



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. Introduction

Gender Education Empowerment & Leadership Organization (GEELO) works in communities where people often face multiple vulnerabilities caused by conflict, displacement, poverty, climate shocks, and social inequality. Many of the people we serve particularly women, girls, children, and marginalized families may already have experienced trauma, discrimination, or violence.

Because of this, safeguarding is not only a policy for GEELO, it is a moral responsibility.

Every person who interacts with GEELO, whether as a staff member, volunteer, partner, beneficiary, or community member, has the right to feel safe, respected, and protected from harm.

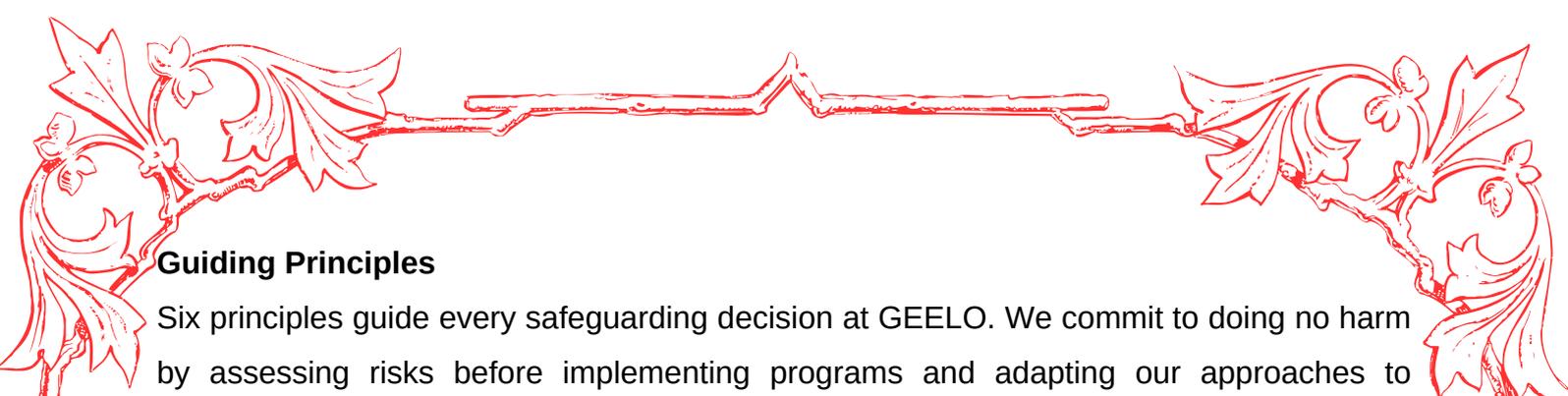
This policy ensures that all GEELO activities are conducted in ways that prevent abuse, protect vulnerable individuals, and respond effectively if harm occurs. Safeguarding is central to GEELO's commitment to human rights, dignity, and community trust.

2. Policy Statement

GEELO is fully committed to:

- Protecting children and vulnerable adults from abuse, exploitation, neglect, and harm
- Creating safe environments where communities can access services with dignity
- Promoting accountability and ethical conduct among staff and partners
- Ensuring that all safeguarding concerns are reported and addressed promptly
- Upholding a culture of respect, integrity, and responsibility

GEELO maintains zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment, or any form of violence against beneficiaries or staff. Any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action and may be reported to legal authorities.



Guiding Principles

Six principles guide every safeguarding decision at GEELO. We commit to doing no harm by assessing risks before implementing programs and adapting our approaches to minimize vulnerability rather than exacerbate it. We uphold dignity and respect by treating all beneficiaries as partners with agency rather than passive recipients of aid. We ensure equality by prioritizing the most marginalized groups in our protection efforts. We promote participation by creating genuine safe spaces where women, children and youth can speak freely and shape the programs affecting their lives. We maintain transparency by being open about our standards and maintaining accessible feedback mechanisms. Finally, we guarantee confidentiality by protecting the privacy of those who report concerns and prioritizing their physical and emotional safety above all else.

