



## 1. Introduction

TLM's Global Mission Statement says 'Following Jesus Christ, The Leprosy Mission strives to break the chains of leprosy, empowering people to attain healing, dignity and life in all its fullness'. TLMA has a Biblical mandate to uphold justice and dignity in our society, as exemplified and taught by Jesus centuries ago. We believe that each person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that all humans are equal in worth and in dignity. The Bible also says in Psalms 82:3 "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed."

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 value of individuals - irrespective of race, religion, ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, displacement, caste, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, poverty, class or socio-economic status. 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 Standard<sup>1</sup>, 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.<sup>2</sup> "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."<sup>3</sup>

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 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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>)

<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>3</sup> Disability and Development Research Symposium, Challenges and Constraints in the Field of Disability and Development Research, December 3, 2008

## **2. 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 resources required for their basic needs, whether economic, social, cultural, civil or political. TLMA agrees that the protection of human rights is an important element in identifying and empowering those living in extreme poverty.

## **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').

The Code is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust, by enhancing the transparency and accountability of signatory organisations. It was developed in 1997 and comprehensively revised in 2017. All ACFID members are signatories to the Code, and a Code of Conduct Committee monitors adherence to the Code and investigates complaints, which may be brought forward by any member of the public.

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.

## **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 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 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.

## **5. How will TLMA do this?**

TLMA aims to ensure a human rights approach is used when achieving TLM's global vision of "Leprosy Defeated, Lives Transformed" and the 5 long-term aims of TLM's global fellowship, which are:

- People affected by leprosy have timely access to quality leprosy services ;
- People marginalised by leprosy, disability and other causes realise their worth and are empowered to overcome challenges;
- Communities are free from stigma and discrimination towards people affected by leprosy and disability;
- TLM will be a learning organisation that uses and shares evidence-based practice; and
- TLM is well-resourced in prayer, funds, partnerships and people to effectively achieve its mission.

TLMA will work alongside people affected by leprosy, people with disability, people who are socially excluded and their organizations, to build their capacity as citizens to claim their rights, support them to advocate for themselves, and assist to provide opportunities for empowerment and responsibility. TLMA will also work with these partners to influence governments and other organisations, strengthen capacity to respond, and encourage accountability in protecting, respecting and fulfilling human rights.

One of the ways TLMA does this is by building the capacity of Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs), which are organisations established and run by people with disability - working towards inclusive, barrier-free, socially just and gender-equitable societies - who recognise the human rights, citizenship, contribution and potential of people with disability. They play an essential role in giving a voice to people with disability and influencing national decision making in development.

TLMA ensures that cross cutting issues (including human rights) are embedded into every stage of TLMA's strategic planning and Project Cycle Management (PCM) processes. Participatory rural appraisals investigate these issues, and are used to inform any new project designs (including project goals and objectives), reviews, evaluations and strategic development. Program staff work closely with project teams, and those who are affected by leprosy and disability, to increase understanding of disability and human rights issues at every stage of the project cycle. This is done through regular field visits, annual project reviews, training and ongoing communication throughout the year.

In most cases, projects work with multiple in-country partners. Through activity planning, training is often given by project staff to in-country partners, on disability inclusion and the rights-based approach. Most projects also work closely with target communities, in order to build grassroots understanding about disability inclusion and empower communities to know and access their rights. TLMA supports this process through the sharing of disability and rights-based resources, and through ensuring that project staff have access and funding to attend relevant training.

TLMA uses the following principles in the implementation of activities through development partners:

- works in authentic long-term participatory partnerships;
- addresses root causes of poverty and social exclusion through advocacy and programmes;
- achieves gender equality and women's empowerment through gender mainstreaming;
- achieves disability mainstreaming throughout the organisation and programs;
- ensures advocacy is grounded in field implementation;
- has in place child protection policies;
- takes into account environmental factors;
- works with the context and culture of implementing country;
- does not exclude anyone on the basis of religious or political affiliation;
- works towards sustainability in its programs;
- seeks to be a learning organisation which is open and transparent;
- keeps abreast of and implements current development standards and practices;
- works with cultural and political sensitivity, to encourage partners to address injustice within the communities they serve; and
- ensures that human rights considerations are taken into account in project appraisals, monitoring visits and evaluations.

TLMA will also work within Australia to:

- ensure just and equitable work practices and encourage partner organisations to do the same;
- mobilise individual supporters and groups to lobby politicians and other opinion leaders on matters related to TLMA's objectives;
- cooperate with ACFID, and other secular and inter-faith networks;
- maintain Christian emphases - including the promotion of Biblical values and the need for reconciliation with God; and
- use national and international avenues to uphold human rights and address injustice (e.g. Human Rights Commissions).

## 6. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in 5 years time.

### Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Summary
3.0	18 July 2017	N Collard	New draft created for next revision
3.1	27 July 2017	IPS	Updated to demonstrate adherence to Section 1 of the new ACFID QAF, and therefore updated section 3 above with reference to 'TLMA as an ACFID signatory'

### 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