for children and young people with whom we will implement projects.

All children, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances are, have the right to be protected, nurtured and free from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation as established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR)², and the Lanzarote Convention (Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of Children against Exploitation and Sexual Abuse)³.

This policy refers to actions that address how the organization's operations and work practices impact the well-being of children. In its most basic form, safeguarding involves the prevention of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and mistreatment by LDA Mostar. One of its main objectives is to ensure the well-being of children.

¹Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 19, www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

²https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf

³<https://rm.coe.int/1680084822>

4.1. Applicability of commitment

The commitment to implement this policy covers all employees and others acting on behalf of LDA Mostar and applies to all aspects of the organization's operations and professional relationships where children and adolescents are potentially affected. The protection of minors is everyone's responsibility, and all people linked to the organization must adhere to the commitment.

4.2. Acknowledgment of duty of care and other legal responsibilities

4.2.1. Managing a breach of child protection policy

The board of directors will investigate violations in a fair, impartial and supportive manner through the following guidelines:

- Discuss the non-compliance with everyone involved and they will be informed of the process on a case-by-case basis.
- Give the representative the opportunity to give his version of the facts.
- The details of the violation will be recorded, including the versions of all parties and the result.
- Ensuring that matters related to the breach are kept confidential.
- Approach an appropriate outcome to be decided based on evidence and discussion.
- Suspend the representative involved, until the investigation is complete and the findings have been made.

4.2.2. Result of a violation of the child protection policy

Depending on the nature of the violation, results may include:

- Emphasize the relevant element of the child protection policy and procedure.
- Provide closer supervision.
- Education and continued training.
- Mediate between those involved in the incident (when applicable).
- Disciplinary procedures, if necessary.
- Current policies and procedures review, and develop new policies and procedures if necessary.
- If the incident constitutes a criminal offense (according to local and international law), the usual legal procedure must be followed.

5. Implementation plan

5.1. Safe recruitment

Safe recruitment and selection procedures for children are put in place and are regularly reviewed and updated. All new staff will be familiar with the Child Protection Policy and will abide by their commitment to comply with it. LDA Mostar ensures that all employees are notified and receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy.

5.1.1. Interviews

If the job specifically involves working with minors, the recruitment interview questions will be tailored and expanded to determine the specific suitability of the candidate. In addition to asking about gaps in employment history, a series of relevant questions could be used to determine a candidate's attitudes towards child protection.

5.1.2. References and background checks

The purpose of background check is to assess the applicant does not have a history of crimes against minors and that, in the past, he or she has not been excluded from working with them. Periodically, LDA Mostar repeats the background checks of all its members and collaborators. In addition to background checks, references from previous employers are checked as a tool to gain insight into candidates' past job performance.

5.2. Training

New members and collaborators training allows new staff to recognize their responsibilities regarding their work and the reporting of bad practices or concerns regarding possible abuses.

5.2.1. Awareness of child protection obligations

All members of the LDA Mostar team will undergo training on child protection. LDA Mostar is responsible for providing training as needed. Newly hired employees and other staff who are directly implementing programs should also receive training. The Management personnel in charge are responsible for guaranteeing that those who report know and understand the Child Protection Policy and receive such training. Other training will be required depending on the specific responsibilities of the job.

5.3. Ethical code

LDA Mostar must ensure that all new representatives receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy before the time of issuing an employment contract. They must read, sign and return copies of the policy to show that they are aware of and agree to act in accordance with the Policy and procedures.

5.3. Safe activities design

5.3.1. Adults information and consent

Where children are the target group and are part of a program implementation phase, project staff must obtain the written consent of their parents/legal guardians and/or relevant school childcare authorities before beginning program implementation; Likewise, their consent must be obtained for minors' images taking and/or voice recording (see Annex 1).

The minor's legal guardians must be fully informed of what implementation of the program will entail before they are asked to sign this form and their consent must be given voluntarily.