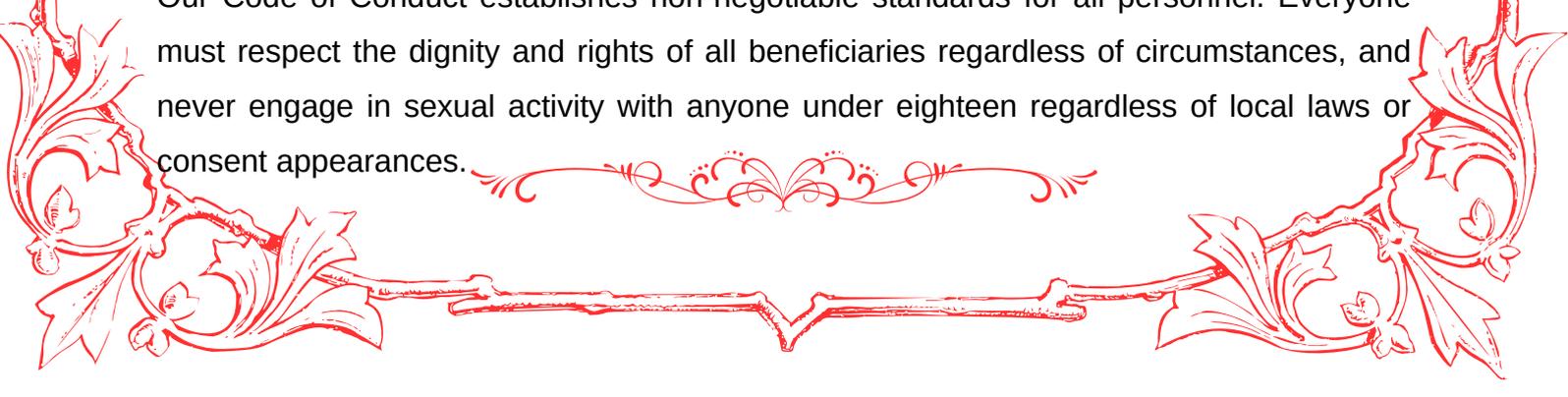
GOVERNANCE, CONDUCT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

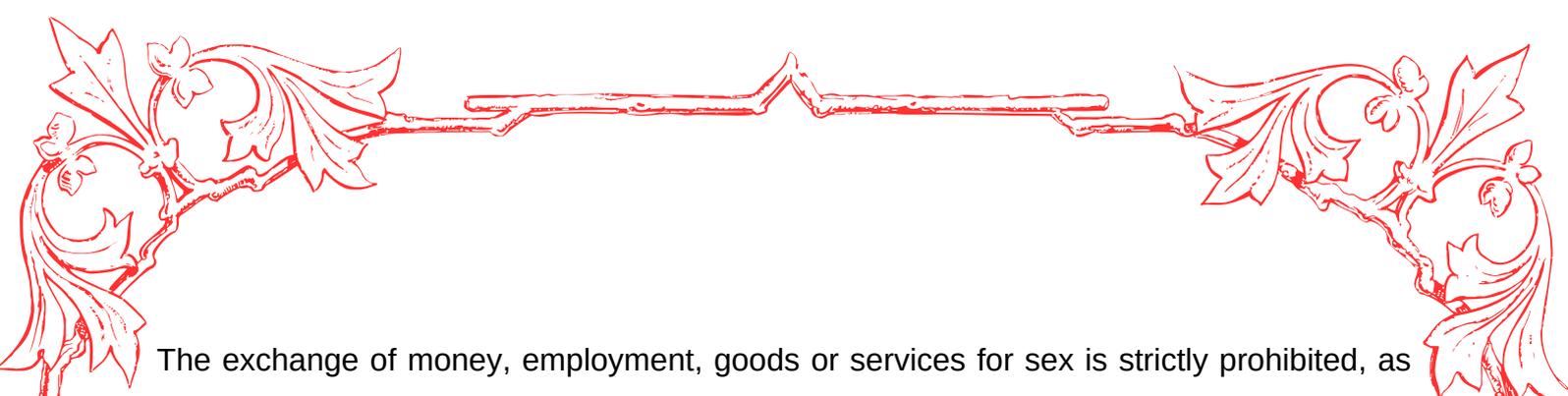
Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding accountability is distributed across GEELO's organizational structure with clear roles for each level. The Board of Directors holds ultimate responsibility for safeguarding culture and compliance, reviewing the policy annually and ensuring adequate resources for implementation. The Executive Director provides day-to-day leadership, overseeing serious incidents and representing GEELO in external safeguarding forums. The Designated Safeguarding Lead, a senior staff member with protection expertise, coordinates safeguarding across all programs, receives and manages concerns, maintains confidential records, and reports quarterly to the Board. Program Managers conduct risk assessments for all projects, ensure staff understand protocols, and monitor compliance during field visits. Every staff member and volunteer bears individual responsibility to read and sign the Code of Conduct, complete mandatory training before engaging beneficiaries, report concerns immediately even when uncertain, and challenge inappropriate behavior by others.

