

Child Protection Policy **(Adapted from CIF)**

I. Overview

Life Foundation (LF), established in 2010, is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) registered under the Registration of Societies Act 1860 (as amended vide Registration of Societies Act 1969). It is also registered:

1. Under Section 12A and u/s 80G of the Income Tax Act 1961
2. CSR Activities under Ministry of Corporate Affairs
3. Under NITI AYOOG.
4. Under FCRA
5. Under section 41 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.

Life Foundation, with its head office at Hojai, Assam operates in all Assam.

Life Foundation basically emerged to address the issue of Child Education, Health, Sanitation, Women Empowerment, Youth affairs etc. the Organization has ventured into the fields of Community Health, Women and Child Development and Rural Development.

LIFE FOUNDATION got registration under section 41 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 on 19th November 2022.

This document has been specially developed and designed to protect Children.

II. Scope of the policy

This Child Protection Policy applies to:

- To include all staff, trustees, consultants, interns, volunteers of Life Foundation
- To include all vendors, sponsors, volunteers, funding agencies, suppliers of Life Foundation.

III. Review of the Policy:

This Policy will be reviewed every five years (or in any event of urgency of reviewing the same) by Life Foundation managing board. Upon review, changes in the Policy will be intimated to all organizations and persons who come within the scope of the policy and compliance with these changes would also be mandatory.

IV. Guiding Principles

- Children are citizens and rights-holders; the dignity, liberty and freedom of every child must be respected.
- 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 themselves.
- A child's right to privacy and confidentiality must be respected within an overall consciousness and awareness of child protection requirements.
- Zero tolerance of any form of abuse of any child whether direct or indirect.
- Child protection is the responsibility of all.

V. Objectives

- To ensure the practice of the highest levels of child protection standards in all the activities of the organization.
- To ensure a well defined and practiced reporting mechanism for child protection violations and time bound redressal system.
- To ensure assessment and management of child protection risk in LF space
- To ensure that there are basic minimum standards of child protection adhered to by all associates LF
- To create consciousness and awareness about child protection.

VI. Policy Statement

LF is committed to the protection and well being of children and adopts this Child Protection Policy to ensure practice of the highest standards of child protection amongst all stakeholders. The policy creates a mechanism to report child protection violation and ensure prompt redressal and calls for mandatory reporting of all child protection violations by all members within this scope.

VII. Definitions

VII.1 Child

"Child" includes all persons within the age range of 0 to 18 years. However, the issue of foeticide implicitly recognizes the right to life of an unborn child. A child may therefore include the unborn, new-borns and all those who are not yet 18 years of age. Similarly, a child who is mentally challenged has the vulnerabilities associated with children even after crossing the age of 18 years. The definition of child is flexible and requires to be viewed in context.

VII.2 Child Protection

Child Protection is about protecting children from or against any perceived or real danger/ risk to their life, their personhood and childhood. Child protection is about reducing the vulnerability of the child to any kind of harm and in harmful situations. It is about protecting children against social, material, physical, psychological and emotional insecurity and distress. All efforts at protecting children must ensure that no child falls out of the social security and safety net and those who do, receive necessary care and protection to be brought back into the safety net.

Child Protection refers to protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. It is integrally linked to every other right of the child. Every child has a right to protection. This not only includes children who are in difficult circumstances and those who have suffered violence, abuse and exploitation but also those who are not in any of these adverse situations and yet need to be protected to maintain and/or increase the existing environment of safety and positive development.

VII.3 Child abuse

Child abuse may be defined as intentional harm caused physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally and psycho-socially through rights violations, neglect and ill-treatment by those with power and authority and who may or may not be responsible for providing care and management services. Older or stronger children may therefore also abuse younger or weaker or disabled children. Any neglect on the part of the parent or the caregiver to provide adequately for the various needs (food, clothing, affection, education, medical care) of the child would also be considered child abuse.

VII.4 Child Protection Violation

Child Protection Violation in the context of this policy amounts to:

- Any act or behavior that puts a child at risk of abuse.
- Any act of behavior that could potentially increase the risk of abuse.
- A 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.