5.3.2. Minors information and consent

Depending on the age and proficiency of the minors, each phase of program implementation is explained to them in detail before implementation begins. This should be explained in plain language that is appropriate for their age and proficiency level.

The child's right to refuse to take part in the project must be respected in its implementation, even if the parent or guardian has given consent for the girl or boy to participate. LDA Mostar representatives must ensure that measures have been implemented to ensure that the health and well-being of minors and members of the organization are protected during the implementation phase.

Programs designed for boys and girls must be evidence-based and meet particularly high requirements for quality and safety. Safety concerns must also be addressed for products or services that are not designed for use by children but may pose any dangerto them.

5.3.3. Online environments

Online children's safety is essential for the organization to prevent, respond to and resolve any potential risk to their safety when using the organization's digital services. LDA Mostar ensures that online environments comply with national and international standards on child health, environmental health and safety standards⁴ by engaging in the following actions (where appropriate and necessary):

- a) Label or select content that is not appropriate for minors.
- b) Establish parental controls and provide contextual guidance to parents and guardians on how to use such tools respectfully and responsibly without infringing on a child's right to access information or participation.
- c) Provide guidance on how to deal with abuse or misuse, such as reporting tools, "group rules", employees trained to intervene, and who can provide links to outside agencies.
- d) Guidance on handling child sexual abuse content or illegal content, including notification and removal processes.
- e) Privacy and data protection measures, for example, about sharing and storing personal information.

6. Research and evaluation with minors

LDA Mostar has incorporated evaluation instruments in the design of its interventions, projects, and programs. The evaluations were promoted from the conviction that they were an unavoidable component of the intervention cycle, essential to be able to know and disseminate its impact and, therefore, a premise for improving its quality and efficiency.

Evaluation and research are two different ways of approaching the generation of knowledge, which differ especially in their purpose, their recipients and production times.

Evaluation has an applied nature, aimed at measuring the value of an intervention or a program in the specific context of its execution. It may also be an internal exercise to monitor LDA Mostar's plans and strategies. The knowledge generated with the evaluation aims to improve the person being evaluated and to be accountable for it. The recipients of the evaluation are:

- *Funders and clients* to obtain objective and transparent information on the fulfillment and impact of projects and contracts;
- *Participating population*, especially in participation processes sustained over time and with some degree of self-government.
- *LDA Mostar team*, in order to extract lessons that allow improving activities, projects, programs, plans and strategies in the future.

⁴https://www.unicef.org/csr/files/UNICEF_ChildSafeguardingToolkit_FINAL.PDF

The **research** promoted by LDA Mostar aims to generate new knowledge as a result of, but not exclusively, experiences managed by the entity. It is proposed to validate or refute hypotheses that derive in learning that are of benefit and recognition of the academic community, as well as people and entities involved in promoting innovations in the field of democratic participation, including LDA Mostar and its environment.

Both evaluation and research generate knowledge, although, as we have seen, with different purposes and recipients. The management of the knowledge produced will have to observe these differences and this must also be reflected in the management of corporate communication and the internal and external training actions of LDA Mostar.

6.1. Evaluation

The qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the interventions seeks to assess the effectiveness of the methodology in each of the groups of participants, as well as the impact of the interventions and the achievements achieved. It is carried out with participants, agents and key informants, who will be the objects of study. In most of the child participation programs developed by LDA Mostar, the following instruments are usually used:

METHODOLOGIES	INSTRUMENTS	DESCRIPTION
Qualitative evaluation	Observation log	Observation with a narrative record that allows identifying the responses of the groups of participants to the dynamics and tools proposed. Likewise, the recording of the group dynamics during the sessions allows individual and group evolutions to be identified.
	Focus groups and discussion groups	Meetings with small groups of participants and/or key informants (6 to 10 people) with predefined profiles and content in a script of open questions, aimed at stimulating group discussion and collecting their assessments regarding the process, the achievement of results and improvement suggestions.
Quantitative evaluation	Profile and satisfaction questionnaires	Based on questionnaires, the participants' satisfaction level is collected in relation to the space in which they have participated and sociodemographic profile data.
	Evaluation questionnaires	Pre-post evaluation questionnaires aimed at evaluating the learning and impact levels of interventions based on predefined variables.
Participatory evaluation	Participatory dynamics	Dynamics of participatory evaluation as dynamics for gathering expectations (at the beginning of the intervention) and their fulfillment (at the end) or dynamics of self-assessment of the process.