Code of Conduct

Our Code of Conduct establishes non-negotiable standards for all personnel. Everyone must respect the dignity and rights of all beneficiaries regardless of circumstances, and never engage in sexual activity with anyone under eighteen regardless of local laws or consent appearances.





The exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex is strictly prohibited, as is using one's position to solicit sexual favors or engage in exploitative relationships. Physical, emotional or verbal abuse of children or adults is forbidden, as is discrimination based on clan, disability, gender, age or other status. Personnel must maintain confidentiality of beneficiary information, report concerns immediately, and challenge inappropriate conduct by colleagues. Zero tolerance offenses that result in immediate dismissal and potential legal prosecution include sexual activity with children, sexual exploitation or abuse of any beneficiary, trafficking, physical or sexual violence, possession of child sexual abuse material, and knowingly failing to report safeguarding concerns.

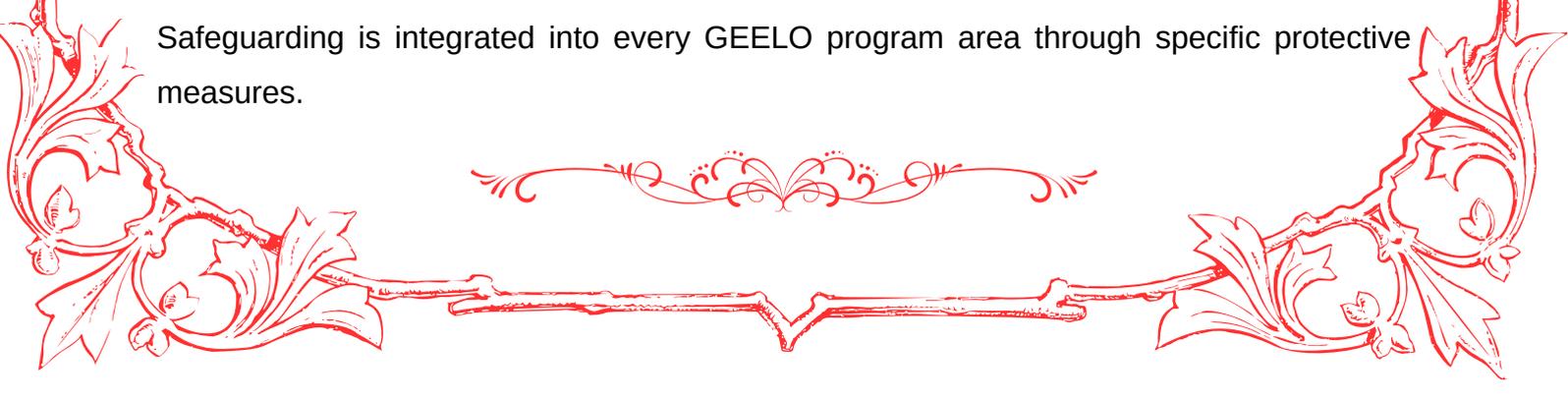
Reporting Mechanisms

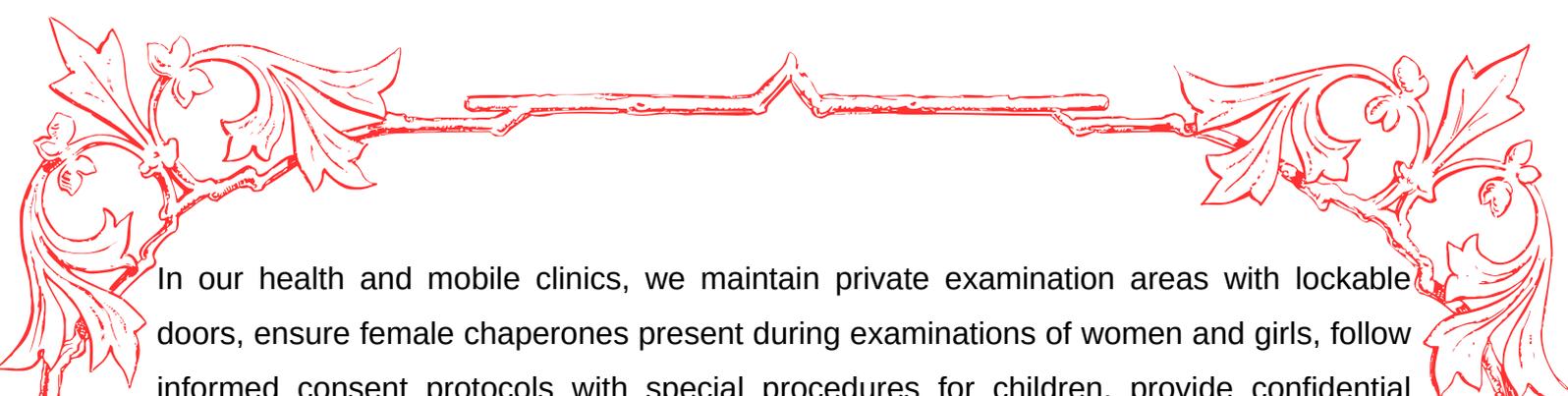
GEELO has established multiple safe reporting channels recognizing that speaking about abuse is extraordinarily difficult in our context where survivors fear disbelief, retaliation, stigmatization, loss of services, or family rejection. The Designated Safeguarding Lead serves as the primary contact for staff and formal concerns. Trained community focal points provide culturally accessible reporting for beneficiaries preferring local mechanisms. Locked anonymous suggestion boxes at all GEELO facilities allow those fearing identification to report safely. A dedicated toll-free hotline with trained responders handles urgent and after-hours concerns. For allegations involving the Executive Director, the Board Chair provides an independent escalation path. All reporting materials are available in Somali and Maay Maay with visual aids for low-literacy populations, female staff are available for women and girls preferring same-gender disclosure, and child-friendly mechanisms accommodate young reporters. We guarantee no retaliation against good-faith reporters and ensure survivors guide their own path forward.

IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRAMMATIC INTEGRATION

Prevention in Programs

Safeguarding is integrated into every GEELO program area through specific protective measures.

