

MASHAL



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT

Mashal is committed to promoting dignity, safety, and respect for every person associated with our work. As an organization serving vulnerable communities, especially children, women, and marginalized groups, we recognize our responsibility to ensure that all our programmes and activities are conducted in a safe and protective environment.

This Safeguarding Policy provides clear guidance to prevent abuse, exploitation, and misconduct, and to ensure that any concerns are reported and addressed promptly and responsibly. It reflects Mashal's commitment to ethical conduct, accountability, and the protection of those we serve.

I encourage all staff, volunteers, partners, and associates of Mashal to understand and follow this policy in both letter and spirit. Together, we must uphold these standards and ensure that Mashal remains a safe and trusted organization for everyone.



Sister Mary Alice,
President
Mashal, Patna

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INTRODUCTION

Mashal, is steadfast in its commitment to upholding the safety, dignity, and well-being of all individuals associated with our organization. As an organization dedicated to creating positive and lasting impact in the communities we serve, we recognize the immense responsibility we bear in protecting the vulnerable populations with whom we work.

Our Safeguarding Policy embodies the core principles and values that guide our actions and interactions with project participants, community members, staff, volunteers, partners, and suppliers. This policy sets forth clear expectations regarding the prevention of all forms of abuse, exploitation, harassment, and misconduct, including sexual misconduct and human trafficking.

Through the implementation of this policy, we aim to create an environment that is free from harm, where everyone is treated with respect, empathy, and compassion. Our priority is to foster an inclusive and supportive atmosphere, ensuring that the rights and dignity of every individual are upheld, and any concerns or suspicions of misconduct are addressed promptly and appropriately.

This Background Introduction serves as a declaration of our unwavering commitment to safeguarding and reflects our determination to embed safeguarding principles at the core of all our endeavors. By adhering to this policy and working collectively, we pledge to continue fostering a secure and nurturing space where all individuals can thrive and reach their full potential.

Together, we stand committed to making a positive difference in the lives of those we serve, upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct and safeguarding in all aspects of our work at Forum for Social Initiatives.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish a comprehensive and unequivocal standard that outlines the moral and legal obligations of all individuals within the scope of this policy. The primary objective is to foster an environment that promotes respect and dignity for all individuals. This policy is committed to preventing and eradicating all forms of harassment, abuse, and exploitation, with particular emphasis on eliminating sexual misconduct and human trafficking.

Scope:

1. The MASHAL Safeguarding Policy applies to all MASHAL staff, including *MASHAL* board members, and “affiliates”, which includes interns and volunteers.
2. The MASHAL Safeguarding Policy applies to all its partners, service providers and suppliers.
3. The MASHAL Safeguarding Policy universally applies and is binding irrespective of geographical location, contractual status, administrative independence of subsidiary entities, or local context.

4. This policy extends its application to cover the conduct and activities of MASHAL staff and affiliates both within the workplace setting, beyond work-related engagements, and even during periods of leave.

Policy Statement

5. MASHAL firmly upholds its commitment to establishing and sustaining an inclusive environment that adheres to our core values. This extends to all aspects of our operations, encompassing not only our workplace but also our projects and the communities we engage with. Our unwavering dedication is to ensure the prevention of harassment, abuse, and exploitation in all interactions with individuals within and outside the organization.
6. This policy explicitly prohibits all forms of harassment, exploitation, discrimination, victimization, and abuse, including instances of sexual misconduct and trafficking. The scope of this prohibition extends to various scenarios, such as workplace-related situations where MASHAL staff or affiliates engage in inappropriate behavior towards other members of the organization, visitors, partners, suppliers, or service providers. Likewise, it encompasses instances where partner, supplier, or service provider staff direct such conduct towards MASHAL staff or affiliates. Furthermore, this policy firmly prohibits exploitation and abuse, including sexual abuse, trafficking as defined below, particularly when involving MASHAL staff and affiliates against individuals, especially children, vulnerable persons, and participants of MASHAL programs. The prevention and eradication of such harmful conduct are fundamental to MASHAL's commitment to fostering a safe and respectful environment for all those with whom we interact.
7. MASHAL acknowledges its paramount responsibility to safeguard vulnerable adults and children from harm in all aspects of our operations. This commitment extends not only to our dedicated staff but also to our projects, partners, collaborators, and the communities we serve, both in the field areas and office settings. Irrespective of the time and location, MASHAL remains resolute in upholding our safeguarding principles. Moreover, MASHAL proactively endeavors to prevent and respond robustly to any form of sexual abuse, harassment, exploitation, or any other harmful behaviour committed by any organization personnel, project staff, volunteers, or representatives towards anyone who comes into contact with our work interventions or benefits from our initiatives. We are firmly dedicated to fostering an environment where respect, dignity, and protection are at the core of all our interactions, ensuring the safety and well-being of all those we engage with.

Prohibited Conduct

For MASHAL, the well-being and safety of vulnerable adults and children are of paramount importance. We are fully committed to ensuring a protective environment in all facets of our operations, encompassing our staff, projects, partners, and the communities we serve. This commitment extends unconditionally, irrespective of the time or location. As part of our dedicated efforts, we actively strive to prevent and respond resolutely to any form of harmful behavior or misconduct. This section outlines the specific conduct that is strictly prohibited within our organization, outlining our steadfast principles of respect and protection for everyone involved in our work.

8. **Harassment;** General harassment is unwanted, unwelcomed and uninvited behavior that demeans, threatens or offends and results in a hostile environment. Harassment is typically targeted at an individual, or a particular group of individuals. This includes, but is not limited to, harassment based on ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry, disability, medical condition, marital status, or veteran status.

9. General harassment is not sexual in nature and may consist of verbal or physical conduct that insults or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual or group of individuals. Some examples of conduct that may constitute harassment (but not limited to) are: (a) the use of derogatory statements, or abusive words or phrases, jokes, unwelcome pranks, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threatening, spreading rumors, and other intimidating or hostile acts (b) written or graphic material that insults, stereotypes or shows aversion or hostility towards an individual or group and that is placed on walls, bulletin boards, email, voicemail, or elsewhere on the organization's premises, or circulated in the workplace; and (c) a display of symbols, slogans, or items that are associated with hate or intolerance towards any select group.¹
10. **Bullying;** At MASHAL, we unequivocally prohibit bullying, which is defined as the persistent and repeated mistreatment of one or more targeted individuals by one or more perpetrators. This behavior encompasses a range of harmful actions, including but not limited to threats, intimidation, public humiliation, name-calling, continuous and unwelcome teasing, abuse of power to undermine or denigrate, intentional work interference, sabotage, or stalking. We are committed to fostering an environment free from bullying, ensuring the safety and well-being of all individuals within our organization.

Sexual misconduct

11. Sexual misconduct can cross age and gender boundaries and may include unwelcome sexual advances; request for sexual favor; verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature; or any other behavior of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected/perceived to cause offense or humiliation to another and when such conduct interferes with work; is made a condition of employment; or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.² Sexual misconduct can be verbal, physical or visual. It includes actions directed at an individual or actions observed by an individual.
- a. **Verbal Sexual Misconduct:** This includes making unwelcome sexual advances or requests of a sexual nature towards another person. If such requests come from a supervisor or superior, they may be used to impose conditions of employment or compensation, either explicitly or implicitly, linking job-related decisions to the acceptance or rejection of such conduct. In the case of requests from MASHAL staff to partner or supplier staff, they may imply a condition of continued cooperation or commercial association.
 - b. **Physical Sexual Misconduct:** This involves any form of unwanted or inappropriate leering, touching, or unwelcome sexual advances. Stalking behaviors may also be associated with sexual misconduct.
 - c. **Visual Sexual Misconduct:** Visual sexual misconduct includes sharing or posting images that create an offensive, hostile, or intimidating environment, thereby affecting an individual's job performance. Examples of this conduct encompass displays of sexually explicit or demeaning materials such as offensive pictures, cartoons, symbols, or items in the workplace.

Exploitation

¹ Adapted from *US Equal Opportunity Commission*.
<https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/harassment.cfm>

² United Nations. *Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, Second Edition, 24 July 2017.

12. Exploitation is the use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or position of vulnerability; or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person.³

Forms of exploitation:

13. **Sexual Exploitation** is any actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.⁴

14. **Child Labor** is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to a child's physical or mental development. It is work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children
- interferes with their schooling by:
 - a. depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
 - b. obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
 - c. requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

MASHAL staff and affiliates are prohibited from hiring children under the age of 15—regardless of any perceived benefit to the child or family—and prohibited from funding programs in which child labor, as defined above, is occurring. Hazardous work⁵ is prohibited for all children, including children aged 15-17 years. This includes construction and manufacturing work.

Abuse

15. Abuse is an intentional and harmful act of ill treatment that poses a significant threat to a person's safety, well-being, dignity, and personal development. It commonly occurs within relationships where the perpetrator holds a position of responsibility and care towards the victim. Such relationships may involve project staff, parents, guardians, teachers, community workers, health-care providers, religious leaders, friends, or even other children.

MASHAL, is unequivocally committed to preventing and addressing all forms of abuse. Our focus is on safeguarding the safety and welfare of all individuals, especially vulnerable adults and children. We strive to foster an environment of trust and care, free from any acts of abuse within our organization and the communities we serve.

Forms of abuse⁶:

16. **Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse involves either the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, often occurring through force or under coercive and unequal circumstances.
17. **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse constitutes the non-accidental use of physical force, resulting in the risk of or actual injury or suffering. Such force encompasses actions like hitting, shaking, kicking, pinching, pushing/pulling, grabbing, burning, torture, and other physical acts.
18. **Emotional Abuse:** Emotional abuse inflicts harm through persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection, including degrading punishments, threats, bullying, and the absence of

³ United Nations. *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, 2004.*

⁴ United Nations. *Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Second Edition, 24 July 2017.*

⁵ Hazardous work is work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

⁶ Adapted from United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (24 July 2017) and Keeping Children Safe (www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk).

care and affection. Such mistreatment can lead to adverse effects on an individual's behaviour and emotional state or a child or young person's behaviour and development.

19. Neglect/Negligent Treatment: Neglect involves the failure, whether deliberate or through negligence, to meet the basic physical and/or psychological needs of a child or individual under the responsibility of a caregiver or guardian. This includes, but is not limited to, inadequate provision of food, clothing, shelter, prevention of harm, supervision, access to appropriate medical care, and ensuring a safe physical environment.

At MASHAL, we maintain a zero-tolerance stance against any form of abuse or neglect. Our commitment is to protect the safety, well-being, and dignity of all individuals, ensuring a secure and nurturing environment within our organization and the communities we serve.

Trafficking

20. Trafficking in Persons: Trafficking in persons is a grave form of exploitation. It involves the recruitment, transportation, or receipt of individuals through deceit, coercion, threats, or force for the purpose of exploitation, such as labour, prostitution, or sexual exploitation.

21. Special Focus on Women and Children: Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of women and children to trafficking, MASHAL places a particular emphasis on combating anti-trafficking efforts in this regard. The organization is acutely aware of the heinous cruelty and perversity to which trafficked women and children are disproportionately subjected.

