

1 Purpose

This policy establishes TLMA's commitment to upholding and advancing human dignity, equality, and justice in accordance with international human rights conventions and frameworks. The policy promotes non-discrimination, participation, accountability, and transparency across all of TLMA's work.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, board members, consultants, and partners of TLMA. It covers all TLMA activities, including program implementation, advocacy, fundraising, procurement, partnerships, and internal operations.

3 Policy Statement

The Leprosy Mission Australia (TLMA) has a Biblical mandate to uphold justice and dignity in our society based on our belief that each person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that all humans are equal in worth and in dignity.

TLMA views a human rights-based approach as a catalyst that can contribute to and transform the practice of development - from a focus on identifying and meeting needs, to enabling people to recognise and claim their rights. TLMA believes in human rights for all and commits to promoting the dignity of individuals. These rights include the right to life, liberty and security, a fair trial, freedom of religion, opinion and speech, participation in government and political activities, work, access to cultural life, the means of income or food production, basic health and education services and an adequate standard of living, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. Additionally, TLMA commits to the principles of humanitarian assistance as defined by the Core Humanitarian Standard¹, including humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.

TLMA believes that without the understanding and promotion of human rights, there will be no solution to poverty and, therefore, little possibility of eradicating the causes and consequences of leprosy. For people affected by leprosy, the most devastating impact is the loss of dignity through stigma, discrimination and injustice. Studies show that in some cases, people affected by leprosy are not able to marry, gain admission to schools, participate in elections or continue employment.² "In order to be able to improve their situation, the public, NGOs and the government need to become more aware of the position of people with disabilities, (the violation of) their rights and the need for them to participate in society."³

For TLMA, the integration of human rights, from a biblical perspective, into our plans, policies and processes, as well as advocating for the same around the world, is a priority. We acknowledge the

¹ Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance. (2014). *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability*. Accessed 27/07/17. (<https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/Core%20Humanitarian%20Standard%20-%20English.pdf>)

² Wim H. van Brakel, *Stigma and Human Rights*, presentation to the TLMI Board, Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) Leprosy Unit and VU University, Athena Institute, May 2009

³ Disability and Development Research Symposium, Challenges and Constraints in the Field of Disability and Development Research, December 3, 2008

right of people affected by leprosy to be involved in TLM at all levels. We commit not only to respecting one another's human rights, but to being proactive in fighting injustice, upholding the rights of the marginalised, encouraging one another to be responsible, and exercising human rights in consideration of one another. This is because all humans are interdependent: each of us depends on, and is affected by, one another.

4 TLMA's Statements of Commitment on Human Rights

- We commit to uphold and protect the human rights of all people, especially those affected by leprosy, neglected tropical diseases and disability.
- We commit to promote and apply within TLMA the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- We commit to upholding the principles contained in the International Labour Organisations (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.
- We commit to empower, encourage and equip our stakeholders, especially people affected by leprosy and disability, to speak up for themselves and their rights.
- We commit to the safeguarding of children (as per the TLMA Child Protection Policy) and the participation of children; incorporating the voices of children in project implementation, monitoring and design.
- We commit to managing the risk of modern slavery in our supply chains.

5 Key Frameworks and Mandates

5.1 Biblical

The Bible says in Psalms 82:3 "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed." In the teachings of Jesus and the early Christian church in the pages of the New Testament, there is impetus to restore the dignity and status of those who are vulnerable, disabled or stigmatized. Jesus re-emphasises the Mosaic teaching to "love thy neighbour" by defining neighbour not simply as family or tribe, but as also stranger and even enemy. The letters to the early Christian churches highlight the breaking down of former status and privilege divisions between men and women, different races, rich and poor, ruler and slave (or employer and employee): "all are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). There is a positive obligation on Christians to seek for others what we wish for ourselves (Matthew 7:12).

5.2 Leprosy Specific

The first international recognition of the human rights of people affected by leprosy occurred as recently as 2006 in the Human Rights Council Resolution 8/13. As UN Special Rapporteur Dr Beatriz Miranda-Galarza notes in her 2025 report, a human rights-based approach to leprosy is required that "moves beyond charity models, focusing on dignity, participation and ethical solidarity [and] provides recommendations for governments, international organizations and donors on ensuring inclusive and sustainable international cooperation". The Special Rapporteur highlights that unless urgent action is taken, global efforts to eliminate leprosy-related discrimination will stagnate, jeopardizing the rights and dignity of millions.⁴

⁴ Beatriz Miranda-Galarza, Strengthening international cooperation and solidarity to protect the rights of persons affected by leprosy (Hansen's disease), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4081653?ln=en&v=pdf>

5.3 TLMA as an ACFID signatory

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak council of Australian non-government organisations, which aims to promote conditions of sustainable human development where people are able to enjoy a full range of human rights, fulfil their needs, be free from poverty, and live in dignity. A key purpose of ACFID is to equip and encourage members to observe the highest ethical standards in all their activities, including strict observance of the ACFID Code of Conduct ('the Code').

As a signatory of the ACFID Code of Conduct, The Leprosy Mission Australia is committed to upholding the principles of the Code, including in relation to the protection of human rights.

5.4 Human Rights and Development

From an aid perspective, development and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. For sustainable development, individuals need to have secure and long-term access to the systems and resources required for their basic needs, whether economic, social, cultural, civil or political. Rights-based approaches inform our other work including recognising and working towards rights to receive medical care and disability support and inclusion. Our rights-based advocacy includes strategic lobbying with decision-makers, mobilises the public through awareness campaigns and advocates for accountability mechanisms to ensure public officials fulfil their commitments.

5.5 Racial Justice

As part of TLMA's commitment to human rights, dignity, and justice for all, our organisation upholds racial justice as a fundamental human rights issue. We recognise that systemic racism and racial discrimination are significant barriers to equality and inclusion, and we are committed to actively confronting and dismantling these injustices in all areas of our work. In line with the ACFID Code of Conduct, we ensure that our programs, partnerships, and policies reflect principles of non-discrimination, inclusion, and equity. We work in solidarity with affected communities, respect cultural identities, and promote the rights and agency of all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, or background. Through our advocacy, programming, and internal practices, we strive to create inclusive and culturally safe environments where diversity is valued, and everyone can examine their own cultural identities and attitudes towards people from cultures other than their own. TLMA also views the dismantling of racism as a spiritual formation and discipline and that the dismantling of racism is not a short-term task but a lifelong journey of transformation.

6 Related Documents

- Disability policy
- Diversity policy
- Gender policy
- Modern Slavery Policy
- Sustainable Development Policy

7 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in 5 years' time.

Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Summary
5.0	12 December 2020	N Collard	New draft created for next revision
5.1	28 October 2025	Greg Clarke, Helen Fernandes and Andrew Newmarch	Updated version incorporating racism and transferring management activities to another place.
5.2	17 December 2025	Helen Fernandes	Revised following Board feedback.

Document Approval

Version	Date	Approved by
1.0	22 April 2003	TLMA Board
2.0	5 May 2014	TLMA Board
3.1	2 September 2017	TLMA Board
4.1	7 December 2020	TLMA Board
5.2	28 February 2026	TLMA Board