

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

FH India was constituted in March 2008 and registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act with a vision to improving the quality of life of people including the most marginalized through strengthening public health leadership and management capacity. Family Health India works on Community Development, Women empowerment, Public Health, Nutrition, Livelihood, Poverty reduction, education of children and medical relief of marginalized populations including people living with HIV/ AIDS (PLHIV), to strengthen education, communication and delivery of services for people living with HIV/ AIDS (PLHIV) as well as provide technical assistance to Government of India and State Governments in wide range of activities related to public health; nutrition and education.

FH India Mission is *“To improving the quality of life of people including the most marginalized through strengthening public health leadership and management capacity”*.

In tandem with its vision and commitment and also the fact that children are often vulnerable to abuse and exploitation; FH India is highly sensitive and accords top priority to protection and safety of children- their right; the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) providing the guiding principle to which India like other nations, is a signatory.

FH India, accordingly, commits to protect its children involved in various projects from exploitation, neglect, sexual and physical abuse and therefore has formulated a Child Protection Policy translating its commitment into practicality. It is intended to keep children safe from possible abuse and exploitation within the organization (Staff members, Volunteers, Resource Persons), outside (community), Partners, donors and volunteers they come in contact with during different activities. The policy also is to serve as advocacy to create (increase) awareness on child protection in the community and in the family.

This Policy is in compliance with the laws of the country-drawn keeping in view FH India’s Philosophy, Mission and Vision, approach and Partnership policy on Child Protection.

Definitions

1. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.
2. Child Abuse is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate action or it may be failing in action to prevent harm.
3. Child protection entails safeguarding children from any harm deliberate or otherwise and the Policy enunciates responsibilities, measures and activities proposed to be undertaken

- **Scope -Child Protection Policy (CPP)**

The Child Protection Policy applies to everyone working for or associated with FH India

- All Staff Members and Resource Persons based in Head Office, Project offices in field areas or elsewhere.
- Other Members-Members of Board, Volunteers-Students, Corporate and community volunteers, contractors and others who may meet the children through FH India
- Guests/Visitors-donors, journalist, media, researcher, celebrities etc. who may meet the children through FH India

- **Implementation guidelines**

CPP 1. Awareness program

1. Organize regular awareness program on Child Rights to Staff Members, Volunteers, community leaders, field volunteers
2. Impart special training to Project Staff on child protection

CPP 2. Program intervention

1. Design interventions with rights-based approach-responding to needs, sensitizing and empowering children, giving them voice
2. Making Community advocacy program on child rights integral part of all interventions
3. Mobilizing and sensitizing women/mothers in order to make them and their spouse responsible for the well-being of children and prevention of exploitation, abuse.

CPP 3. Compliance mechanism

1. Background verification, experience and aptitude, interest in education sector and teaching children to be important considerations, in addition to essential and desired qualification of candidates to be eventually recruited – full time or part time. Similar verifications are to be done prior to appointing teachers, Community volunteers, interns, consultants etc. All persons shall be informed about CPP.
2. Establish a Child Protection Committee (CPC) in organization consisting of Sr. Program Manager, Program Manager/Officer, Campaigns and Advocacy Officer (Officer-IEC), Members from Community (parents) and youths (FH India's Alumnus) - under overall supervision of the President of the organization. Necessary functional linkages with local MLA, Police and Hospital shall be established.
3. Capacity building of staff members working with children in projects, to effectively deal with and promote rights of children and to help protect from any kind of exploitations and abuse.

4. Monitor staff's performance and conduct to ensure the same is in tandem with philosophy, mission and vision of FH India and culturally sensitive.
5. All personnel –staff, volunteers, interns, consultants, visitors or anyone else- connected with FH India will not spend time alone with a child, nor touch the child inappropriately or make child feel insecure.
6. Children must not only be heard but also encouraged to voice their concerns and problems. All staff, volunteers and whoever meet children must ensure it. However, it must be watched and suitably guided that their interactions are friendly and decent.
7. Children must not be employed as domestic worker by staff.

CPP 4.Complaints/ Allegations handling

1. Any complaint regarding incident of misbehavior with child (abuse) in any program implemented in the target community shall be reported to the Child Protection Committee constituted under FH India- which will, first of all, facilitate medical care to the victim, if need be; subsequently carry out a thorough unbiased investigation or if need be, get First Information Report (FIR) filed and take help from local police for appropriate legal process and actions.
2. CPC members of FH India shall extend moral support to parents and the victim (child) and if need be; help to file the First Information Report (FIR) at the local police station. CPC has the responsibility of informing the abuse case immediately to the President of FH India who will then initiate appropriate legal recourse - dealing the case with due sensitivity and confidentiality.
3. In case the wrongdoer is a staff member or any other person connected with FH India, the matter shall be reported to the Nodal Officer of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) constituted, the alleged person put under suspension with immediate effect, initiate appropriate investigations in house or, if need be, through official machineries; the accused person to be reinstated only after being found innocent by investigations done.
4. Child subjected to abuse, often, gets psychologically upset which is very traumatic, leaves deep scar on mind. Often faced with conflicting emotions- confusion, fear, anger, shame, depression- result into lack of confidence, low self-esteem. Such upheaval may have serious repercussions later in life. Understandably, due personal care along with professional, effective counseling is critical and must be provided.
5. Often, there is request received by FH India for sponsorship of child's education. It is to be ensured that no inappropriate requests are encouraged from the sponsor and entertained both at organization's level and the same in correspondences from sponsor to the sponsored child.
6. FH India shall encourage visits by donors and sponsors of child's education to projects on receiving prior permission. If requested, Sponsor may be facilitated visit to

sponsored child's home accompanied by staff member of FH India and only with the consent of the family. However, it shall be always insisted that sponsor meet the child in FH India's Head Office.

CPR-5 Policy issues

1. FH India will be networking and collaborating with likeminded individuals and institutions for sharing knowledge and experiences (best practices); and support advocacy campaigns on child protection, development and promote children's participation.
2. FH India shall ensure that pictures/captions in all literature, documents and IEC materials on children are not offensive, commercializing poverty and miseries.
3. It is committed to keep information about children confidential. Child abuse incidents to be kept as confidential and handled with care and concern. Ensure Information about any such incident is shared with people only if it is deemed necessary by Child Protection monitoring group and ensure names and identities are not disclosed outside or to the media.

Contractors & Vendors

1. FH India shall make Contractors & Vendors aware of its Child Protection Plan and make them agree to adhere to it.

Annexure- I

Child Protection Committee (CPC) - FH India

Members of the Child Protection Committee are appointed by management, each for a three (3) year term, 50% of which must be women. Members will be selected for their awareness of and sensitivity to sexual harassment.

Current members of the Internal Complaints Committee:

(a) Presiding Officer

- Mr. Som Kumar Sharma, Associate Director, FH India | TEL: 011-4048-7705; +91-99199 91025 | somksharma@fhiindia.org

(b) Employee members

- Mr. Neeraj Kumar Sinha, Finance and Administrative Officer, FH India| TEL: 011-4048 7705; +91 96541 54154 | nksinha@fhiindia.org

(c) Independent member (for incidents of sexual harassment only)

- Ms. Sumita Taneja, Director, Program Management Unit | TEL: 011-4048-7777; +91-98993 34568 | staneja@fhi360.org