22. Types of Prohibited Exploitative Conduct: In alignment with the aforementioned elements, the following forms of exploitative conduct are strictly prohibited, as they are commonly associated with human trafficking schemes:

- Forced prostitution and child pornography
- Forced marriages
- Illicit organ trade
- Narcotics smuggling
- Forced begging or labour

23. Prohibited Employment Practices Related to Trafficking:

a. MASHAL staff are strictly forbidden from engaging in practices that contribute to trafficking, including the destruction, concealment, confiscation, or denial of access to an employee's identity.

b. Misleading or fraudulent recruitment practices are prohibited, such as withholding key terms and conditions of employment or charging recruitment fees to employees.

c. Staff must ensure compliance with legal requirements by providing valid employment contracts or work documents where mandated by law.

24. Prohibited Procurement of Goods/Services Linked to Trafficked or Forced Labor:

MASHAL staff are also prohibited from knowingly obtaining any work-related goods or services that have been provided or produced through trafficked or forced labor. The organization takes a strong stance against supporting such exploitative practices and is committed to ensuring that its procurement practices align with ethical standards.

At MASHAL, we uphold stringent measures to combat trafficking and forced labor in all aspects of our operations. Our commitment to ethical employment practices and responsible procurement underscores our dedication to promoting human rights and dignity for all.

Regenerate response

Sexual Activity

25. Prohibited Sexual Conduct: Sexual Abuse of Children; At MASHAL, all sexual activity involving a child, defined as an individual under the age of 18, is unequivocally considered sexual abuse and strictly prohibited, regardless of local age of majority or consent laws. Mistaken belief in the child's age is not a defence in such cases.

26. Prevention of Sexual Exploitation

To prevent sexual exploitation, MASHAL strictly prohibits staff, board members, affiliates, and visitors from engaging in the act of buying sex (prostitution) by offering money, gifts, or any material support to individuals selling sex, irrespective of their age or affiliation.

27. Prohibition of Sexual Relations between Staff/Affiliates and Program Participants

Any sexual relations between MASHAL staff/affiliates and program participants, regardless of their age, are strictly prohibited and will result in termination. The exception is a consensual relationship between a staff member and a program participant, wherein the employee must fully disclose the relationship to their supervisor, or senior management at the outset of employment or the relationship.

28. Ensuring Non-Exploitative Relationships with Program Participants

All MASHAL staff must ensure that their relationships with program participants or potential participants do not involve any form of exploitation or abuse.

29. Prohibition of Offensive and Pornographic Material

Accessing, displaying, or transmitting offensive and/or pornographic material on any MASHAL provided or subsidized electronic device (e.g., computer, tablet, phone, etc.) at any time, or on any personal electronic device on an MASHAL network in the workplace is strictly prohibited.

At MASHAL, we maintain a steadfast commitment to safeguarding the well-being and dignity of all individuals, particularly vulnerable populations such as children and program participants. These stringent policies are in place to ensure a safe and respectful environment for everyone within our organization.

Child safeguarding

30. At MASHAL, the safety and protection of child project participants are of paramount importance. To ensure their well-being, all staff must adhere to the following guidelines when interacting with children:

- 1. Avoiding Excessive Alone Time:** Staff members are prohibited from spending excessive or unnecessary time alone with a child. It is essential to maintain professional boundaries and ensure that interactions occur within appropriate settings.
- 2. Maintaining Professional Boundaries:** Staff should refrain from encouraging children to engage in activities unrelated to official duties, including the following:
 - Encouraging a child to meet outside of work-related activities.

- Befriending or sending private messages to a child via email, WhatsApp, Facebook, or any other social media platform.

These guidelines are in place to protect the well-being and security of child participants and to maintain a professional and respectful environment in all interactions. MASHAL remains steadfast in its commitment to providing a safe and nurturing space for children involved in our projects.

Sub-recipients, Suppliers and Service Providers

To ensure a consistent and robust approach to safeguarding, MASHAL implements the following measures in all agreements with sub-recipients, suppliers, and service providers:

31. Sub-Recipient Agreements:

The MASHAL Safeguarding Policy must be included as an addendum to all agreements with sub-recipients. Furthermore, a provision in their agreement must require the adoption or adherence to a policy that ensures a similar level of protection.

Sub-recipient agreements should incorporate a safeguarding clause mandating the reporting of any allegations related to trafficking of persons, abuse, or exploitation involving programming or staff funded by MASHAL. This ensures prompt reporting and swift action in response to any such incidents.

32. Supplier and Service Provider Code of Conduct:

MASHAL requires all suppliers and service providers to sign the MASHAL Supplier and Service Provider Code of Conduct. This code includes specific terms and conditions related to safeguarding. By signing this agreement, suppliers and service providers commit to adhering to these safeguarding provisions, ensuring a safe and secure environment for all individuals involved in MASHAL projects and operations.

These measures are in place to safeguard the well-being and dignity of all individuals associated with MASHAL and to reinforce our commitment to promoting a secure and respectful atmosphere in all aspects of our work.

Reporting

Reporting and Communication on Safeguarding Concerns

33. All MASHAL staff, board members, and affiliates have a mandatory obligation to promptly report any concerns or suspicions regarding harassment, abuse, and exploitation described above, involving any individual associated with MASHAL, including staff, board members, affiliates, partners, program participants, suppliers, service providers, or aid workers from other organizations. Concerns may arise from witnessing an incident, being informed of it, or being the subject of it.

34. Required reporters should report all concerns through any of the following channels:

- The Secretary cum Director of MASHAL - Contact No.: 6001227831
- Safeguarding designated staff - Contact No.: 9775887779

35. Reports of alleged safeguarding violations should include as much information as is readily available, such as:

- Date, time, and location of the incident
- Nature of what happened
- Any immediate help or actions required

36. Intentional false or malicious reporting may lead to disciplinary action.

37. MASHAL is committed to ensuring that program participants and members of the communities in which they reside are well-informed about acceptable staff behaviour and how they can confidentially and securely raise their concerns or questions. Communication will be systematically integrated throughout project planning, and community-based feedback, complaints, and response mechanisms will be made available.

At MASHAL, we prioritize transparency, accountability, and the safety of all individuals involved in our projects. By fostering open channels of communication, we aim to address any safeguarding concerns effectively and ensure a secure environment for everyone associated with MASHAL.

Confidentiality

38. MASHAL acknowledges and deeply respects the courage and trust associated with reporting allegations of misconduct. We understand the significance of maintaining confidentiality in such sensitive matters, as it can be crucial for the safety, security, reputation, and overall well-being of all parties involved, including survivors/victims, reporters, witnesses, and subjects of complaints.

39. It is essential for all reporters to be aware that, despite our commitment to confidentiality, MASHAL may be legally obligated to follow up on certain allegations. This includes situations where reporting to donors or relevant authorities is necessary, especially in cases involving potential criminal offenses. Therefore, strict confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed due to our moral and legal obligations to report and conduct thorough investigations.

40. In cases where there is a legitimate belief that an investigation could endanger the reporter, survivor, witnesses, or any other individual, MASHAL will take reasonable and necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of those perceived to be at risk. Our priority remains to create a supportive and protective environment for all those involved in safeguarding matters.

Support to Survivors and Safety/Security

41. MASHAL is committed to providing immediate and appropriate support to safeguarding survivors. This support may encompass a range of services, including specialized psychosocial counselling, referrals to medical or legal assistance, addressing security concerns, and facilitating access to other necessary support, as deemed suitable and required for each survivor's unique situation. Our primary goal is to ensure the well-being and recovery of survivors, offering compassionate and tailored support during their healing journey

Investigation of Safeguarding Reports

42. It is imperative that under no circumstances should any MASHAL staff independently assess or investigate an allegation or reported incident outside of the standard reporting protocols.
43. MASHAL is dedicated to following up and thoroughly investigating all safeguarding reports in adherence to its established investigation procedure, as well as in compliance with legal and statutory obligations. (See Annexure 1 for details on the investigation procedure). Our commitment to ensuring a fair and rigorous investigation process underscores our unwavering commitment to safeguarding the well-being and rights of all individuals involved in our organization.

Non-Retaliation

44. MASHAL strictly prohibits any form of retaliation, whether in the form of adverse employment action or harassment, against individuals who report allegations in good faith or participate in an investigation. Retaliatory actions will not be tolerated, and any instances of retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. We are fully committed to fostering a safe and supportive environment where individuals feel secure in reporting concerns without fear of reprisal.

Adherence:

45. Failure to adhere to the provisions stated above may lead to a range of actions and consequences. For staff, these consequences could include (but are not limited to) verbal warnings, written warnings, mandatory training or counselling, suspension, and/or termination of employment. In cases involving serious misconduct, such as sexual abuse and exploitation, or persistent and severe forms of harassment, immediate termination of employment will be enforced in accordance with the local labour law.
46. MASHAL strictly prohibits knowingly facilitating or aiding another aid worker in performing acts of exploitation or abuse. Such actions will be addressed with the same gravity as if they were undertaken directly by MASHAL staff. We are resolute in our commitment to holding all individuals associated with MASHAL accountable for maintaining the highest standards of conduct and safeguarding, ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all.

Interpretation and Questions:

Questions on the interpretation of this policy—and any other questions—can be directed to the Director of MASHAL and Safeguarding Designated Staff.

Related Policies and Resources (insert other safeguarding relevant documents) e.g.:

- *Code of Conduct and Ethics; Annexure-1*
- *Investigation procedure; Annexure 11*
- *MASHAL Whistleblower Policy*

Key Words:

Safeguarding, conduct, harassment, bullying, sexual harassment, abuse, exploitation, child labor, trafficking, survivor, confidentiality, investigation, retaliation.

Glossary

Affiliate: This category encompasses any individual working in service to MASHAL over a period of time, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity. This includes university interns, volunteers, and others with similar relationships to MASHAL.

Child: Refers to any individual below the age of 18 years.

Partner: Any entity formally engaged by MASHAL under a grant, contract, cash contribution, or memorandum of understanding to implement programmatic deliverables with the aim of improving outcomes for vulnerable populations.

Service Provider: An entity that provides services in exchange for payment. This term is commonly used for specific categories of businesses, such as consulting, legal advice, and telecommunications.

Stalking: Unwanted and/or repeated surveillance by an individual or group directed towards another person. Stalking behaviors are closely related to harassment, bullying, and intimidation and may include activities such as following or closely monitoring the victim.

Supplier: An entity that provides goods or services to another business or directly to the customer.

Survivor: A person who has experienced or been exposed to a safeguarding concern. The term "survivor" is generally preferred in the psychosocial support sector as it implies resilience, in contrast to the term "victim."

Survivor-Centered Care: Care that is responsive to the needs and preferences of the survivor, with a focus on protecting them from stigma, discrimination, retaliation, or any other harmful consequences. This approach aims to empower survivors and prioritize their well-being throughout the support process.

Annexure: 1

Standard 1; Prevention

Code of Conduct

Purpose

Protecting the well-being of project participants and community members from abuse and exploitation is a fundamental commitment in all facets of our work. This Code of Conduct serves the purpose of establishing clear expectations regarding our ethical obligation to treat all individuals with respect and actively prevent any forms of abuse and exploitation, including sexual misconduct and human trafficking.