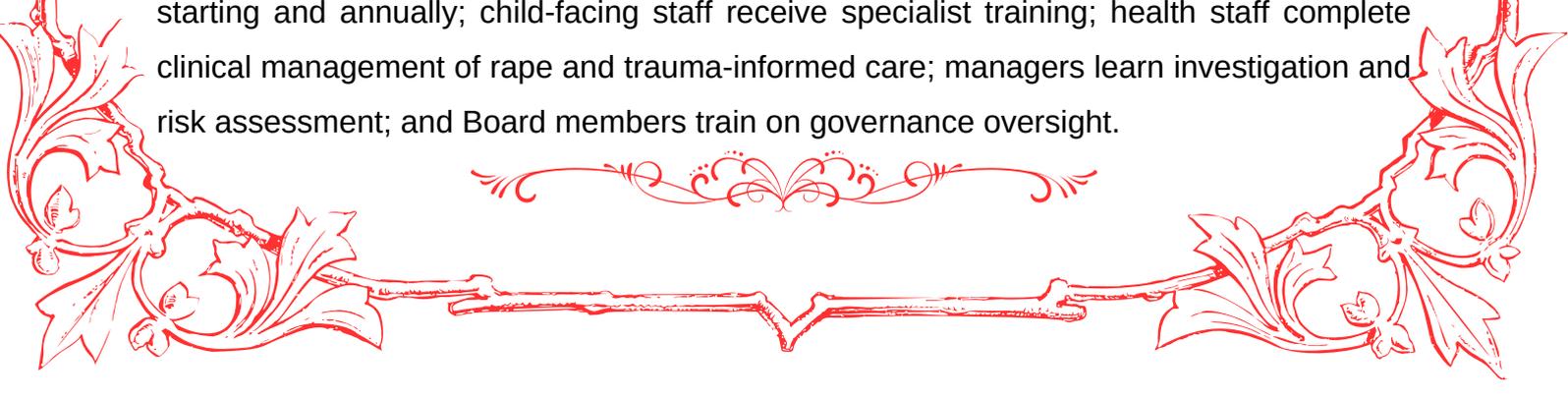


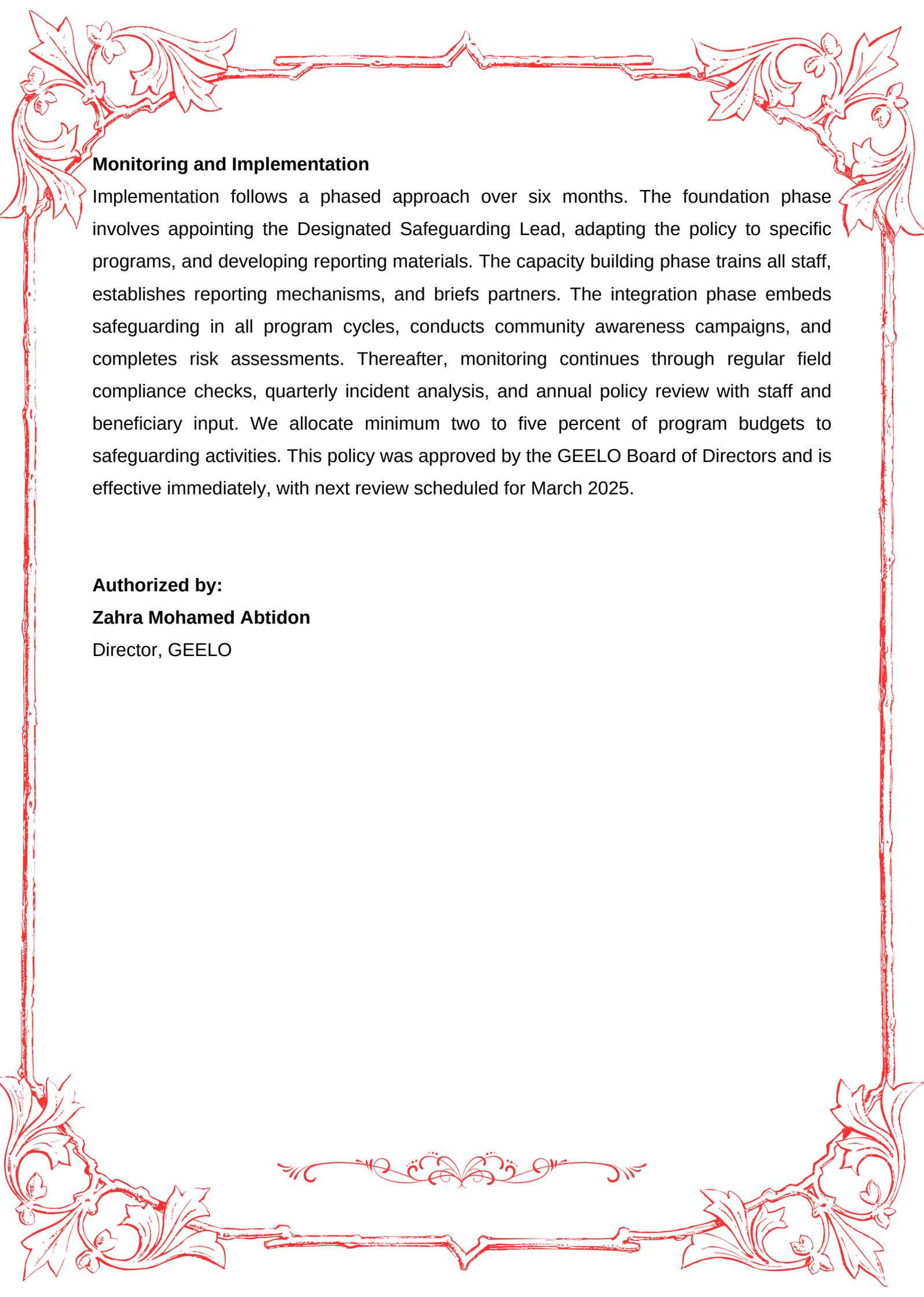


In our health and mobile clinics, we maintain private examination areas with lockable doors, ensure female chaperones present during examinations of women and girls, follow informed consent protocols with special procedures for children, provide confidential spaces for gender-based violence disclosure with separate medical records, and maintain pre-established referral pathways to specialized services. Our education and vocational training programs require background checks for all teachers and trainers, prohibit corporal punishment, establish child-friendly reporting mechanisms, ensure safe transportation routes to training centers, and incorporate life skills curriculum covering personal safety and rights. For cash transfers and economic empowerment, we prioritize direct transfers to women where possible, conduct multiple smaller distributions to reduce targeting risks, provide financial literacy training, and monitor for signs of coercion or theft following distributions. Our governance and leadership programs train women on personal security and digital safety, engage male family members as allies where culturally appropriate, and secure venues for women's political gatherings. All GEELO facilities meet minimum safety standards including adequate lighting, private consultation areas, lockable and accessible toilets, and trained security personnel.

Safer Recruitment and Training

We implement rigorous safer recruitment practices to prevent those who would cause harm from joining our organization. All job descriptions include safeguarding responsibilities and commitment to our Code of Conduct. We require minimum two references including the most recent