VIII. Components of the Child Protection Policy

There are three components comprising this CPP:

1. Code of conduct
2. Whistle blower policy
3. Operational Guidelines

VIII.1 Code of conduct

Life Foundation recognizes the need for honesty and integrity and respect for the child to reflect both in decisions of the organization as well as in the conduct of its personnel. As a result, this code of conduct has been articulated for all staff and work associates, including permanent and full-time as well as part-time staff, consultants, and volunteers.

Personnel should:

- Be conscious of and respect the privacy and dignity of each and every child

- Be visible and not in a secluded place, while in contact with children at the work place.
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists and facilitates children to interact and express their issues and concerns with staff
- Respect and encourage children's voices and views.
- Make efforts to ensure children's informed participation in decisions that affect their lives.
- Educate children about their rights, issues of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Personnel should not:

- Engage children in personal work or employ children at work or at home.
- Use language or expressions that are inappropriate for a child.
- Use corporal punishment or tolerate corporal punishment by the staff.
- Make any physical gestures in a manner that appear to be inappropriate or have a sexual context or association.
- Develop any relationship with any child that is or could be assumed to be exploitative or abusive.
- Discriminate against children on any basis such as, for example, community, color, language, disabilities, or physical features.
- Stigmatize or humiliate a child.
- Act in any manner that puts children at risk.
- Patronize any service that employs children.
- Take any photograph that would or could potentially violate the child's dignity, or privacy in any way.

VIII.2 Life Foundation Whistle Blower Policy

The Whistle Blower Policy is framed to ensure that there is an appropriate mechanism in place to ensure prompt and fair action in the case of a child protection violation.

Response Mechanism in case of a child protection violation:

Outlined below is a reporting and response framework for any alleged, witnessed, or suspected child protection violation

Life Foundation:

- Report the matter in writing, directly to the Grievance Cell (toll free 24 hours child helpline 1098) of the organization which will address the issue with the Management Team of the organization. OR

- Reporting of child protection violations within the organization is **mandatory** - any body coming across child protection violation must report it.
- The Management Team of the organization will investigate the matter and take appropriate action.
- While the matter is under investigation the individual who is suspected of having committed a child protection violation must be removed from direct contact with children.
- The issue is to be addressed and brought to closure within a month of having been reported.
- Any alarming or inappropriate behavior of a staff member and any action taken against the person must be noted in his/ her personal record.
- If the abuse falls under IPC or any other relevant law, First Information Report must be filed with the local police

VIII.3 Operational Guidelines

This Child Protection Policy articulates our aspiration and commitment to practicing the highest level of child protection within the organization and all its operational area.

IX. Human Resource Management

Recruitment

All employees having direct or indirect contact with children would face a thorough and standardized recruitment process.

- Any recruitment advertisement will reflect the child protection statement of LF
- During the interview process
 - Ask relevant questions to assess the candidate's attitude and sensibilities regarding child protection
- There should be at least three references that each applicant should provide along with the biodata.
- For each candidate a thorough reference check will be carried out with the place of previous employment or the academic institute attended by the candidate. There should be a minimum of two reference checks for each candidate.
- At the time of employment the organization will also take the following from each employee
 - #Proof of identity
 - #Proof of Residence (both temporary and permanent)
 - #Letter of experience and good conduct from the past employee.

#Attested photocopies of proof of education/ experience. Original Documents should be verified.

- A duly signed Appointment letter should be issued to the employee mentioning conditions of employment.
- All new recruits are to sign an undertaking acknowledging receipt of the CPP, and stating their agreement and acceptance to all components of the Policy.
- On recruitment, personnel files of the person will be duly maintained. The personal file should have : biodata, photograph, name and contact details of referees and outcome of reference check duly signed by director, copy of appointment letter, CCP undertaking signed by the employee, identity and proof of residence, six monthly performance review
- Each employee should be oriented to child protection and child protection policy within a week of recruitment

X. Staff Development and Capacity Building

- Orientation to child protection will receive special focus in all staff development and capacity building programs.
- The organization will make attempts to stay abreast of the latest trends and issues on child protection and share this knowledge with its team 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.