Scope

This Code of Conduct is specifically devised to safeguard the communities we serve, ensuring that every individual working and interacting with project participants comprehends the prohibited behaviors outlined herein. It further emphasizes the duty to report any concerns or suspicions related to such prohibited conduct committed by others. This Code applies to the conduct of both staff and volunteers, encompassing their actions during work hours, outside of work, and while on leave. Our unwavering dedication to this Code fosters a secure and respectful environment for everyone involved in our projects.

Prohibited Behaviour

While working on projects implemented by Mashal, you are strictly prohibited from engaging in the following behaviors:

- **Any form of sexual misconduct, abuse, or exploitation of project participants, including:**
 - Touching anyone in a sexual or inappropriate manner
 - Making inappropriate or sexualized comments
 - Taking or sharing pornographic pictures
 - Improperly using your position and power as a staff member in a relationship with people who need assistance
- **Exchanging money, employment, goods, or services for sex**, including sexual favors. This includes:
 - Purchasing sex
 - Offering assistance in exchange for sexual favors from project participants
- Engaging in **trafficking of persons**, which includes withholding identity documents of domestic workers or daily laborers.
- Causing **emotional harm** to project participants through threats, humiliation, or discrimination.
- Using corporal punishment or causing any other **physical harm** to project participants.
- **Meeting or interacting with project participants** that you met through MASHAL projects outside of work-related activities. This includes interaction via email, text messages, WhatsApp, Facebook, or any other social media platform.
- **Failing to provide adequate care or supervision** and/or failing to provide a safe environment for project participants under your responsibility.
- **Engaging in sexual relations with a child** (anyone under 18 years of age), regardless of the local age of consent. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.
- **Employing children under 15 years of age** for any type of full-time work.
- **Employing children under 18 years of age** in mentally or physically dangerous employment or employment that interferes with compulsory schooling.

- **Spending excessive or unnecessary time alone** with a child project participant or a child of an adult project participant.

Mandatory Reporting

- **You are obligated to *immediately* report concerns or suspicions that someone working on a MASHAL project is engaging in any of the prohibited behaviors described above.** These concerns or suspicions may be a result of witnessing the incident, being told about such prohibited behavior, or being the subject of it.
- This means that when you report:
 - **You do not have to** know if your concerns or suspicions are true or have all the facts.
 - **You do not need to** have understood everything you have seen, heard or suspected.
 - **You do not need to** identify a witness or provide evidence to support your concerns.

You can report concerns through any of the following channels:

- mshalpatna@gmail.com: Main reporting channels of MASHAL
- Mob.no. 6001227831: Director of MASHAL (Sr.Deepika)
- Ethics Point: <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/>

Declaration

- I have read, understood and agree to comply with the above Safeguarding Project Code of Conduct.
- I also understand that a breach of this Code of Conduct or failure to report concerns of abuse and exploitation may lead to disciplinary action—including termination of my contract or suspension of the contract between MASHAL and

Name: _____

Date _____

Signature: _____

Standard 2

Annexure 2:

Safeguarding clause in contracts with vendors, suppliers, sub-recipients

Clause

The supplier/service providers agree to comply with Forum for Social Initiatives' (MASHAL) Supplier and Service Provider Code of Conduct set forth in Annex 11.

Supplier and Service Provider Code of Conduct

As a supplier/service provider of MASHAL, Patna, Bihar,..... [Name of Supplier/Service Provider], we commit to the following safeguarding standards:

- **Prohibit all forms of exploitation and abuse:** We strictly prohibit any form of exploitation, abuse, or misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking in persons, involuntary labor, and child labor. Our commitment extends to fostering an environment where the rights and dignity of all individuals are upheld, free from any harm or exploitation.
- **Employment of Children:** We will not recruit or employ children under 15 years of age for any type of work. Additionally, we will not employ children under 18 years of age for work that is mentally or physically dangerous or interferes with their schooling. We prioritize the protection and well-being of young individuals, ensuring their safety and access to education.
- **Preventing and Addressing Exploitation and Abuse:** We will implement robust systems to actively prevent, address, and respond to any incidents of exploitation and abuse. Our procedures will prioritize the safety and protection of individuals, and any concerns or suspicions will be addressed promptly and appropriately.
- **Reporting Mechanism:** We will establish accessible and confidential reporting options for employees and other stakeholders to report any concerns or suspicions of exploitation and abuse. Whistleblowers or reporters will be protected from any form of retaliation for coming forward with information.

Additional Safeguarding and Non-Safeguarding Expectations:

- **Respectful Conduct:** We will treat all individuals involved in MASHAL projects, including project participants, staff, and community members, with respect, fairness, and dignity. We will refrain from engaging in any form of discriminatory behavior or actions that may cause harm or offense.
- **Transparent and Ethical Practices:** We will conduct our business with integrity and adhere to transparent and ethical practices in all interactions with MASHAL and its stakeholders. We will not engage in corrupt practices, bribery, or any other unethical behavior that may compromise the values of MASHAL.
- **Compliance with Laws and Regulations:** We will fully comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and legal obligations related to our activities and services provided to MASHAL. This includes compliance with labor laws, environmental regulations, and any other relevant statutes.

MASHAL reserves the right to conduct due diligence audits or assessments to monitor compliance with this Code of Conduct. In case of identified concerns, MASHAL will take reasonable steps to investigate or take appropriate action to address the issues.

In the event of becoming aware of any suspected cases of exploitation or abuse related to the implementation of this agreement, [Name of Supplier/Service Provider], MASHAL, Patna, Bihar, requires immediate reporting through any of the following channels:

- The Director of MASHAL, Patna, Bihar
- Email: mashalpatna@gmail.com
- Mobile: 6001227831

MASHAL, Patna, Bihar, reserves the right to terminate any relationship with..... [Name of Supplier/Service Provider] for non-adherence to the above-mentioned safeguarding and non-safeguarding requirements.

By signing this Code of Conduct, we affirm our commitment to uphold these standards, ensuring the well-being and protection of all individuals involved in our work with Mashal.

Signature

[Name of Supplier/Service Provider]

Annexure 3:

Safeguarding Clause for Subrecipients

Definition of Subrecipient: For the purposes of this Safeguarding Clause, "Subrecipient" refers to any entity formally engaged by Mashal under a grant, contract, cash contribution, or memorandum of understanding to implement programmatic deliverables for the purposes of improving outcomes for vulnerable populations. This may include implementing partners, local organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), or other entities involved in MASHAL-funded programs.

APPLICATION OF SAFEGUARDING CLAUSE

This Safeguarding Clause applies to all Subrecipients engaged by MASHAL to implement programmatic activities. By entering into an agreement or partnership with MASHAL, the Subrecipient agrees to comply with the following safeguarding expectations:

- 1. Prohibition of Exploitation and Abuse:** The Subrecipient must prohibit all forms of exploitation and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking of persons, involuntary labor, and child labor, within the scope of their activities funded by MASHAL.
- 2. Adoption and Compliance with MASHAL's Safeguarding Policy:** The Subrecipient must adopt and fully comply with Forum for Social Initiatives' (MASHAL) Safeguarding Policy, including any additional safeguarding standards required by specific donor agreements.
- 3. Immediate Reporting of Allegations:** The Subrecipient must immediately report to MASHAL any credible allegations involving abuse and/or exploitation that relate to programming or staff funded by MASHAL. This reporting should be made through the designated channels specified in the Safeguarding Policy:
 - The Director of MASHAL, Patna, Bihar
 - Email: mashalpatna@gmail.com
 - Mobile: 6001227831
- 4. Non-Retaliation and Protection of Whistleblowers:** The Subrecipient must ensure that no retaliation is taken against any individual reporting an allegation in good faith or participating

in an investigation. Whistleblowers or reporters must be protected from any form of retaliation for coming forward with information.

5. **Support for Safeguarding Survivors:** The Subrecipient must provide immediate and appropriate support to safeguarding survivors, including access to specialist psychosocial counselling, medical or legal referrals, and other necessary support as needed and appropriate.
6. **Safety and Security Measures:** The Subrecipient must take reasonable steps to protect the safety and security of those involved in safeguarding investigations, including reporters, survivors, witnesses, and anyone perceived to be at risk.
7. **Compliance with Laws and Regulations:** The Subrecipient must adhere to all applicable laws and regulations related to safeguarding and protection of vulnerable individuals, ensuring compliance with labor laws, child protection laws, and any other relevant statutes.
8. **Preventing Exploitation and Abuse:** The Subrecipient must implement measures to actively prevent and address exploitation and abuse within its operations and programs. This includes developing and enforcing clear policies and guidelines for staff, beneficiaries, and stakeholders.
9. **Training and Awareness:** The Subrecipient must provide comprehensive safeguarding training to all staff and stakeholders involved in MASHAL-funded programs. This training should cover awareness of safeguarding risks, identification of potential abuse, and reporting mechanisms

NON-COMPLIANCE AND TERMINATION

Failure to comply with any provisions of this Safeguarding Clause and the MASHAL Safeguarding Policy may result in the termination of the Agreement between MASHAL and the Subrecipient without penalty to MASHAL.

By accepting this annexure to the Safeguarding Policy of MASHAL, the Subrecipient acknowledges and commits to fulfilling the safeguarding expectations and responsibilities outlined herein. The Subrecipient further agrees to adhere to MASHAL's Safeguarding Policy and actively contribute to creating a safe and respectful environment for all individuals involved in MASHAL-funded programs and activities.

Signature

[Name of Supplier/Service Provider]

Annexure 4:

Reference Check Form

Name of Applicant:

Position Applied For:

Contact Name and Title:

Organisation Contacted:

<i>Could you please tell us about:</i>	
1. The nature and length of your relationship with(Name) as a team member?	
2. Mr./ Ms.'s key accomplishments and contributions to the organization?	
<i>Request you to share about her/ his</i>	
a) Strengths b) limitations and c) growth areas	
<i>Her/ His relationship with</i>	
a) Team members reporting to her/ him b) Reporting authority to whom she/ he reports c) Peers	
<i>Reasons for leaving your Organization</i>	

How would you rate(name) on below aspects on a scale on 1-5, (If you rate 3 or below please leave a remark)?

<i>Safeguarding Reference Check</i>	
1. During the period of employment, has this candidate been the subject of a substantiated misconduct (proven/confirmed) misconduct investigation concerning harassment, exploitation or abuse?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Has the candidate been the subject of disciplinary action in relation to harassment, exploitation or abuse?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
3. If YES to any of the above, please provide the nature of the misconduct and any disciplinary action taken.	
4. Can you comment on the candidate's commitment to ethical conduct and adherence to the organization's values and code of conduct?	
• Punctuality	/5
• Proactiveness	/5
• Response to the feedback	/5
• Innovative	/5
• Communication; oral and written	/5
• Dependability	/5
• Interpersonal skills	/5
Remarks:	
<i>Is there any additional information or insights you believe would be valuable for us to know about the candidate?</i>	

Annexure 5:

Self-Declaration Form

MASHAL’s Safeguarding Policy mandates that, in compliance with local laws, all selected candidates must complete a safeguarding self-declaration form before finalizing an employment contract. The form below includes essential information required to meet this standard.

Candidate Details:

Candidate Name: [Candidate Name]

Position: [Position]

1. **Prior Misconduct Inquiry:** Have you ever been the subject of a substantiated misconduct investigation concerning harassment, exploitation, or abuse?

