



Child Safeguarding Policy

For internal use and implementation by all Leher personnel, partners
and representatives

Child Safeguarding Policy

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1. Background

Leher was launched in January 2013, keeping in mind the importance of strengthening and creating the mechanisms to prevent any kind of abuse of children and violation of their rights.

Leher is a child rights organisation working to make child protection a shared responsibility. We envision a society where caring families, alert communities and responsive government come together to ensure the rights and protection of all children.

We believe that all children are entitled to a safe, healthy and happy childhood.

In the course of our work, Leher interacts with Government representatives, Development Professionals, Corporations, Media, Members of Community and Children. This policy is applicable to all those associated with Leher and its partners.

2. Policy Statement

Leher is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children's right to protection is fully realised. We take seriously our responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we are committed to taking appropriate measures when any staff or associate is alleged/found to have violated the terms of this policy. Leher is a Zero Tolerance Zone for child abuse. Our decisions and actions in response to child protection violations will be guided by the principle of the best interest of the child and laws currently in force.

3. Guiding Principles

- Children are citizens and rights-holders; the dignity, liberty and freedom of every child must be respected.
- Children's right to consent shall be respected.
- Zero tolerance for any form of abuse of any child, whether direct or indirect.
- Child protection is the responsibility of all.
- The best interests of the child must remain in focus in all matters that affect or concern the child.
- Children have the right to freedom of expression
- Children have the right to participate in decisions concerning them.

4. Definitions

- **Child:** “Child” Includes all persons within the age range of 0 to 18 years.(UNCRC)
- **Child Protection:** Child protection refers to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage. (UNICEF)
- **Child Abuse:** Child maltreatment, sometimes referred to as child abuse and neglect, includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, development or dignity. Within this broad definition, five subtypes can be distinguished – physical abuse; sexual abuse; neglect and negligent treatment; emotional abuse; and exploitation.(WHO)
- **Child Protection Violation:** Child protection violation in the context of policy amounts to
 - Any act or behaviour that puts a child at risk of abuse.
 - Any act or behaviour that could potentially increases the risk of abuse.
 - Failure to act in a situation where a child is being abused.
 - Failure to follow the code of conduct or any other prescribed protocol without suitable justification.
- **Best interest:** Best interests of children ensure their social well-being, Physical, emotional, and intellectual development by balancing factors in order to assess the best option, through the involvement of decision makers with relevant expertise, and involving children without discrimination, in decisions taken for them. (Fatma Hassan Beshir, Article 3 on the Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- **Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA):** “Sexual exploitation” is any actual or attempted abuse in a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- **“Sexual abuse”** is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. This includes non-contact and online sexual exploitation and abuse. (UNICEF PSEA Toolkit April 2020)
- **Child Safeguarding Policy Point Person:** It is a staff person deputed within Leher to ensure that the Child Safeguarding Policy is circulated among staff at the time of their recruitment within Leher/Patner Organizations and that they are provided orientation training on the same within a stipulated time frame.
- **Grievance Redressal Committee:** It is a three-member committee comprising two members from Leher and one external member who is not employed by Leher and is not engaged in any Leher projects. The committee is responsible for gathering information, documenting, hearing from all parties involved and examining cases of violation of the Child Safeguarding Policy reported to them or through taking suo motu cognisance. The governing body is authorised and responsible for selecting, appointing, and changing GRC members.

5. A code of conduct

Should

- Respect the privacy and dignity of each and every child.
- Respect and encourage children's voices and views. Make efforts to ensure children's participation in decisions that affect their lives.
- Uphold privacy of child by not disclosing identity of child to anyone who may put the child at risk.
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists and facilitates children to interact and express their issues and concerns with staff in LEHER settings.
- Be visible while working with children and not secluded at the work place.
- Educate children about their rights, issues of abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- While addressing the needs of the victimised child ensure that he/she is educated and understands about all decisions taken for his/her best interest.
- Person who is addressing the need of the child should play a supportive and protective role for the child.
- Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concern and allegation.
- Ensure that there are same sex persons/escorts for children.
- Inform about situation/possibility or suspicion of child abuse, earliest possible in accordance with applicable appropriate procedure.
- Respond to a child who may have been abused/exploited in accordance with applicable appropriate procedure.
- Always take permission from children/guardian before taking images/videos. Respect their decision to say no.
- In disclosing any information that reveals the identity of the child utmost care should be taken to not violate the dignity and safety of the child.
- In exceptional circumstances if the child needs to be kept in the organizational premises it should be done so with the permission of Child Welfare Committee, and there should be a staff designated on a 24-hour basis. The head of the organization shall be responsible to appoint an appropriate staff member.

