



Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Heart for Lebanon's (H4L) Children At Risk program started in 2012 and aims to serve kids and youth age 8-16. It is a character formation program with the goal to educate, empower, and inspire a student to develop emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, and socially.

Since 2007 Heart for Lebanon has been facilitating monthly children's programs and day camps; H4L has also been offering student scholarships in different Christian schools along with regular home visits to sponsored students. Community service programs are offered to the children and youth involved in H4L's ministries.

The Children At Risk program is for Lebanese students, Iraqi and Syrian refugee kids, and Gypsy and Bedouin children. Heart for Lebanon pursues this mission through integrated, holistic commitment to the needs of the children it serves and provides them with hope for an ever improving and more fulfilled life. In this spirit, Heart for Lebanon seeks to provide the highest level of protection for the dignity and safety of children it serves. We seek to protect the children in our ministries from exploitation or abuse of any kind.

Heart for Lebanon supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and commits to taking into consideration the three guiding principles of the CRC:

Article 3

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

States parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

Article 32

State Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic and exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Article 34

State Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, State Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent: The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials

Purpose

To protect children from exploitation and abuse of all kinds in the delivery of Heart for Lebanon's programs. To establish and outline Heart for Lebanon's policy on its responsibility and commitment to the protection of the children and families it serves. To maintain a workforce that is committed to the welfare of children in Lebanon.

Scope

This policy applies to all Heart for Lebanon staff (covering all employment categories including full-time and part-time), independent contractors (consultants), interns, board members and volunteers in all offices of Heart for Lebanon. As well as on donors and visitors to Heart for Lebanon's programs.

Policy

For the purpose of this policy, and Heart for Lebanon's work, we take into consideration the following definitions:

Child: A child will be any boy or girl under the age of 18 years.

Abuse: Abuse is the systematic pattern of behaviours in a relationship that are used to gain and/or maintain power and control over others.

Types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** This includes hitting, burning or caning children or using the denial of food needed for the development of a child as punishment.
- **Sexual abuse:** This can range from inappropriate touching to rape (contact) and non-contact sexual abuse that is forcing a child to observe sexual acts, showing a child pornography etc.
- **Emotional abuse:** This includes humiliation, derogatory language, uncaring attitudes, absence of praise, ridiculing, bullying, denial of time to play, scolding or rebuking the child in a manner that demoralises the child rather than focusing on the behaviour that needs changing.
- **Harmful cultural practices:** These are the harmful practices that may deny children their rights. These include Female Genital Mutilation, early marriage, over working and discriminating against the girl child.
- **Exploitative work:** This includes doing household chores in teacher's house, sending children to sell teacher's merchandise, selling or giving drugs to children, giving a child tasks for which she/he is not physically or developmentally ready.

Places of abuse

- **In the family:** This also includes others known to the child as most abuse of children occurs within the home or community and is carried out by adults known by the children.
- **Within the community:** Child labour such as child domestic work, prostitution/child sex work, by children being displaced, abduction and kidnapping of children, trafficking, abandonment, female genital mutilation, stigmatization of children with disabilities.
- **In Institutions:** this includes schools, day care centres, children's homes and correctional rehabilitation centres.

The following principals also guide the policy:

1. **Zero tolerance of child exploitation and abuse**

H4L does not tolerate child exploitation and abuse. H4L works to reduce the risks of child exploitation and abuse associated with delivering aid activities and trains its staff on their obligations. H4L will not knowingly engage anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children.

2. Recognition of the best interest of the child

H4L is committed to upholding the rights and obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. H4L recognises that some children, such as those with disability and children living in areas impacted by disasters are particularly vulnerable.

3. Risk management approach

While it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child exploitation and abuse, careful management can reduce the risks to children that may be associated with aid activities. These are identified during initial risk assessments and are managed for the duration of the aid activity.

Policy Implementation

1. Awareness Raising

Heart for Lebanon seeks to educate its staff and volunteers on the definition of and protection against abuse especially that our work attracts visitors and strangers into local communities.

H4L staff will receive trainings on child protection issues and on their obligations under this policy, including mandatory reporting of concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse.

H4L staff must immediately report any concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse, and policy non-compliance, by anyone covered by the policy

H4L staff considers child protection as part of the initial risk assessment for aid activities and throughout the aid management cycle.

2. Internal recruitment and screening processes

H4L's internal recruitment processes include stringent screening measures to ensure that the association does not employ inappropriate people. These include criminal record checks and background checks on all successful candidates before they begin work. Additional screening measures are incorporated into the selection processes for positions that involve working with children.

3. Internal procedures for handling reports related to child exploitation and abuse

H4L has internal procedures for handling reports related to child exploitation and abuse. These procedures outline obligations and responsibilities for reporting on and managing concerns about inappropriate behaviour.

4. Ensuring appropriate use of communications systems

H4L guidelines on appropriate use of its communications systems apply to child exploitation material. Using the association's systems to access child exploitation material or to engage in online grooming is unacceptable and is dealt with promptly.

5. Ensuring risks to children are managed in humanitarian disaster responses

H4L recognises that children living in areas impacted by disasters are particularly vulnerable. Risks to children must always be considered when developing humanitarian disaster response activities.

6. Behaviour Protocols

Behaviour Protocols are designed to protect children staff, volunteers, board members, consultants and visitors from false accusations of inappropriate behaviour and abuse.

Basic principles of Heart for Lebanon Behavioural protocols include:

- H4L staff, volunteers, consultants and visitors will be concerned about perception and appearance in their language, actions, and relationships with children, and young adults.
- H4L staff, volunteers, board members, consultants and visitors will not stay overnight on his/her own with one child or more at any community project whether that is in the staff member's house, project premises or elsewhere.
- H4L will not hire boys and girls less than 18 years of age as "house-help" or provide them shelter in their homes. Even though providing employment for boys and girls may be culturally acceptable and can provide benefits not otherwise available to the child, the hiring of children may lead to misunderstandings and is inconsistent with H4L efforts to stop exploitative child labour.
- Children, like adults, need appropriate touch. Visitors to H4L must ask the child or family for permission before touching or holding hands.
- Children need adults around them that will help them feel safe and well. The "two adult" rule, where two or more adults supervise at all times children activities, will be followed.
- Inappropriate behaviour towards children, including failure to follow H4L behaviour protocols or child abuse is grounds for discipline including legal action and or dismissal from employment. Staff will be laid off and volunteers will be requested not to take part in any of H4L activities.

The following are the Behavior Protocols which all H4L staff, volunteers, consultants, and visitors are expected to adhere to:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity.
- Listen to children.
- Be sensitive to the unwritten laws of personal familiarity in language, conversation and physical intimacy and observe them.
- STOP any interaction with a child if a child says stop or if the child appears uncomfortable with the interaction.
- Always ask permission from a child and parents/guardian if you wish to take a photograph.
- Do not touch sexual areas of the body or have sex with a child.
- Do not expose them to sexual materials or abuse them through non-contact sexual activity.
- Do not spend time alone with a child. This is for the protection of the child and to protect you from false accusation
- Do not slap or hit a child or physically abuse any child.
- Do not psychologically and/or verbally abuse any child.
- Adults are always responsible for their behaviour with a child even if a child is acting seductively.

