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LESSAN e.V.

Child Protection Policy

A. Introduction

For more than ten years, LESSAN e.V. has been working for integration, against female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) as well as gender-specific violence against women and racism through various transcultural projects.

LESSAN is the nationwide contact point for the protection letter against female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). This is about active child protection, because even very young girls are affected by FGM/C. We offer counselling for those affected and at the same time train experts from various fields throughout Germany who work with children and women at risk and affected.

LESSAN thus makes an important contribution to enabling young people from diverse cultures to actively shape their inclusion. It is important for LESSAN to promote an atmosphere in which every child feels safe and can develop in a healthy way.

This Child Protection Policy sets out LESSAN's obligations to protect children from all forms of harm. It sets out the responsibilities and instructions for action for all persons who have contact with children as part of LESSAN's activities. It is based on internationally recognised standards established by international child rights instruments (especially the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). LESSAN communicates this policy to its volunteers and staff.

B. Objectives of the Child Protection Policy

The purpose of this policy is to protect children from abuse in the delivery of our programmes, to reaffirm LESSAN's commitment to the safety and protection of children and to ensure that we do not perpetuate or increase systematic or structural abuse and discrimination against children in our work. In doing so, the policy defines and outlines our guiding principles and responsibilities.

C. Scope

This policy applies to everyone who represents LESSAN: Staff, volunteers, partners, contractors, donors and board members.

D. Commitment

LESSAN is strongly committed to protecting children from exploitation and abuse. Children can be extremely vulnerable, especially in situations of poverty, humanitarian crisis and conflict, and deserve

a higher standard of protection. As an organisation working in such contexts, LESSAN takes its duty to protect children seriously. Our Child Protection Policy is guided by the 5 following principles:

I. Children's Rights

LESSAN is committed to protecting the rights of all children to live safely, without fear of abuse or exploitation, as outlined in the UNCRC.

II. No tolerance for child abuse

LESSAN will not tolerate any form of child abuse by anyone working in our programmes or representing our organisation in any way. LESSAN will not allow representatives to work with children or access communities if they pose an unacceptable risk to the safety or welfare of children.

III. Shared responsibility

We believe that safeguarding children is a shared responsibility, which means that the successful implementation of child protection initiatives depends on all LESSAN representatives committing to and adhering to the principles of this policy. LESSAN will work to ensure that all partner organisations meet minimum standards for the protection of children in relation to our projects and programmes.

IV. Risk management approach

Although it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child abuse, LESSAN will ensure that risks of child abuse are identified and mitigated when assessing our activities.

V. Confidentiality, wellbeing and safety

Matters raised under this policy will be dealt with in a confidential, fair and timely manner to ensure the safety and welfare of all concerned.

E. Definitions

This policy has been based on the following definitions:

I. Child

LESSAN considers everyone under the age of 18 to be a child.

II. Child's best interests

The best interest of the child is a legal concept that encompasses the overall well-being of a child and his or her healthy development. According to Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in all actions concerning children, whether taken 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.

III. Child protection

Activity or initiative to protect children from all forms of harm. Child protection is the responsibility of organisations working or coming into contact with children. It is important to ensure that the activities and programmes of staff, volunteers and partner organisations (including external consultants or service providers) do not harm children. They must implement policies and strategies to minimise the risk of children being harmed. They report suspected cases of child vulnerability to the relevant authorities (youth welfare office and law enforcement agencies).

IV. Children's right

Children have the right to life, survival and development, where development includes physical, emotional, energetic, cognitive, social and cultural development.

V. Child abuse/maltreatment

Child abuse/maltreatment encompasses the abuse of children's rights and includes all forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, domestic violence, neglect, commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking and child labour, as defined below.

VI. Physical abuse

When a person intentionally hurts or threatens to hurt a child. For example: hitting, shaking, kicking, burning, pushing or grabbing.

VII. Neglect

The persistent failure, where there are resources, or deliberate refusal, to provide a child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation, supervision or care to the extent that the child's health or development is at risk.

VIII. Sexual abuse

When a child is used by another child, young person or adult for their own sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual abuse includes contact and non-contact activities involving all forms of

sexual activity with children, including exposing children to pornographic images or taking pornographic photographs of children.