6.2. Research

One of LDA Mostar's main lines of research is child and youth participation. This research is based on alliances with researchers and other partners that make it possible and that have given rise to the presence of LDA Mostar in scientific and outreach publications.

Research in child and youth participation focuses on processes that allow quasi-experimental studies to be carried out to address hypotheses about the possible effects of the design.

There is a great abundance of data collected in this line and one of the current objectives is to be able to exploit them by analyzing the results according to variables such as habitat, socioeconomic context or participants' sex, as well as multilevel analysis. As an innovation, in the coming years we also want to study the effects that voluntary and random participation, online and offline, has on various psychosocial variables and polarization.

7. Reporting an incident

Most children who experience abuse do not ask for help, so their disclosure needs to be approached with greater awareness and responsiveness. In accordance with the zero-tolerance policy of the organization and national laws, all members of the organization should be guided to report all situations related to abuse that they witness or suspect, including harassment, verbal abuse or insults. Any concerns that arise should always be reported, without putting the organization member in a position to decide whether or not abuse has occurred.

8. Confidentiality

LDA Mostar is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive information related to child protection incidents reported. Personally identifiable information will only be shared in consideration of the safety of the child, witnesses, and the person who is the subject of the report, or to protect the integrity of an investigation.

9. Communication through the media

The organization aims to take appropriate security measures to protect children in all Internet marketing venues, including social media, chat sites, blogs, and web pages (e.g., do not promote conduct or violence harmful and unhealthy). LDA Mostar ensures that the communication policy conforms to national and international standards on child health, environmental health and safety standards:

- Children must be protected from being used and exploited as a marketing technique to promote products of any kind, both in schools and elsewhere.
- Obtain informed parental consent (Annex 1) to obtain photographs for work-related purposes.

10. Agreements with partners

LDA Mostar has a wide range of partners, including local NGOs, governments and local authorities. Prior to collaboration, the organization should ensure that there is a robust assessment of the partner's contact with and impact on children during the partnership and what this means for child protection agreements.

11. Good practices commitment

LDA Mostar is committed to creating and maintaining an organizational culture of protection, in which all the people with whom it collaborates or who work for LDA Mostar feel empowered to claim mutually respectful and non-discriminatory behavior, in which illicit conduct is not accepted and power is not abused. The protection of minors in LDA Mostar's work is entirely our responsibility, and we must take it into account in all aspects of our labor.

All people employed by LDA Mostar are expected to commit to complying with good practices. The organization's teams and references in the field of safeguarding and protection strive to offer the best services and advice, as well as to keep up to date with good practices for the protection of minors in the sector and in general. In order to ensure that the protection and safeguarding of girls and boys is at the heart of our work, LDA Mostar is open to input and feedback, to continuous learning and improvement.

12. Annexes

Annex 1 – Consent form



I hereby consent to

the use of the photographs taken by **XY** between (date)/(date)

of me _____
(First name, last name)

of my child / my children _____

(First names, last names)

for:

- **Advertising and information materials, brochures** no
- **Posters** no
- **Newspaper articles and reports** no
- **Website and online media** no
- **Social media like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and others** no
- **Exhibitions** no

I am aware that photographs published online can be found worldwide. A complete deletion of the photographs from the Internet cannot be guaranteed.

I am aware that I can revoke this consent at any time by e-mail to ldamostar@aldaintranet.org. This declaration will be stored together with the photographs and used to protect the rights to the aforementioned photographs.

If preferred, consent can also be given as video statement.

Place, date

Signature