Should not

- Touch, hug or caress a child
- Spend time with a child alone
- Stay in a room alone with a child in a closed environment without supervision of a person in charge.
- Take children to the office/residence of anyone associated with Leher or its partner organizations.
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves.
- Engage children in personal work or employ children at work or at home.
- Use language or expressions that is found inappropriate/demeaning to a child.
- Use corporal punishment or tolerate corporal punishment by the staff/volunteer.
- Make any physical gesture in a manner that appears to be inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- Develop any relationship with children which could be assumed as exploitative or abusive
- Discriminate against children on the basis of colour, language, ability, class, caste, physical features, gender identity, sexuality, etc.

- Stigmatise or humiliate a child
- Act in any manner that puts children at risk
- Give gifts to a child directly/personally.
- Patronise any service that employs children.
- Behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm/abuse.
- Make any false and malicious accusation against a co-worker/volunteer/staff.

6. Scope of the policy

This CPP applies to

- Leher: All staff, Governing Board members, consultants, interns, volunteers
- Associate of Leher: Partner organisations, vendors, volunteers, funding agencies, suppliers, visitors to field project sites

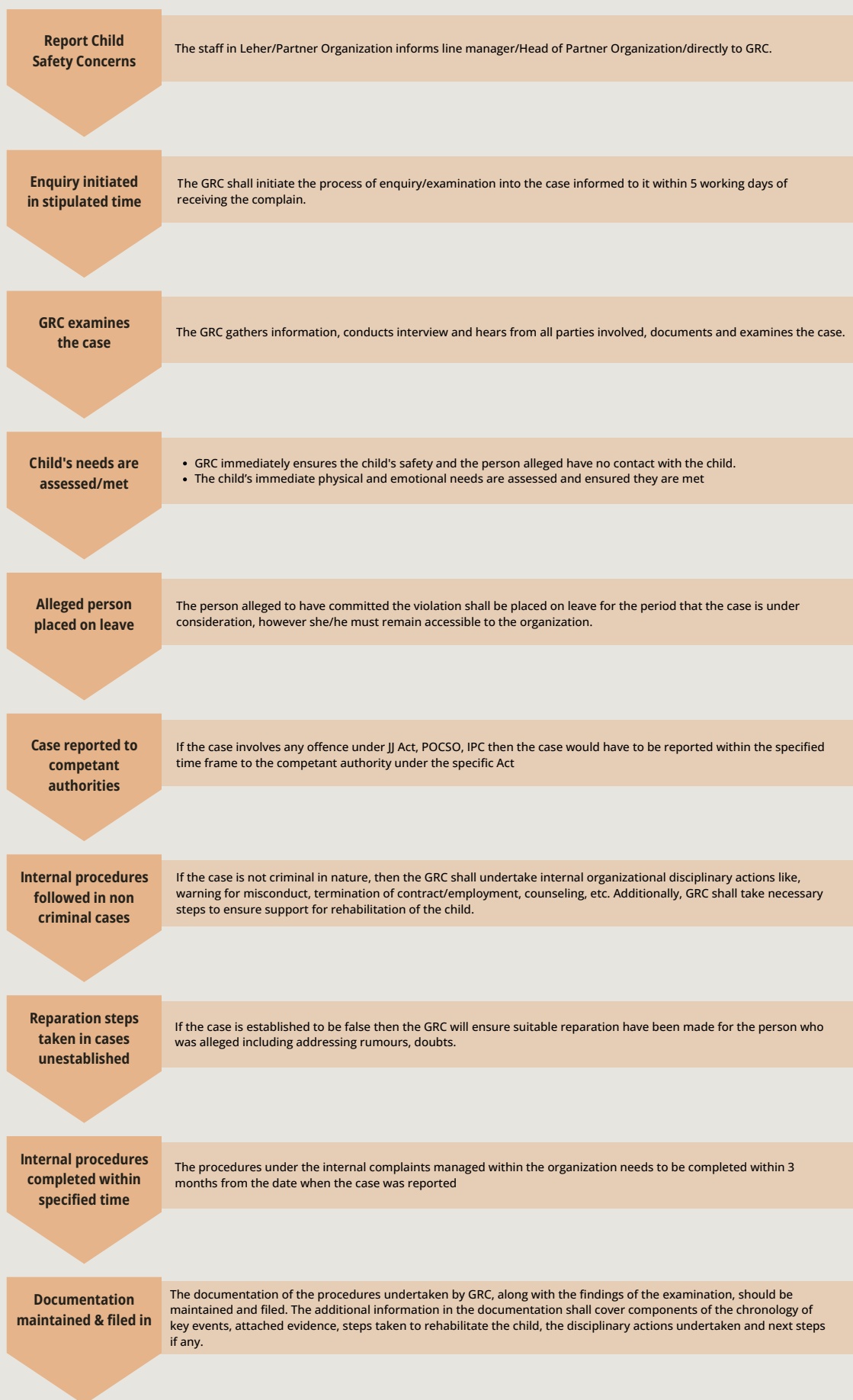
7. Implementation of the policy:

