



Safety Improvements since 2014

More Than Me exists to ensure children are safe, healthy, and learning. More Than Me was established with the belief that no little girl should have to work the streets when her biggest dream is just to go to school. In 2014, we were horrified to learn that girls at our Academy were raped by a staff member on and off campus. When senior staff learned of these abuses, the perpetrator was jailed just days later. We are deeply, profoundly sorry. We are determined to learn all that we can from this painful chapter to support victims, empower girls, and ensure that this type of abuse never happens again.

In the past four years, More Than Me has worked to improve our safeguarding practices. Below is a list of changes we have made to systems, policies, and processes to improve child protection at More Than Me Academy since 2014 and across our school network since it was launched in 2016. We continue to improve our processes proactively, engaging experts, local perspectives and government in our efforts.

MORE THAN ME ACADEMY

Since 2014, the following specific steps have been taken at More Than Me Academy to ensure that girls are safe, including:

Policy Improvements

- Completed three revisions of the 2013 Child Protection Policy. The first revision took place after the 2014 incident. The second revision took place in 2016. The most recent revision was conducted by an internal Working Group beginning in 2017 and concluding in 2018.
- Improved Reporting Procedures & Definitions
- Established a Whistleblower Policy in 2015. This policy protects the reporter from retribution, outlines reporting procedures and allows for anonymous reporting
- Established a Fraternalization Policy in 2015
- Completed two revisions of the 2014 Employee Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy in 2015 and 2018.
- Improved student recruitment process by engaging local partners to refer students via referral forms, followed by staff interview and verification visits

Hiring and Staff Practices

- Strengthened our Child Protection Policy to clarify staff responsibility including a requirement for staff to report any suspected incidents of abuse.
- Hire female staff wherever possible including day-time female security guards - and female janitorial staff to ensure students have mostly female interaction on school campus. 75% of Academy staff are female. No staff is permitted to be alone with a child unless their job description permits it (i.e. social worker or nurse)



- All jobs are publicly posted and MTM invites all qualified candidates to apply. Applicants are screened by the appropriate management team members for initial fit and then complete additional in person interviews and, when appropriate, a written assignment. Potential staff are always evaluated by multiple team members. Final candidates must provide references MTM can contact as well as any previous employers
- In 2018, we further bolstered the process for conducting background checks on all new staff that involves hiring a local investigator to secure reference checks beyond those listed by the potential employee

Training and Counseling

- Conduct annual staff-wide training on organization's child protection policies and procedures at time of hire
- Introduced Adolescent Reproductive Health and Life Skills Curriculum at MTMA using Tuko Pamoja curriculum vetted by USAID, Population Council, PATH, and Frontiers in Reproductive Health which includes topics like life cycle, puberty, STIs, HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, and gender-based violence
- Hosted training with students' guardians and parents on gender-based violence and the rights of a child
- Hired a guidance counselor and created "The Talking Point," a safe space for girls to talk about and disclose abuse at the Academy. We are currently undergoing hiring process for licensed social worker to further enhance this service
- Posted list of Rights of a Child on walls throughout the Academy
- At various times, staff attend workshops on Sexual Gender Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse hosted by external partners including IRC, HOPE
- Academy students led peer trainings on menstrual health and rights of a child in West Point community

Partnerships and Local Leadership

- Established a Liberian Advisory Board in 2015 including three known gender-based violence leaders in Liberia to help guide our work: Nelly Cooper (President, West Point Women), Rosanna Shack (Founder, THINK), and Aisha Cooper Bruce (Program Director, HOPE).
- Partner with Victim Support Advocates from the SGBV Unit at the Ministry of Justice to provide ongoing psychosocial support to survivors and their families

MORE THAN ME PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our public schools have implemented policies to ensure every child is safe, happy, healthy, and learning. We are providing support to 18 public schools, with a model that focuses on safety, health and quality education. As we expanded our programs to support public schools in 2016, we have adapted and reinforced standards including:

Policies



- Since the inception of LEAP, every teacher and principal signs and is trained in the Ministry of Education's Code of Conduct and More Than Me's Teacher Agreement
- Established Child Protection Reporting Procedure Policy that requires any allegations of abuse be reported directly to the Ministry of Education

Trainings

- Teachers, Principals and Capacity Leads receive annual training on the Ministry of Education Code of Conduct, More Than Me Teacher Agreement, rights of a child, and positive, non-violent, non-humiliating disciplinary methods
- Implemented an accessible, flipchart curriculum that teaches children and families about sexual abuse and their rights. We piloted it last year with teachers, parents, students at two public schools, and are rolling it out across the network this year
- All PTA Executive Boards receive training on child protection and positive discipline
- Child Protection and Retention (CP&R) Sub-Committees are being established in each PTA. This committee will receive training on SGBV, child protection and positive discipline, and will implement the accessible, flipchart curriculum mentioned above in the community and school.
- Conduct community outreach to encourage the enrollment of girls in school. We are committed to achieving gender parity, and currently, girls make up 43% of our student population.

We are committed to always improving our practices to ensure the utmost safety for our students. Earlier this year we engaged a consulting firm with expertise in preventing violence against girls and women in post-conflict areas to provide insights into what additional steps More Than Me can take towards creating the safest and most enabling learning environment possible for girls in Liberia. The firm examined the efficacy of More Than Me's safeguarding actions taken between 2014 to date and what additional steps are needed in light of MTM's growth. We are investing in implementing findings from this report to strengthen our work in this area.

Complete List of Documents + Policies Referenced

- 2018 Child Protection Policy
- 2018 Child Protection Policy Reporting Procedure
- 2018 Child Protection Definitions
- 2018 Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy
- 2018 Whistleblower Policy
- 2017 Hiring Practice Liberian Staff
- 2016 Child Protection Policy
- 2015 Child Protection Training
- 2015 Child Protection and Media Policy
- 2015 Whistleblower Policy
- 2015 Code of Conduct
- 2015 Fraternalization Policy



- 2014 Child Protection Policy
- 2013 Child Protection Policy
- Adolescent Reproductive Health + Life Skills Curriculum
- 2014 Ministry of Education Code of Conduct
- 2016 MTM Teacher Agreement (LEAP Schools)
- 2017 MTM Teacher Agreement (LEAP Schools)
- 2018 MTM Teacher Agreement (LEAP Schools)
- Sexual and Gender Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation Training
- My Body Is Mine - Flipchart Training
- PTA Executive Board Training Manual