No Yes If yes, please provide details:

2. **Confirmation and Consent:** By proceeding with this application, I affirm that the provided information is accurate. If my employment offer is confirmed, I commit to promptly informing MASHAL of any changes to the information provided on this form.

3. By continuing with this application, I grant MASHAL consent to verify with my previous employers the accuracy of the information provided regarding previous substantiated misconduct.

4. **Understanding of Consequences:** I understand that any misrepresentation or willful omission of facts on this form, regardless of when discovered, may result in dismissal.

Declaration: I confirm that the information provided in this form is true.

Candidate's Signature: _____ Date: _____

[Note: Please ensure that the candidate reads and understands each section before signing and dating the form.]

Name and Signature:

Date:

Standard 4

Annexure 6:

Mandatory Safeguarding Orientation for Staff

I. Introduction

This module is designed to guide MASHAL in establishing and implementing a comprehensive Mandatory Safeguarding Orientation for all team members and associated individuals. The primary objective is to ensure a clear understanding of safeguarding policies and foster a secure and respectful work environment.

II. Sub-standard

SUB-STANDARD	EXPLANATION
The organization provides a safeguarding orientation session for all staff and affiliates	<p>The organization ensures that all its staff and affiliates, encompassing board members, interns, and volunteers, undergo a compulsory safeguarding orientation. This session can either be conducted online or in-person. The mandatory orientation covers key aspects, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly outlining the policies in place, specifying who they apply to and when they are applicable. • Addressing prohibited behaviour, encompassing workplace harassment, as well as preventing abuse and exploitation of program participants and community members. • Clearly defining the obligation for staff to report any safeguarding concerns. • Providing information on the process and designated individuals to whom staff can report safeguarding concerns. • Outlining the potential disciplinary actions in cases where safeguarding misconduct is established and proven.

III. Purpose and Overview

The primary objective of providing staff with an orientation on the organization's Safeguarding Policy is to ensure a thorough comprehension of the policy among all team members. This orientation aims to furnish participants with an overview of prohibited conduct and clarify their individual responsibilities in preventing workplace harassment, abuse, and exploitation. It serves as a proactive measure by:

- Informing staff about their rights and obligations concerning safeguarding.
- Acting as a deterrent against inappropriate behavior.
- Empowering witnesses and survivors to report concerns.
- Cultivating a harassment-free work environment.

The safeguarding orientation session, at a minimum, covers:

- The purpose of relevant safeguarding policies.
- The scope of these policies, specifying who they apply to (e.g., staff, interns, volunteers) and when (both during and outside of working hours).
- Explanation of prohibited conduct within the workplace (harassment) and towards program participants and community members (abuse and exploitation).
- Reporting channels available to staff and affiliates and how they can report safeguarding concerns; and
- Potential consequences of safeguarding-related misconduct.

IV. Tool 1: Sample Outline of the Mandatory Orientation Session

KEY TOPICS	KEY CONTENT/MESSAGES TO STAFF
Introduction and Scope:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Definition of Safeguarding: Clearly define what safeguarding entails.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scope of Relevant Policies: Explain the policies in place, detailing that they apply to all staff, interns, volunteers, and board members, both during and after working hours.
Prohibited Conduct:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explanation of Prohibited Conduct: Clarify that all forms of harassment, abuse, and exploitation are strictly forbidden. ▪ Definitions and Examples: Define workplace harassment, abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual), exploitation (including trafficking and child labor), and sexual exploitation. Outline potential disciplinary measures for safeguarding-related misconduct. Incorporate case studies or quizzes for better understanding.
Vulnerability and Power Inequality:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain power imbalances, emphasizing that NGO staff and affiliates hold more power than the vulnerable communities they serve. Stress the need for mindfulness and the principle that power comes with responsibility.
Why Safeguarding is Important:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impact on Survivors: Safeguarding violations can lead to physical harm, psychological trauma, stigmatization, loss of reputation for survivors, and possible rejection by family and community. ▪ Impact on the Organization: Incidents can result in loss of trust, damaged reputation, security risks, disruptions to programming/services, and diminished staff morale leading to loss of motivation and trust in the organization
Responsibility for Safeguarding:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everyone’s Responsibility: Emphasize that safeguarding is the responsibility of all staff, who must adhere to policies and complete the Mandatory Safeguarding Orientation. ▪ Managerial Role: Highlight the critical responsibility of managers in creating a safe environment and enforcing systems to prevent harassment, exploitation, and abuse.
Mandatory Reporting:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Obligation to Report: Stress the obligation to report any suspicions or concerns regarding harassment, abuse, and exploitation involving staff, affiliates, or anyone associated with the organization. ▪ Key Messages: Encourage reporting even for rumours or suspicions, without the need for complete information. Immediate reporting is crucial.
Importance of Reporting:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key Messages: Emphasize that not reporting could lead to continued or escalated abuse, putting people at risk. Reporting allows senior management to investigate and respond.
How to Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reporting Channels: List all channels for reporting safeguarding concerns, ensuring staff are aware of available options.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key Messages: Stress the importance of confidentiality and clarify that staff should not investigate concerns, as senior management is responsible for the investigation.
Summary and Q&A:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summary: Recap key messages from the orientation. ▪ Final Quiz: Test knowledge through a final quiz. ▪ Q&A Session: Allow staff to ask any remaining questions, ensuring clarity and understanding.

Standard 5

Annexure 7

Feedback, Complaints, and Response Mechanism (FCRM) Structures

Introduction

5. MASHAL has established a Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanism (FCRM) to:

- a. improve its programme quality by contributing to timely learning and ensuring that the learning is considered in decision making
- b. to protect programme participants by responding to safeguarding allegations and reducing the risk of harm.

Therefore, MASHAL provides program participants and community members access to a reporting channel and have a process in place to handle safeguarding reports.

5.1. MASHAL has established and publicized specific channels for communities to report safeguarding concerns

5.2 MASHAL has a documented process in place for handling safeguarding reports from program participants and community members, which ensures confidentiality

5.1. MASHAL has set up its FCRM as follows:

a. MASHAL has identified and established the following channels for the community to collect feedback and complaints

- Email id: mashalpatna@gmail.com
- Phone, sms messages and Whatsapp Number of SaFE Focal Point person: 9775887779
- Phone, sms messages and Whatsapp number of MASHAL Director : 6001227831
- Postal Address:
Mashal,
20-C, Patliputra Colony, Patna, Bihar
P.O. Patliputra Colony, Dt. Patna, Bihar
- Community level meetings
- Staff monthly meetings

b. Communication about the Channels of Reporting

MASHAL will inform target communities of the following key Safeguarding messages;

- Purpose of the FCRM
- Standards of conduct for staff – expected behavior
- Assistance is FREE
- Where and how to report
- What to expect after submitting a feedback or a complaint
- Timeframes

MASHAL shall use the Communication methods given below to disseminate the information:

- Posters and flyers
- SMS, phone calls, Whatsapp messages
- Community meetings
- Door to door visits
- FGDs

C. Other Factors

MASHAL will provide budget for:

- Staff time
- The costs toward Safeguarding training or FCRM Orientation for staff will be budgeted.
- Costs associated with informing communities about the channels and Code of Conduct

5. 2. Process the feedback and complaints

5.2.1. Types of Feedback

MASHAL shall receive feedback related to its programs, regarding Safeguarding concerns and others that may not be related to the support provided by the project. Examples of the types of feedback is given below:

	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
PROGRAMMATIC	1. Request for information	Questions about current project activities, services and eligibility, or about the organization.
	2. Request for individual project support	A request by an individual for project services that have not been supplied due to a potential targeting error or larger access issue.
	3. General suggestions for service and program improvements	Feedback on relevance, quality and appropriateness of services and programming. A request to change how support is provided in current or future projects.
	4. Appreciation of services or support	Appreciation of current activities or support provided.
SENSITIVE	5. Any alleged violation of the Code of Conduct/Safeguarding Policy	An allegation of misconduct involving staff (including interns, volunteers, partners, vendors and suppliers or other aid workers); this includes safeguarding issues, harassment, abuse or exploitation, fraud or misuse of project resources and unprofessional behavior.
	6. Other protection issues	An allegation of exploitation or abuse that <i>does not</i> involve staff, partners or other aid workers, or an allegation of protection concerns affecting the communities we support.
	7. Safety and security	Information related to the safety or security of staff, offices or goods—including communities.
OTHER	8. Out-of-scope feedback	A request for support not provided by the project.

5.2.2. FCRM Flow Chart

A. Operations

✦ Receiving of feedback

Feedback will be received at any time of the project by the focal persons like the field staff or supervisors. It can be given face to face, written on papers or via sms to the phone numbers

circulated earlier. Immediate acknowledgement of the feedback will be given by the focal point persons via sms or in writing. These feedbacks will be stored in a log book or in soft copy in a computer in MASHAL Office.

✦ **Processing of Feedback**

The feedbacks collected in the data base will be documented every week by the project Coordinator and categorised into:

- programmatic feedback and complaints,
- Sensitive Complaints
- Out of Scope

✦ **Response to the feedback**

The feedback will be acknowledged, answered and appeals processed.

- Frequently asked questions will be answered regularly by the field staff.
- Requests for individual assistance will be taken up during the staff meetings or community level meetings
- Suggestions, dissatisfaction and appreciation will be considered during the quarterly meeting of the project management team
- Sensitive complaints will be referred to the MASHAL Head Office Safeguarding Focal Point for confidential follow-up according to the Safeguarding Policy
- Feedbacks that fall in the category of 'Out of Scope' will be dealt by the project Coordinators and referred to concerned stakeholders.

✦ **Utilization of Feedback**

- MASHAL will analyze, summarize and communicate the feedback during the regular review meetings and response will be given to the community.

B. Dealing with Safeguarding complaint received via the FCRM

- Staff responsible for the intake of all feedback and complaints will take steps to ensure the immediate safety of the survivor as necessary
- He/She shall not investigate
- Keep all information confidential and not talk to others about it
- Document the safeguarding complaint
- Escalate to the Director and SaFE Focal Point person in MASHAL within 24 hours.
- Director and SaFE Focal Point person in MASHAL determine if the allegation is plausible,
- Assess immediate risks to all affected parties
- Ensure referrals to medical, legal and psychosocial services for affected parties as necessary
- Report to local authorities as necessary
- Refer to the Internal Complaint Committee at the earliest

(In cases where the director or SaFE Focal Point Person may be implicated in the complaint, reports can also be made directly to the board/a board member or to President of Mashal, Patna)

5.2.3. Response to Feedback and Complaints

A. MASHAL will orient its Responders on certain Do's and Don'ts as follows:

Do's

- Do clearly explain to the community members what happens with the feedback that is collected
- Do ask for consent to that the person's details (People don't have to give personal details such as names. If they prefer to remain anonymous, they need to be informed that this means we cannot get back in touch with them directly).
- Do listen carefully to what the person has to say
- Do empathize with the person
- Do document the feedback thoroughly (think of the questions: What happened? Who was involved? Where and when did it happen?)
- Do repeat the feedback back to the person to ensure you understand the situation.