employer, specifically inquiring about any safeguarding concerns. Police clearance is obtained where available, identities are verified, and social media screening is conducted. Mandatory safeguarding training must be completed before any beneficiary contact, with annual refreshers required thereafter. All partners and subcontractors must sign safeguarding commitments, demonstrate staff training, maintain beneficiary reporting mechanisms, and submit to compliance audits. Training requirements vary by role: all staff complete safeguarding induction before starting and annually; child-facing staff receive specialist training; health staff complete clinical management of rape and trauma-informed care; managers learn investigation and risk assessment; and Board members train on governance oversight.



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Monitoring and Implementation

Implementation follows a phased approach over six months. The foundation phase involves appointing the Designated Safeguarding Lead, adapting the policy to specific programs, and developing reporting materials. The capacity building phase trains all staff, establishes reporting mechanisms, and briefs partners. The integration phase embeds safeguarding in all program cycles, conducts community awareness campaigns, and completes risk assessments. Thereafter, monitoring continues through regular field compliance checks, quarterly incident analysis, and annual policy review with staff and beneficiary input. We allocate minimum two to five percent of program budgets to safeguarding activities. This policy was approved by the GEELO Board of Directors and is effective immediately, with next review scheduled for March 2025.

Authorized by:

Zahra Mohamed Abtidon

Director, GEELO