

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

HAQ: CENTRE FOR CHILD RIGHTS

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights works towards the recognition, promotion and protection of rights of all children. It aims to look at the child in an integrated manner within the framework of the Constitution of India, and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, which India ratified in 1992, and contribute to the building of an environment where every child's rights are recognised and protected without discrimination.

In recognition of the need to protect rights of all children in all locations and at all times, HAQ's child protection policy aims to work towards ensuring it's team, partners and associates follow certain norms and ethical guidelines in their professional and personal capacities while dealing with children; that they do not violate child rights, or are party to any such act which indicates exploitation and violation of child rights. This policy therefore applies to all persons who are directly employed by HAQ as well as to all those who are contracted by HAQ to provide services, consultants, partner organisations, interns and volunteers. It seeks to cover their interactions with children in the course of carrying out the duties/responsibilities assigned by HAQ, whether at HAQ's premises or any other location.

This Child Protection Policy shall be displayed on HAQ's website at all times and shall form part of all service contracts and agreements entered into with HAQ. It is an ever evolving document and hopes to capture new thoughts, ideas, debates and concerns around commitment of organisations and individuals to child protection concerns. Changes or amendments made to it from time to time shall be communicated to all concerned at the earliest and also displayed on HAQ's website.

1. HAQ: Centre for Child Rights expects its staff, partner organisations, volunteers, interns, consultants and visitors (herein after referred to as HAQ Staff and others) to treat with respect and ensure dignity to all children, rising above values and action that promote or cause discrimination and inequality on the basis of gender, caste, class, disability, sectarian and ethnic background. This applies to both people associated with the work of the organisation as well as children within the personal lives of the individuals.
2. All staff members, partner organisations, volunteers, consultants and interns must abide by the organisation's Child Safety and Ethical Guidelines as listed below:
 - A. **HAQ Staff and others must never:**
 - Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children
 - Use overt or covert sexual (physical or verbal) language and in any way develop an intimate physical/sexual relationship with children

- Act in ways that may be abusive or knowingly place a child at risk of abuse
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Use language or make suggestions that are inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment towards, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others
- Employ children in any role including domestic work

B. HAQ Staff and others must:

- Report any concerns of child abuse associated with HAQ's work or within the personal lives of individuals
- Empower children and discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- Follow the requirements of protecting privacy and confidentiality of children as required under the existing laws in force
- Ensure that pictures, materials and personal information regarding children are held in a secure place, whether physical or online
- Obtain consent of children and their parent(s)/guardian(s) for using their photographs in publication of reports, documents or any IEC materials; taking them out as part of programmes and events organised by HAQ or its partners; engaging with them on a one-to-one basis

C. HAQ Staff and others who are in direct one-to-one contact with children shall:

- Uphold privacy of the child by not disclosing the identity of the child to anyone who may put the child at risk.
- Uphold privacy of the child by not disclosing the identity of a child to media.
- Maintain confidentiality of fact(s) shared by a child during interaction unless it is not in the interest of the child or it might put the child to risk(s).
- Not be judgmental or blame a child.
- Never let allegations by a child go unnoticed, unreported or unrecorded
- Not associate beyond the scope of one's work/duty should be established with any child.
- As far as possible and unless necessary in case of an emergency, visit children and their families during day time and as per their convenience and comfort.
- Be very cautious about body language, gestures or actions while interacting with a child so as to ensure that the child does not feel uncomfortable, hesitant or abused during interaction.

- Make no false promises towards providing anything beyond the office policy/organisational mandate.
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed without fear of repercussion.
- Refrain from recording of interviews of children or their family members in any form and taking photographs without explaining the purpose of the interview and obtaining their written consent. In the case of minors, consent of parent/guardian is essential unless it is against the child's best interest. In that case reasons for not taking the consent of parent/guardian must be clearly stated in the document where the child's consent is obtained.

3. Establishment of the Committee and incorporating the policy

- A Child Protection Committee will be formed to inquire into any child rights violation that may take place as a result of action or inaction by any HAQ staff, consultants and partners.
- The committee shall consist of three members of whom at least two shall be women.
- If for reasons beyond organisation's control, the Child Protection Committee cannot be constituted or ceases to exist, HAQ's Committee on Sexual Harassment at Workplace shall hold the mandate and responsibility of the Child Protection Committee.
- All staff, consultants, partners, interns and volunteers have to sign the Child Protection Policy of the organisation at the time of signing of contract/agreement and thereby abide by it.
- Induction of all new staff, volunteers/interns at HAQ will include a briefing on child protection issues, this policy and the Child Protection Committee.

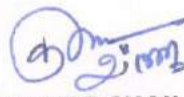
4. Mechanism to Address any Reported Cases of Violation of the Child Protection Policy

- Proper systems will be established by the Child Protection Committee to investigate possible abuse and/or neglect once reported and thus to deal with such cases.
- The Committee on receiving a complaint will meet within two to ten days depending upon the availability of the members. The Committee has the power to summon people involved in the case or whoever else is able to provide information. However, the committee can reach a decision ex-parte if the accused refuses to comply. After having considered the case, further action is recommended within a stipulated time.
- The Committee can call upon an external person for conducting the inquiry.
- Based on the report of the inquiry, necessary actions will be taken against the perpetrator.
- The recommended action can range from a verbal warning to requiring the accused to undergo counselling, and/or deduction from salary or wages of the accused

- Based on the report of the inquiry, necessary actions will be taken against the perpetrator.
- The recommended action can range from a verbal warning to requiring the accused to undergo counselling, and/or deduction from salary or wages of the accused (respondent) such sum as compensation to be paid to the victim, and/or expulsion from HAQ.
- If, in the course of performance of duty or obligations under an agreement or contract with HAQ, any act by staff, consultants, partners, interns or volunteers amounts to a criminal act under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 or any other law for the time being in force, the committee shall initiate the process of making a formal complaint/registering an FIR with the concerned police station.



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Distribution:

All Staff/Governing Body Members