Don'ts

- Don't become defensive
- Don't push people to give you details they don't want to share
- Don't argue with the person
- Don't be dismissive
- Don't blame others
- Don't make assumptions without knowing the facts.
- Don't make promises you can't keep.
- Don't ignore the problem.

B. Managing FCRM data for Response

Apply good practices for data management and data protection to FCRM Data

FCRMs are designed to ensure confidentiality, a timely response and attention to urgent matters. To achieve these goals, the data management, documentation and information-sharing processes need to be regularly assessed to identify and resolve challenges with responsible data management, gaps in internal information sharing between teams and delays in response caused by inefficiencies in FCRM data storage and reporting.

FCRM Data Management practices:

- Password protect or encrypt FCRM management systems and all associated files
- Document the names, contact information (email) and role of MASHAL staff who will have access to feedback and sensitive complaints. DO quarterly, biannual or annual reviews of the list of staff who have access to these systems. Remove access for staff who have changed roles or are no longer involved in the project or CP FCRM
- Avoid emailing FCRM Data files
- Store hard copies (Logbooks, Feedback Forms) in locked filing cabinets with clear protocols for access and destruction
- Destroy hardcopy files once digitally documented in the electronic data management system
- Determine the length of storage and steps for de-identification and archiving of the FCRM data after project close-out by considering donor and agency requirements.

5.2.4. Close the Loop and Repeat

More on FCRM Data

Regularly analyze FCRM data to provide timely and user-friendly feedback and complaints trend reports for review, decision-making and action.

FCRM data is a relevant and valuable addition to the range of information used for program-level and strategy-level decisions and adaptive management. Regular analysis of FCRM data and presentation of the trends in complaints and feedback is important to supporting FCRM data use in adaptive management and the responsiveness of program teams. FCRM data should be made available to program Coordinators and decision-makers in accessible formats, such as data summaries, visuals and dashboards.

Tips for FCRM data analysis:

- Regularly analyze FCRM quantitative and qualitative data to identify larger trends and how those change by month or by quarter.
- Summarize the key points in feedback received, noting the key characteristics of Individuals sharing feedback, such sex, age, disability and geographic area.
- Remember that individual perspectives are as important as larger trends in informing data use.
- Triangulate perspectives within feedback received and against monitoring results as part of FCRM data interpretation.
- Analyze FCRM data by each channel (active and static), sex, age and other key characteristics, FCRM category and geographic area.
- Check the satisfaction levels with the FCRM, and determine whether and why these may vary by community group.
- Track the response rate to feedback and complaints, calculating the percentage of responses that meet the project's commitment for response time, and the average response time for each category and channel.
- Explore new comparisons and trends as initial ideas and findings emerge during preliminary analysis.
- Identify any errors in the completion of the FCRM registry or concerns of FCRM data quality and data protection.

Safeguarding Policy – Standard Operating Procedure (SoP)

1. Introduction

MASHAL is committed to upholding the dignity, safety, and rights of every individual it engages with. A key part of this commitment is the establishment of an effective **Feedback and Complaint Response Mechanism (FCRM)**, which allows internal staff and community members to raise concerns — particularly safeguarding-related — in a confidential, respectful, and timely manner.

This SoP outlines the process for receiving, documenting, and responding to safeguarding complaints in line with **Standard 5 of the Safeguarding Policy Principles**.

Guiding Principles:

- ❖ Foster a culture of respect and accountability
- ❖ Prioritize the well-being and dignity of all individuals
- ❖ Actively oppose abuse, exploitation, and harassment
- ❖ Ensure non-retaliation and protection for complainants
- ❖ Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
- ❖ Appoint accountable Safeguarding Focal Points at all levels

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All MASHAL employees, board members, volunteers
- Project partners, contractors, and consultants
- Community-based organizations and diocesan collaborators

The SoP covers feedback types including:

- Non-sensitive suggestions or requests
- Sensitive safeguarding reports involving misconduct, abuse, harassment, or exploitation
- Ethical concerns related to power misuse, manipulation, or coercion

Confidentiality is mandatory. All persons handling complaints must be trained in data privacy and non-disclosure.

3. Internal Reporting Responsibilities

All staff, board members, and affiliates must report concerns if they:

- Witness an incident
- Are informed of an incident
- Are themselves victims

Reporting Channels for Staff and Affiliates:

1. **Email:** iccmashal@gmail.com
2. **Phone:** +91-6001227831

3. **Direct Reporting:** Safeguarding Focal Point Person (SFPP) or Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) Member

4. Community Reporting Channels

To ensure accessibility and inclusion, MASHAL provides multiple ways for community members to report safeguarding issues:

Community Reporting Options:

1. **Email:** iccmashal@gmail.com
2. **Phone:** +91-6001227831
3. **One-on-One Reporting:** Safeguarding Focal Point Person (SFPP) or Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) Member

MASHAL ensures accessibility irrespective of literacy, gender, language, or disability through:

- Display of safeguarding posters in community areas
- Community orientation on how and what to report
- Embedded safeguarding education within ongoing programs

5. Publicizing the Mechanism

To ensure transparency and accessibility, MASHAL adopts a multi-layered communication strategy for raising awareness about safeguarding policies and reporting mechanisms among all stakeholders. The approach includes both internal and external communication methods designed to foster a culture of vigilance and accountability.

a. Internal Communication

- **Safeguarding Flowcharts and Contact Information:** Visual flowcharts outlining the safeguarding reporting process are displayed prominently in all MASHAL and Diocesan offices. These include names and contact details of designated safeguarding focal points and reporting authorities.
- **Staff Orientation and Refresher Trainings:** All new staff, volunteers, and interns are oriented on MASHAL's safeguarding policy, including steps to report concerns. Periodic refresher trainings are conducted to reinforce knowledge and preparedness.
- **Internal Memos and Email Notices:** Regular internal communications are shared to update staff on policy revisions, reinforce key safeguarding principles, and remind them of their roles and responsibilities.

b. External Communication

- **Community Posters and IEC Materials:** Posters, brochures, and other information, education, and communication (IEC) materials are displayed in all community project locations. These materials include simple, locally understood language and visuals to explain safeguarding breaches, reporting mechanisms, and available support.

- **Engagement with Community Groups:** MASHAL conducts awareness sessions with children, youth groups, women’s collectives, and community leaders to explain safeguarding principles, highlight reporting procedures, and build trust in the mechanism.
- **Inclusion in Program Events:** Safeguarding messages and reporting information are routinely included in the agenda of all public events, training sessions, and meetings held under MASHAL programs.

c. Continuous Sensitization

- **Regular Sessions and Interactive Platforms:** Routine sensitization sessions are conducted with staff, partners, and community members to deepen their understanding of safeguarding risks and empower them to identify and act on violations.
- **Feedback Mechanism Visibility:** All feedback and complaints boxes are clearly labeled and placed in accessible locations, ensuring individuals can report anonymously and safely.

6. Complaint Documentation Process

All complaints — whether internal or external — are logged in the **MASHAL Safeguarding Complaint Register**.

Register Format:

1. Complaint ID
2. Name of Complainant
3. Date & Time Received
4. Contact Info
5. Relationship to Incident
6. Description (time, place, details, witnesses, evidence)
7. Type of Complaint (abuse, exploitation, harassment etc.)
8. Feedback/Complaint
9. Mode of Submission (email, phone, verbal)
10. Reporter Type (Staff/Affiliate/Community)
11. Sensitive or Non-sensitive
12. Assigned Investigator
13. Outcome/Action Taken
14. Resolution Date
15. Corrective Actions for Prevention

7. Centralized Review and Oversight

The **Safeguarding Focal Point Person (SFPP)** documents and forwards complaints to the **Presiding Officer of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** within 24 hours for safeguarding cases.

Special Cases:

- If the accused is the SFPP or a senior official, reports are escalated to designated **MASHAL Governing Board members**.
- If the accused belongs to another agency, with consent, the case is transferred to that agency's safeguarding body.

Acknowledgment: All complaints will be acknowledged within **7 days**, providing a unique reference number and point-of-contact.

11. Annexures

MASHAL SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT REPORT FORM

SECTION 1: REPORTER DETAILS

Name: _____

Position: _____

Contact Details: _____

SECTION 2: SURVIVOR DETAILS *(Indicate if the survivor chooses to remain anonymous)*

Name: _____

Position (if applicable): _____

Contact Details: _____

Has the survivor consented to participating in the investigation and/or being contacted for further inquiries?

YES

NO

SECTION 3: INCIDENT DETAILS

Description of Incident: *(What happened? When did it occur? Is it ongoing? Where did it take place?)*

SECTION 4: SUBJECT(S) OF ALLEGATION *(If names are unknown, provide any identifying details such as physical description, role in MASHAL, gender, age, etc.)*

Name(s): _____

Position/Role (if applicable): _____

Additional Identifying Information: _____

SECTION 5: SAFETY CONCERNS

- **Personal safety concerns of the reporter:** _____
- **Personal safety concerns of the survivor:** _____
- **Other identified safety concerns:** _____

SECTION 6: SUPPORT & ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

- Medical assistance provided
- Psycho-social support provided
- Legal assistance provided
- Other (please specify): _____

SECTION 7: ACTIONS TAKEN

- Any immediate steps taken: _____
- Any potential criminal conduct involved? YES NO
- Has the case been reported to law enforcement/local authorities? YES NO
- If YES, provide details (date, agency, contact person): _____

SECTION 8: REPORT RECORDING

Report recorded by (Name & Title): _____

Contact Information: _____

Date of Report Submission: _____

Signature: _____

Acknowledgement of Complaint Receipt

To: _____

Subject: Acknowledgement of Complaint Receipt

Dear _____,

We acknowledge the receipt of your complaint dated _____ regarding the issue of _____ [Brief Summary of Complaint].

Please find below the details of your complaint for reference:

1. **Complaint Registration Number:** _____
2. **Date of Receipt:** _____

Your complaint has been referred to the **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** of the Mashal for appropriate action and resolution. The designated officer responsible for handling your complaint is:

Presiding Officer/ICC Member Contact Information:

- **Name:** Sr. Chinnamma K C
- **Contact Number:** 6001227831
- **Email ID:** biharforumicc@gmail.com

We assure you that your complaint will be handled with utmost confidentiality and impartiality. The investigation will be conducted in a fair and timely manner, and you will be updated regularly on the progress and outcome of the case.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention and for your trust in our safeguarding mechanism.

Sincerely,

Chinnamma K C
Presiding Officer/Director
Mashal

Date: _____

Standard 6

SAFEGUARDING INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

Applies to: All staff, interns, volunteers, sub-recipients, suppliers, service providers, and board members.

Created On: 31-06-2025

Next Revision Date: 01-07-2028

Purpose:

This procedure establishes the key steps to be followed for safeguarding investigations at the Mashal. It ensures due process, transparency, and consistency in handling safeguarding concerns. The procedure aims to protect the rights and dignity of all individuals involved while ensuring that allegations of misconduct are addressed in a fair, timely, and systematic manner. It is designed to provide a structured approach that minimizes risk to survivors and ensures accountability at all levels within the organization.