- The overall implementation of the policy would be the responsibility of the head of Leher.
- The partnership agreement between Leher and its project partners should necessarily include acceptance of the CPP and its guidelines.
- All agreements /contracts/terms of reference between Leher and its associates should include acceptance of relevant clauses of the CPP and its guidelines.
- All children should be made aware about their rights, procedures of complaints.

8. Grievance Redressal

- Head of Leher and the Governing Board must be informed about all cases/reports of abuse/suspicion of abuse.
- Head of Leher is responsible for directing GRC to initiate the investigation process.
- If the reporting is against the Head of Leher, then the Governing Board will direct the GRC to initiate the investigation process.
- While the matter is under investigation, the individual/s who are suspected of having committed the violation must be removed from direct contact with the child.
- Governing Board shall appoint the senior-most staff member to follow the enquiry and decisions to be taken.
- All such matters, procedures, meetings, investigations, verbal discussions etc. related to violation/abuse and suspicion of the same must be documented.
- Any alarming or inappropriate behaviour of a staff member and any action taken against the staff must be noted in the personal record.
- If the abuse/violation falls under IPC or any other law, a first information report must be filed with the local police in accordance with POCSO. Leher is a zero-tolerance zone, and any alleged case of sexual abuse and exploitation w.r.t children or adults; male/female/LGBTI from the beneficiary field communities will result in disciplinary action, which may result in termination of employment upon the case being proven.

Grievance Redressal Committee can be reached at: grievances.leher@gmail.com



Note: Throughout the process of enquiry the case shall be kept confidential and information shared only with persons who are associated with the investigation of the case.

10. Implementation of CPP

10.1 HR Recruitment in Leher and Partner Agency

- There should be a reference check with at least two prior employers of which one should be the previous supervisor.
- All new recruits must be provided with a copy of the Leher child safeguarding policy along with the contact of the Grievance Redressal Committee members.
- All new recruits sign an undertaking accepting the child safeguarding policy and the code of conduct.
- On recruitment, personal files with photograph of the staff recruited should be maintained.
- All personnel files would contain information on child protection compliance, both positive and negative action and record any action taken in this regard.

10.2 Training and Staff Development

- Orientation on child protection must be given critical focus in all staff development and capacity building programs.
- The organisation must make attempts to stay abreast of the latest trends, issues and developments on child protection and share this knowledge with its personnel across all levels and departments.
- Protection of staff needs to be discussed at length as staff members also face threats and various risks in the course of their work.
- Organization/Employer is responsible for ensuring that their staff and volunteers understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are well informed about the CPP.

10.3 Communications

- Consider age and the cultural appropriateness before engaging a child/children in any activities
- Ensure that the child understands that their involvement in sharing their personal story or participating in an activity is voluntary.
- Ensure that imagery of children does not violate their dignity
- In the case of child survivors their identity should not be revealed in any manner
- Ensure that the child is safe and feels secure at the location where they are invited to participate/take part.
- Be empathetic, compassionate and listen actively when a child is sharing their story
- Avoid asking a child to repeat a traumatic story multiple times
- Ensure that child's basic needs are met, doesn't feel exhausted while participating in an activity/event.
- A community or child shall always be presented in online/offline media/ official documents in a respectful manner and not as an object of pity
- Data about children should be disseminated in a manner that does not pose risk to the children/families/community.
- While briefing communication teams care should be taken to explain this section of the policy

11. Review Process for CPP

The policy will be reviewed every three years by Leher.