IX. Emotional abuse

A persistent attack on a child's self-esteem. For example: calling the child names, threatening, ridiculing, intimidating or isolating the child.

X. Domestic violence

This includes verbal, physical, sexual or emotional violence within the household or family that the child experiences.

XI. Commercial sexual exploitation

When a child is sexually abused or exploited in exchange for money or services.

XII. Child labour

When the type and frequency of work a child of a certain age is required to do exceeds UNICEF guidelines or harms or prevents them from attending school, as identified in the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

XIII. Child trafficking

Refers to any role in the recruitment, transportation or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. This can be through threats, violence or other forms of coercion, including abuse of power.

XIV. Military use of children

When children are involved in or exposed to military activities, including as soldiers or human shields.

XV. Suspected risk to the welfare of a child

Situation in which an allegation is made that a child is being abused or there is a risk of abuse, even though the suspicion may not be substantiated, constitute suspicion of child welfare endangerment.

XVI. Employees

All persons working full-time or part-time for or on behalf of LESSAN. This includes interns and staff on short-term contracts.

XVII. Volunteers

All persons who work for LESSAN on a voluntary basis.

XVIII. Partners

Organisations involved in joint projects with LESSAN. Organisations working with LESSAN and in direct contact with children in their projects must either have or develop their own child protection policy or adhere to our Code of Conduct.

F. Implementation

LESSAN ensures that its commitment to child protection is shared by all representatives and integrated into our work in the following ways:

I. Child Protection Policy Information

All LESSAN representatives must be aware of their responsibilities to keep children safe and to comply with the Code of Conduct. Any violation of the Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action, which may include legal action depending on the severity of the case.

Interviews with new LESSAN staff and volunteers are systematically organised to ensure that all representatives receive clear instructions on how to minimise the risk to children and what standards of behaviour and practice are required of them at all times when they come into contact with children. Every staff member and volunteer who works with children receives a training about child protection before starting the work. The training is tailored for the future field of activity, to find potential risks and how to protect the concerning children. LESSAN partners are asked to develop an internal child protection policy if they do not already have one.

II. Photographs, images and story capture

LESSAN ensures strict controls on the use of photographs, images and stories of children.

III. Risk management

LESSAN considers the risk of child abuse in the design and implementation of all projects and programmes. Measures are taken to limit the risk and ensure the protection of the child. Risks are monitored and reported.

IV. Child protection focal point

We have designated a Child Protection Focal Point to clearly communicate the roles and responsibilities of LESSAN staff and to support risk management. We also work in the field of child protection counselling, where we are a focal point for various communities on the topic of child protection and advise, among others, youth welfare offices.

V. Review of the Children's Policy

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.

VI. Child Safe Recruitment Policy

LESSAN is committed to discouraging applications from, and identifying applications from, individuals who may specifically seek to gain access to children through employment with LESSAN. During the selection process for new employees, it is clarified which positions to be filled require direct contact with children and where the corresponding risks for inappropriate

behaviour may lie. Staff members and volunteers who have regular direct contact with children require an extended certificate of good conduct from the police.

G. Procedure in case of suspicion and allegations

If there are concerns about the conduct of LESSAN staff and volunteers, partners or board members in relation to the Child Protection Policy, this will be investigated in accordance with the law of the country in which they work and/or by LESSAN. Violations of this policy will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, service changes or termination of employment.

A suspected child welfare risk may be reported to info@lessan.eu. If a SAR (suspicious activity report) reaches another staff member or volunteer, they must immediately forward the SAR to the Child Protection Confidant.

All reports and the information contained therein are treated as strictly confidential in order to protect the identities of the persons concerned.

The child protection confidant decides on the necessary steps and may also seek advice from external specialised agencies. If the initial suspicion proves to be justified, an investigation committee is to be set up. The investigation committee usually consists of the child protection confidant, the chairperson of the board, if possible, an external expert and, if necessary, additional persons.

This policy was revised in July 2024 and is approved by:

Place and date: Hamburg, 22.07.2024



Dr. Gwladys Awo

Board Director LESSAN e.V.