Scope:

This procedure applies to all safeguarding misconduct investigations undertaken by MASHAL, regardless of whether the alleged incident involves staff, partners, beneficiaries, or external stakeholders. It covers cases of abuse, exploitation, harassment, neglect, and any form of misconduct that violates MASHAL's safeguarding policies. Investigations conducted under this procedure will adhere to principles of confidentiality, impartiality, and survivor-centered approaches, ensuring that all parties involved receive fair and respectful treatment.

Procedure:

Any deviations from the procedures outlined in this document must be documented, justified, and approved by the Director of MASHAL. A record of such deviations must be maintained in the relevant case file for accountability and future reference.

1. Receipt and Escalation of Allegation

Safeguarding allegations are received by the **Safeguarding Focal Point Person (SFPP)**, who documents the allegation in the **Complaint Register** and escalates it to the **Presiding Officer** and selected **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) members** within **24 hours of receipt**, or sooner, depending on the gravity of the case. The staff member who reports the case must maintain confidentiality regarding the safeguarding allegation.

The **SFPP ensures that the survivor is referred** to necessary support services, including medical, psycho-social, and legal assistance. These referrals are made using the Essential Services Mapping of MASHAL.

All reports received via email, phone calls, or one-on-one conversations are recorded in the **Complaint Register** and assigned a **case number** for tracking and documentation purposes.

The **SFPP ensures that the Presiding Officer and ICC members are informed** of the allegations within **24 hours** or sooner, depending on the severity of the case. If any ICC members are involved in the case, they are not notified; instead, the **Director/Chairperson** is informed to ensure impartiality in the investigation process.

2. Credibility Assessment

Within one or two business days, the **Presiding Officer and ICC members** conduct a **credibility assessment** to determine whether the allegation is **plausible**. This assessment is based on the following factors:

- **Identification of the accused:** Whether the accused can be clearly identified and linked to the allegation.
- **Potential violation of organizational policies:** Whether the reported incident constitutes a breach of MASHAL's safeguarding policies.
- **Access and opportunity of the accused:** Whether the accused had the means, opportunity, and proximity to commit the alleged act.

If the allegation is deemed plausible, the following steps are immediately undertaken by The Presiding Officer of MASHAL and other IC committee members:

- **Risk assessment:** Any immediate risks to the survivor or other individuals are identified and mitigated.
- **Support services:** The survivor is provided with necessary support, including medical, legal, and psycho-social assistance.
- **Donor notification:** If required, relevant donors and stakeholders are informed about the case while maintaining confidentiality.

Investigation initiation: The survivor is informed by Focal Point Person that an investigation will be conducted and provided with a clear outline of the process

If the allegation is deemed implausible, the following steps are taken:

- **Documentation:** The decision and reasoning behind it are recorded in the **Credibility Assessment Form** by Focal Point Person.
- **Communication with the survivor:** The survivor is informed by **The Presiding Officer** about the outcome of the credibility assessment, including any available support services and next steps if applicable.

The credibility assessment ensures that only valid cases proceed to a full investigation while maintaining fairness and integrity in the process.

3. Survivor-Centered Approach

MASHAL is committed to putting the survivor's safety, dignity, and choices at the center of any investigation.

- The survivor has the **right to choose** whether or not to take part in the investigation.

- If the survivor does not want to participate, the investigation may still continue, but **only after carefully considering** how it could affect the survivor's **safety and well-being**. These concerns must be written down and updated in the **Investigation Risk Management Plan (Annex 4)** by the **Safeguarding Focal Point Person**.

Here's how MASHAL supports the survivor during the process:

- The **Presiding Officer** will explain the investigation process to the survivor and how their information will be used.
- The survivor will be asked if they want to take part in the investigation and in what way.
- If the survivor agrees, the Presiding Officer will give them regular updates about the progress of the investigation and its outcome (whether the allegation is proven or not). These updates should happen at least every **two weeks**, unless the survivor prefers fewer updates.

For child survivors: If the survivor is a child, the **Presiding Officer will talk to the child's parent, guardian, or another trusted adult** to understand the child's needs and to plan for their safety and care throughout the investigation.

4. Planning the Investigation

Investigations must be conducted promptly, taking into account the seriousness of the allegations. In **high-risk cases**, such as those involving violence, the investigation must begin within **72 hours** of receiving the allegation.

- The **Presiding Officer** appoints the **investigation team** and prepares or updates the **Terms of Reference** for their role.
- All **investigation team members** must sign the **Investigator Terms of Reference (Annex 6)**, and the **Safeguarding Focal Point Person (SFPP)** ensures these signed documents are securely stored in the case file.
- The **SFPP continuously updates** the **Investigation Risk Management Plan (Annex 4)** to identify and mitigate risks during the investigation.
- Within **one week** of the decision to investigate, the **investigation team** prepares an **Investigation Plan (Annex 7)**. The **ICC Committee** must review and approve this plan within **one week** of receiving it.

The **ICC Committee** determines whether any **interim measures** should be taken against the accused while the investigation is ongoing. These may include **temporary reassignment, administrative leave, or other actions**. The decision is based on:

- Whether the accused poses a risk to other individuals or the organization.
- Whether their continued presence affects the integrity of the investigation.

- Whether there is a risk of **evidence being tampered with, concealed, or destroyed**.
- Compliance with **local labour laws** and organizational policies.

Once these steps are completed, the **Presiding Officer drafts the Subject of the Investigation Notification Letter**, formally informing the accused about the investigation process.

5. Evidence Gathering

The investigation team is responsible for collecting all relevant evidence in a thorough, structured, and timely manner to ensure a fair and impartial process.

- **Timeframe for Evidence Collection:** All interviews and supporting evidence must be gathered within **two months** from the start of the investigation.
- **Interview Process:**
 - Investigators ensure that **all interviewees sign the Confidentiality Form (Annex 14)** before participating in any interview.
 - Before starting the interview, investigators read the **Interview Preamble (Annex 13)** to inform interviewees about the process, their rights, and confidentiality expectations.
 - Investigators document all responses using the **Record of Interview Template (Annex 9)** to ensure accuracy and consistency.
- **Case Updates for the Survivor:** The **Presiding Officer** provides the survivor (or victim) with **weekly updates** on the progress of the case, including:
 - **Changes to the Investigation Risk Management Plan (Annex 4)** to ensure their safety and well-being.
 - **Additional support needs**, such as access to relevant documents, interview arrangements, funding for witness transportation, and ensuring cooperation in the investigation process.
 - **Plans for any further interviews** if new information emerges.
 - **Potential operational and reputational risks** for MASHAL, ensuring transparency in handling the case.
 - **Requests for additional support** based on any new information that may arise during the investigation.

This approach ensures a **structured, survivor-centered, and transparent** evidence-gathering process while maintaining confidentiality and procedural integrity.

6. Informing the Accused

The **Presiding Officer** is responsible for informing the subject of the investigation about the process, any interim measures imposed, and their rights and obligations during the investigation. This step ensures that the subject is aware of the proceedings while maintaining procedural fairness.

➤ **Timing of Notification:**

- The subject is informed **after most of the evidence has been gathered**, unless interim measures require earlier notification.

➤ **Method of Notification:**

- The **Notification Letter (Annex 8)** is issued to the subject, outlining the key details of the investigation.
- The subject may seek clarifications regarding the process, but detailed evidence is not disclosed at this stage.

➤ **Information Provided:** The subject of the investigation is informed about:

1. **Nature of the Allegations and Policy Breach** – A summary of the accusations and the specific policy or code of conduct violation being investigated.
2. **Confidentiality Requirements** – A reminder that the investigation is confidential, and unauthorized disclosure may result in disciplinary action.
3. **Consequences of Retaliation** – A strict warning that any form of retaliation against the complainant, witnesses, or investigators will lead to disciplinary measures.
4. **Steps in the Investigation Process** – An overview of the investigation, including evidence review, interviews, and report finalization.
5. **Interim Measures (if applicable)** – If restrictions such as **administrative leave, reassignment, or access limitations** have been imposed, they are formally communicated.

7. Investigation Report

- The **investigation team** submits the **draft Investigation Report (Annex 10)** to the **Director (MASHAL)** within **one week** of completing the evidence-gathering phase.
- The report includes:
- Whether the allegations are **substantiated** based on the applicable **evidentiary standard** required by local labour law (typically the **balance of probabilities** or **more likely than not**).
 - **Recommended corrective actions**, which may include **disciplinary measures** for individuals involved or **systemic changes** to prevent future occurrences.

- The **subject of the investigation** is provided with a **summary of the findings** and given an opportunity to **respond** before the report is finalized. The **Opportunity to Respond Template (Annex 11)** can be used to facilitate this process.
- The **ICC Committee** reviews the response and includes a **summary of the subject's feedback** in the final **Investigation Report** before submitting it for final decision-making.

8. Disciplinary and Corrective Actions

- The **ICC Committee** determines the appropriate **disciplinary actions**, considering the **severity of the policy violation**. It also assigns **responsible individuals** to ensure the implementation of these actions.
- The **ICC Committee and the Director** decide on necessary **systemic (organizational/programmatic) improvements** to prevent future incidents. They designate **specific individuals** to oversee and implement these corrective measures.

This ensures that both **individual accountability** and **institutional improvements** are addressed effectively within MASHAL.

9. Conclusion of Investigation

- The **Presiding Officer** informs the **subject of the investigation** of the investigation's outcome within **seven working days** after receiving their response to the findings. This notification includes any **disciplinary actions** taken. The **Outcome Letter (Annex 12)** is provided at this stage.
- The **ICC Committee** informs the **survivor** of the investigation's outcome (**substantiated or unsubstantiated**) within **seven working days** of finalizing the **Investigation Report**.
- The **Presiding Officer, through the Director**, informs the **donor** of the investigation outcome, including any **corrective actions planned or taken**, within **seven working days** of finalizing the **Investigation Report**.
- The **ICC Committee** considers and oversees **communication to relevant stakeholders**, depending on the nature of the case.
- The **ICC Committee** ensures that all **corrective actions** are effectively implemented.
- The **Safeguarding Focal Point Person (SFPP)** updates the **Safeguarding Report Register (Annex 2)** with the **investigation outcome** and **case closure date**.

Information Management

The Safeguarding Focal Point Person (**SFPP**) is responsible for **securing** all **case-related materials**. This includes:

- Storing **physical documents** in **locked cabinets**.

- Ensuring electronic files are password-protected.

This process ensures that investigations are concluded transparently, corrective actions are enforced, and confidentiality is maintained within MASHAL.

ANNEXURES Of Standard 6:

ANNEX 1: MASHAL SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT REPORT FORM

SECTION 1: REPORTER DETAILS

Name: _____

Position: _____

Contact Details: _____

SECTION 2: SURVIVOR DETAILS *(Indicate if the survivor chooses to remain anonymous)*

Name: _____

Position (if applicable): _____

Contact Details: _____

Has the survivor consented to participating in the investigation and/or being contacted for further inquiries?

- YES NO

SECTION 3: INCIDENT DETAILS

Description of Incident: *(What happened? When did it occur? Is it ongoing? Where did it take place?)*

SECTION 4: SUBJECT(S) OF ALLEGATION *(If names are unknown, provide any identifying details such as physical description, role in MASHAL, gender, age, etc.)*

Name(s): _____

Position/Role (if applicable): _____

Additional Identifying Information: _____

SECTION 5: SAFETY CONCERNS

- Personal safety concerns of the reporter: _____
- Personal safety concerns of the survivor: _____
- Other identified safety concerns: _____

SECTION 6: SUPPORT & ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

Medical assistance provided

- Psycho-social support provided
- Legal assistance provided
- Other (please specify): _____

SECTION 7: ACTIONS TAKEN

- Any immediate steps taken: _____
- Any potential criminal conduct involved? YES NO
- Has the case been reported to law enforcement/local authorities? YES NO
- If YES, provide details (date, agency, contact person): _____

SECTION 8: REPORT RECORDING

Report recorded by (Name & Title): _____

Contact Information: _____

Date of Report Submission: _____

Signature: _____

ANNEX 2: REGISTER OF SAFEGUARDING ALLEGATIONS—CONFIDENTIAL AND RESTRICTED ACCESS

CASE NUMBER	ALLEGATION TYPE	REPORT DATE	SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION	SURVIVOR (IF KNOWN)	REPORTER	DONOR AFFECTED	DATE REPORTED TO DONOR	DATE CASE CLOSED	OUTCOME	DISCIPLINARY & CORRECTIVE ACTION	DATE DONOR INFORMED OF CASE OUTCOME
MASHAL/2024/001	Sexual Harassment	15-Jun-24	Ramesh Kumar, Field Officer	Rani Kumari, Program Assistant	Anonymous	UNICEF	18-Jun-24	5-Jul-24	Substantiated	Field Officer dismissed; mandatory staff training implemented	10-Jul-24
MASHAL/2024/002	Child Exploitation	2-Jul-24	Chandani Kumari, Volunteer	Unknown	Community Member	Save the Children	5-Jul-24	30-Jul-24	Unsubstantiated	Policy review & refresher training for all volunteers	2-Aug-24
MASHAL/2024/003	Physical Abuse	10-Aug-24	Mohan Singh, Project Coordinator	Somal Kumari, Beneficiary	Staff Member	World Vision	12-Aug-24	28-Aug-24	Substantiated	Coordinator suspended; counselling support provided	1-Sep-24

ANNEX 3: MASHAL CREDIBILITY/PLAUSIBILITY ASSESSMENT FORM

Case Number: _____

Date Completed: _____

Assessment Team Members: _____

Date Allegation Received: _____

1. Initial Allegation: *(Provide a brief summary of the allegation, including key details such as location, individuals involved, and nature of the allegation.)*

2. Information Gathered: *(Summarize the evidence collected so far, including witness statements, documents reviewed, and any other relevant information.)*

3. Plausibility Assessment Outcome & Rationale: *(Indicate whether the allegation is deemed credible or not, based on the available evidence, and explain the reasoning behind the decision.)*

Credible – Sufficient evidence supports the plausibility of the allegation.

Not Credible – Lack of sufficient evidence to support the allegation.

Inconclusive – Further investigation required.

Rationale:

4. Recommendations: *(Outline the next steps, including whether a full investigation is warranted, interim measures required, or if the case should be closed.)*

Proceed with a full investigation.

Gather additional evidence before deciding.

Case closure due to lack of credible evidence.

Other (Specify): _____

Assessment Team Lead Signature: _____

Date: _____

ANNEX 4: MASHAL INVESTIGATION RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. Risk Assessment Table

Entity/Individual at Risk	Identified Risk	Likelihood (Low/Medium/High)	Impact (Low/Medium/High)	Mitigation Actions	Person Responsible	Monitoring Frequency
Survivor						
Reporter						
Witnesses						
Other Staff Members						
Subject of the Investigation						
Investigators						
Organization						

ANNEX 5: DONOR NOTIFICATION TEMPLATE (MASHAL)

To:

CC:

Subject: _____ [Insert Donor Agreement Identifier] – Safeguarding Allegation Notification

Dear [Donor's Name],

We are writing to notify you of an alleged safeguarding incident under award _____ [insert donor agreement identifier], reported to us on _____ [insert date].

The incident allegedly occurred in **[insert location]** and involves a potential violation of **MASHAL's Safeguarding Policy**. The nature of the allegation includes **[insert brief summary of the allegation in relation to policy breach – e.g., inappropriate behaviour, sexual harassment, exploitation, etc.]**.

MASHAL has **initiated a formal investigation** into the matter in accordance with our safeguarding protocol. As of now, the following **actions have been taken**:

- _____ [Insert key actions taken e.g., interim protective measures, formation of investigation team, support to survivor, etc.]

We are committed to maintaining transparency and ensuring accountability. A summary of the **investigation findings and corrective measures** (if any) will be shared with you within **7 working days** of the investigation's conclusion.

Should you require further details or wish to speak directly with us, please use any of the following contact points:

- **Email:** iccmashal@gmail.com
- **In-Person:** Contact our Safeguarding Focal Point Person or a member of the IC Committee.

We value your continued partnership and appreciate your understanding as we address this matter with urgency and diligence.

Kind regards,

_____ [Insert Name]

**Presiding Officer
Mashal**

ANNEX 6: INVESTIGATOR TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mashal

You have been assigned to conduct an investigation regarding a potential breach of the MASHAL Code of Conduct.

If you believe that your involvement in this case could present an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest, it is your responsibility to immediately inform the **Internal Complaints (IC) Committee of MASHAL**.

Confidentiality

During the investigation, you may access highly sensitive information—including the identities of survivors, subjects of the investigation, witnesses, and details of the alleged incidents. You are expected to maintain strict confidentiality and only share information with individuals who are directly involved in the investigation or providing necessary support.

Avoid discussing the investigation in non-secure areas such as shared offices, hallways, elevators, or any public or informal settings.

If you witness or become aware of a breach of confidentiality (e.g., someone discussing the investigation inappropriately), you must report this immediately to the IC Committee.

Ensure that all physical documents are stored securely in locked cabinets and that all digital records are password protected, in accordance with MASHAL's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

All inquiries from the media must be directed to the **Safeguarding Focal Point Person** or the **IC Committee**.

Protection from Retaliation

Retaliation against any individual participating in the investigation—including survivors, witnesses, reporters, and investigators—is strictly prohibited.

If you feel that you or anyone else involved in the process is facing mistreatment or retaliation due to participation in the investigation, notify the **Safeguarding Focal Point Person** or the **IC Committee** immediately.

As an investigator, you are also expected not to misuse the information obtained during the investigation or retaliate against anyone in any way.

Investigation Process

You must ensure that all parties involved in the investigation are treated fairly and in line with MASHAL's due process principles.

Your **draft investigation report** must be submitted to the **Presiding Officer** within **five (5) working days** of completing the evidence-gathering phase.

If you identify any systemic, structural, or programmatic concerns during your investigation, please include those in your report as well so appropriate corrective measures can be considered.

By signing below, you acknowledge your understanding and acceptance of these terms. Failure to comply may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of engagement.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

ANNEX 7: MASHAL INVESTIGATION PLAN

(Confidential – Internal Use Only)

Date Prepared: _____

Case Number: _____

Location: _____

Investigation Team: _____

Subject(s) of the Investigation: _____

Alleged Survivor (if known): _____

(Use roles or descriptions to protect identity, e.g., "female staff," "male child beneficiary")

I. Allegations

List and number each alleged incident or policy violation. Include relevant policy reference.

- 1.
- 2.

II. Actions Taken To-Date

Chronological list of actions taken before this plan was drafted.

Date	Action Taken	Persons Involved
------	--------------	------------------

III. Donors/Grants Potentially Affected

List donors linked to the subject(s). Note if donor notification is required and sent.

Donor	Linked Grant/Project	Notification Sent (Y/N)	Date Sent
-------	----------------------	-------------------------	-----------

IV. Investigation Approach

A. Background and Context- Provide relevant program and location background for context.

B. Legal Implications- List any applicable criminal laws or labor codes.

C. Sources of Information

- Document Review (e.g., HR files, logs, records, messages)
- Interviews (list known individuals to be interviewed)
- Additional Sources of Evidence (e.g., email/phone logs, GPS data, site visits)

D. Investigation Timetable

Investigation Step	Person Responsible	Planned Date of Completion
Finalize Investigation Plan		
Document Review		
Interview Questions Finalized		
Interviews Conducted		
Draft Report Submitted		
Draft Report Reviewed		
Final Report Submitted		

Approved by (Presiding Officer): _____

Date: _____

ANNEX 8: SUBJECT OF INVESTIGATION — NOTIFICATION LETTER

From: mashalpatna@gmail.com

Subject: Notice of Investigation

Dear _____ **[Subject’s Name],**

This letter is to formally inform you that the **Mashal** has initiated an investigation regarding allegations that you may have breached MASHAL’s **Safeguarding Policy** and **Code of Conduct**.

The concerns relate to alleged misconduct involving dishonesty, confidentiality breaches, or failure to follow procedures. If substantiated, these would constitute violations of organizational policy and could lead to disciplinary action.

The investigation aims to determine the facts fairly and thoroughly. You are expected to cooperate fully, provide truthful responses during interviews, and disclose any information, documents, or witness names that may support your account. Failure to cooperate or providing false or misleading information may itself be treated as misconduct.

You will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegations during the interview process. During this time, you have the right to be treated respectfully, take reasonable breaks, and ask questions about the process.

Please note that the investigation is **strictly confidential**, and information may not be shared without permission from the **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)**. Retaliation against anyone involved in this investigation—including witnesses or reporters—is strictly prohibited.

MASHAL uses the “**preponderance of evidence**” standard, meaning a finding will be made if it is more likely than not that a violation occurred.

If you have questions, you may contact the **Safeguarding Focal Point Person** or the **ICC Committee**.

Acknowledgement

I have read and understood my rights and obligations regarding this investigation process.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

In the Presence of (Witness): _____

Date: _____

ANNEX 9: RECORD OF INTERVIEW

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL — SAFEGUARDING INVESTIGATION

Case Number: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____

Job Title/Role: _____

Department/Unit (if applicable): _____

Date of Interview: _____

Location of Interview: _____

Interviewer(s): _____

Other Attendees (e.g., Note-taker, Support Person): _____

Interview Introduction

The interview began with a clear explanation of the purpose and process of the investigation. The interviewee was reminded of the **confidential nature** of the process and their obligation to provide honest, factual responses.

The interviewer confirmed that the **Confidentiality Form** was signed, and the **Interview Preamble** (Annex 13) was read aloud before beginning the discussion.

Discussion Notes

(Record responses using initials of speakers. Use direct quotes as much as possible.)

Additional Information

(Note any special arrangements made for the interviewee, such as disability accommodations, breaks, translation support, or documents they submitted.)

Interview Conducted By:

Name(s): _____

Position(s): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ANNEX 10: INVESTIGATION REPORT TEMPLATE

Executive Summary (Optional)

A brief overview of the case, this section summarizes the investigation process from start to finish. It should include:

- Nature of the allegation(s)
- Duration of the investigation
- Key findings (substantiated/unsubstantiated)
- Summary of recommended disciplinary actions and proposed corrective steps.

1. Allegations

Clearly state the allegations under investigation. If more issues arise during the process, list and address each one separately. Provide brief references to MASHAL's safeguarding or conduct policies believed to be breached.

2. Relevant Policies and Procedures

Outline the specific safeguarding, conduct, or operational policies that relate to the allegation(s). Include direct citations or annex excerpts if applicable.

3. Investigation Team

List the names and positions of those assigned to conduct the investigation.

4. Program and Legal Context

Provide a brief background on the program where the issue arose. Highlight any national or local laws (e.g., labour laws, child protection regulations) relevant to the allegations.

5. Actions Taken Before Investigation Began

Summarize initial actions taken before the formal investigation started. This may include:

- Safety assessments
- Survivor support referrals
- Clarifications with complainants or reporters
- Internal safeguarding alerts or preliminary reviews

6. Investigation Methods

Detail the steps undertaken during the investigation:

- **Documents Reviewed:** List key records examined (HR files, attendance sheets, feedback forms, emails, etc.)
- **Interviewees:** Include roles or pseudonyms (e.g., Witness 1, Survivor, Respondent)
- **Challenges Faced:** Mention issues such as unresponsive witnesses, missing documents, or access limitations

7. Factual Findings

Break this section into subsections based on each allegation. For each:

- Present the core facts established
- Include supporting evidence (quotes, logs, documents)
- Mention any counter-evidence or conflicting accounts

8. Outcome Assessment

Use an evidence-based approach to determine whether the allegation is substantiated. Consider:

- Consistency and reliability of witness statements
- Presence of corroborative documentation
- Credibility indicators (past behaviour, motives, emotional consistency)
- Likelihood (preponderance of evidence)

Clearly conclude if each allegation is:

- **Substantiated**
- **Unsubstantiated**

Also identify which policies, if any, were breached.

9. Recommendations by ICC Committee

A. Disciplinary Measures

Recommend appropriate actions considering:

- Severity of the misconduct
- Prior history
- Frequency
- Role and responsibilities of the individual involved
- Willingness to take accountability

Examples of Disciplinary Actions:

- Verbal or written warning
- Suspension (with/without pay)
- Demotion or ineligibility for promotions
- Termination of employment
- Mandatory training or counselling

Illustrative Table:

Confirmed Violation	Context	Recommended Action
Child labour at home	No prior violations, expressed remorse	Verbal warning
Failure to report safeguarding case	Repeated offense after training	Written warning
Romantic involvement with a child	Refused to end the relationship	Termination
Corporal punishment of own child	First offense, showed remorse	Written warning

B. Corrective Measures (Systemic/Programmatic)

Investigators should also note any broader issues that may have contributed to the misconduct. Recommend measures to strengthen prevention:

Examples:

- Regular staff capacity building on safeguarding
- Orientation sessions for community members/beneficiaries
- Enhancing internal complaint mechanisms and feedback tools
- Strengthening oversight in high-risk locations or roles

ANNEX 11: OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND

Mashal

Dear _____ [Name],

As you are aware, you are the **subject of an ongoing investigation** being conducted by Mashal. Specifically, it is alleged that you have been involved in the following conduct:

_____ **Insert brief summary of the allegation]**

You are now being given the opportunity to **provide a written response** to the findings and evidence related to this allegation. In line with MASHAL’s Safeguarding Investigation Procedure, you are allowed **seven (7) working days** from the date of this notice to submit your response.

To assist in preparing your response, you are being provided with the following documents:

- A summary of the allegation(s)
- Witness statements
- Relevant evidence gathered during the investigation
- A copy of the Investigation Report

Your written response may include clarifications, explanations, additional evidence, or any other information you believe is important for the **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)** to consider.

If you have any questions or need support during this process, please contact the **Presiding Officer** or **Safeguarding Focal Point Person** at MASHAL.

Signature (Subject of Investigation): _____

Date: _____

Received by (ICC Member / Investigation Lead): _____

Date: _____

ANNEX 12: OUTCOME LETTER TO THE SUBJECT OF THE INVESTIGATION

Mashal

Confidential

To: _____ [Name of the person under investigation]

From: Presiding Officer, Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)

Date: _____

Subject: Outcome of Safeguarding Investigation

Dear _____ [Name],

On _____ [insert date], MASHAL received a complaint about your conduct. It was reported that you _____ [briefly mention the nature of the concern, e.g., shared private information, acted inappropriately, etc.].

The investigation has now been completed. Based on the evidence, the committee has found that the allegation is:

Proven (Substantiated)

Not Proven (Unsubstantiated)

As a result, MASHAL has decided to take the following steps:

1. [e.g., Written warning / Training / Termination / No action needed]
2. [If needed, mention follow-up or monitoring steps]

Please remember that **retaliation is not allowed**. Do not take any action against the person who made the report, witnesses, or anyone involved in the investigation. If you do, it may lead to further action.

If you have questions or want to talk about this, you may contact the **Safeguarding Focal Point Person** or the **ICC Committee**.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

[Presiding Officer's Name]
Presiding Officer, ICC
Mashal

ANNEX 13: INTERVIEW PREAMBLE

Mashal

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to meet today. I want to begin by sharing some important information about this interview:

- I am here to speak with you about some concerns that have been raised. These may relate to a possible violation of MASHAL’s **Code of Conduct** or **Safeguarding Policies**.
- My role is to **gather information in a fair and neutral way**. I will be asking you some questions to help us understand the situation. You may take a break anytime — just let me know.
- During this conversation, I will be taking notes, or a colleague will do so. We’ll review them with you at the end to ensure they are accurate.
- As an MASHAL staff member (or affiliate), you are expected to answer truthfully and share any relevant information. If you’re unsure about a question, it’s perfectly okay to say “I don’t know.”
- The information you share today will help us understand what happened. We will prepare a report based on all the interviews and evidence. Please note that the **final decisions** about the case will be made by the **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)**, not by me.
- This interview is **confidential**. Please do not discuss it with anyone else. Information you provide may be shared with the ICC to support their review. In some cases, information may also be shared with the person under investigation — but MASHAL will take all necessary steps to **protect your identity and safety** whenever possible.
- This may be the first of more interviews, depending on what we learn.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Are you comfortable proceeding with the interview?

ANNEX 14: CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

Mashal

Strictly Confidential

You are being asked to participate in an interview as part of a **safeguarding investigation** at MASHAL. This form explains your **rights and responsibilities** during this process.

MASHAL expects all staff and affiliated individuals to:

- Cooperate fully by answering all questions honestly.

- Provide any documents that may be relevant.
- Make themselves available for follow-up if needed.

You are also expected to keep this process **strictly confidential**. This means:

- Do **not share** anything discussed in the interview with others, including colleagues, friends, or family.
- Do **not use** any information from the investigation for personal gain or to harm or benefit anyone else.
- If you hear others discussing the investigation or sharing information about it, you are required to **report this immediately** to the Safeguarding Focal Point Person or the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC).

Confidentiality is extremely important. MASHAL will protect the identity of those involved in the investigation as much as possible.

Retaliation is not allowed. If you feel you have been treated unfairly or threatened for participating in this process—or if you are concerned someone else has—you must report it. Similarly, you must not take any action that could be seen as retaliating against anyone involved.

You have the right to be treated respectfully throughout the process. If needed, you can request access to **confidential support or counselling** through the ICC.

If you have questions, you may contact the **Safeguarding Focal Point Person** or the **ICC Committee** during working hours.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read this notice and understand your responsibilities.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Standard 7

ESSENTIAL SERVICE MAPPING FOR SURVIVORS

Guidance: Essential services for survivors must be identified. This includes at a minimum the following services:

- 1.) Health
- 2.) Mental Health/Psychosocial Support
- 3.) Social Services (Case Management/child protection/Emergency Shelters)
- 4.) Legal Services
- 5.) any other relevant services (e.g. Police)

Services	Name of Organisation/Institution	Address (physical and postal)	Phone number	Types/description of services offered	Target group and criteria (if applicable)	Operation days	Operation hours	Guidance on how to make a referral. (E.g. if the organisation requests to fill out a referral form, or call before making the referral, etc)	Name and contact information of person in charge of referrals (if applicable)
Health/Medical	Patna Medical College & Hospital (PMCH)	Ashok Rajpath Rd, Panta-800001	0612 230 0343	Emergency medical services	All age categories	Monday to Monday	24	Call or Direct approach	Doctor-in-charge
Health/Medical	Nalanda Medical College & Hospital	Agam Kuan, Gulzarbagh, Patna - 800007	9431047667, 0612-2918523, 0612-2631159	Emergency medical services	All age categories	Monday to Monday	24	Call or Direct approach	Superintendent- Binod Kumar Singh
Social Services/Case Management	Child Protective Services (Ministry of Social Welfare)	CWC, Apna Ghar, Bailey Road, Rajbanshi Nagar, Patna,	9234449122, 9304377253	Case management of any child protection cases (unaccompanied children, child survivors, etc.)	Abused and neglected children, children without caretakers, (CNCP)	Monday to Monday	24	Call or Direct approach	Chairperson- Deepak Kumar, Member- Tarkeshwar Prasad
Social Services/Case Management	Child Protective Services (Ministry of	Apna Ghar, Bailey Road, Rajbanshi Nagar, Patna,	9122921007, 9304329962	Case management of any child protection cases (unaccompanied children, child survivors, etc.)	Abused and neglected children, children without caretakers, (CNCP) (Boys)	Monday to Monday	24	Call or Direct approach	Ravi Shankar Kumar (Superintendent) 9122921007

	Social Welfare)								
Social Services/Case Management	Child Protective Services (Ministry of Social Welfare)	Nishant Bhawan, Gai Ghat, Patna	8340581685	Case management of any child protection cases (unaccompanied children, child survivors, etc.)	Abused and neglected children, children without caretakers, (CNCP) (Girls)	Monday to Monday	24	Call or Direct approach	Dazy Kumari (Superintendent) 8340581685
Police	Ladies Police Station	Near Gandhi Maidan, Patna, Bihar 800001	9470001390, 94318 22162, 0612 221 9241	Accompaniment in time of struggle. Attending all typs of complaints releted to Women	Abused and neglected women	Monday to Monday	24	Call or Direct approach	Inspector-in-charge
Social Services/Case Management	Bihar Women Commission	4th Floor, Vishweshwar aiya Bhawan, Bailey Road, Patna, Bihar 800001	0612 221 5111, 0612 2226368	Accompaniment in time of struggle. Attending all typs of complaints releted to Women	Abused and neglected women	Monday to Monday	24	Call or Direct approach	Ashwamedh Devi- President, Anju Kumari- Secretary
Social Services/Case Management/	Bihar State Legal Services Authority (BSLSA)	Budh Marg, Sone Bhawan, Patna, Bihar 800001	0612 220 3839	Offers free legal aid and advice to survivors of harassment. Offers free legal aid and advice to survivors of harassment.	All age cartegories	Monday to Friday	10:00 AM to 5:00 PM	Call or Direct approach	Member Secretary or Legal Aid Officer
Social Services/Case Management/ Emergency shelter	SOS Children's Villages (Patna)	SOS Children's Village, Khagaul Road, Danapur, Patna,	0612 257 6346	Provides a supportive environment for abandoned children, including those who are survivors of abuse.	Abused and neglected children, children without caretakers, (CNCP)	Monday to Monday	24	Call or Direct approach	Superintendent

1st version approved by Governing Body on 12.07.2025 for a period of 3 years.

Chinnamma

Chinnamma KC,
Secretary, Mashal