

OM – IC – GL1 – CHILD SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to set standards on how GCERF and its recipients¹ are expected to work so that the children they engage with, whether directly or indirectly, are safeguarded. GCERF's mission of promoting community engagement and resilience to violent extremism extends to include protecting its beneficiaries from any type of harm in the course of its funded programmes and activities, and especially children. These guidelines help regulate the work conducted by GCERF and its recipients that may involve children, ensuring no child is subject to any harm (see working definitions in section 2). They are in addition to any child protection/safeguarding policies and/or conditions GCERF and its recipients are already bound by as a result of their agreements with their donors. GCERF recipients should comply with national requirements and policies concerning child protection/safeguarding. Recipients' policies are expected to at least adhere to those at the national level.

1.2. Scope

These guidelines are applicable to all GCERF's and its recipients' operations and activities. These guidelines cover GCERF staff,² volunteers, consultants, as well as recipients of GCERF funding engaging with children, whether directly or indirectly.

1.3. Principles

GCERF's Child Safeguarding Guidelines are based on a set of intrinsic principles. These principles should guide GCERF and its recipients and act as a benchmark in safeguarding children.

- i. **Protection against harm:** All actions taken must not pose any risk of harm to children, respecting their rights and placing their safety as a top priority.
- ii. **Equality:** All children have equal rights to protection and GCERF and its recipients shall work hard to ensure that children they engage with have their wellbeing and participation promoted.
- iii. **Transparency:** It is always crucial for GCERF and its recipients to act in an honest and open manner. This helps ensure that GCERF holds itself and its recipients accountable.
- iv. **Freedom of speaking-up / no retaliation:** GCERF believes that every individual has the complete right to speak up, assuming that it is done in good faith, and protects

¹ Recipients include Principal Recipients (PRs), Sub Recipients (SRs) and Direct Grantees (DGs).

² In line with RDM-HR-Reg 5 – Categories of staff, this includes employees, interns, junior associates, and young professionals. For the purpose of this guidelines, this definition will also include secondees and outsourced staff.

individuals from any form of retaliation. GCERF urges speaking up on any child safeguarding concern, and neither takes nor tolerates any act of retaliation in response to speaking-up. GCERF recipients are expected to foster a work environment that encourages speaking-up and does not tolerate any form of retaliation.

- v. All concerns are treated in a serious manner:** All reports of concern regarding the safety of a child should be taken seriously. GCERF relies on a fact-based approach in treating any kind of incident report it receives. It is essential that steps and decisions are taken based on true findings, facts and adequate evidence. When responding to incidents appropriate steps will be taken to protect the child against harm and against the alleged perpetrator which may include law enforcement. In relation to allegations against staff, consultants, volunteers and partners, action may include, where necessary, the suspension or termination of engagement or any type of cooperation.
- vi. Confidentiality:** GCERF and its recipients shall maintain utmost confidentiality when treating cases relating to child safeguarding. Personal data should only be exchanged where necessary (e.g. to ensure the child is protected) and only between the relevant individuals. Information related to child safeguarding incidents should not be disclosed except to the appropriate people (this includes the GCERF Ethics Officer and may include the GCERF Safety & Security Officer, as listed in the flowchart in section 4), when and as necessary.
- vii. Engagement with partners:** GCERF and its recipients are required to cooperate to ensure the wellbeing of all children engaged in funded programmes and with other partners and agencies accord to the applicable laws in the country concerned. This means working together to deter, prevent, detect and respond to incidents of child abuse.

2. Working Definitions

- Child:** For the purposes of these guidelines, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years old, in line with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
- Child Safeguarding:** Child safeguarding is understood as the responsibility that organisations have to ensure that their programme, operations and staff members do not expose children to harm, abuse, or maltreatment and to report any concerns about children’s safety to the appropriate authorities.
- Child Abuse:** According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), child abuse constitutes “all forms of physical and or/emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in

actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power”.

- i. Physical abuse:** Physical abuse is understood as the intentional use of physical force against a child that results in harm for the child's health, survival, development or dignity. Without providing an exhaustive list it may involve hitting, shaking, beating, kicking, strangling, scalding, suffocating, burning, poisoning, shaking, and biting.
- ii. Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse is understood as the involvement of a child in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Children can be sexually abused by both adults and other children who are in a position of responsibility, trust or power over the victim. The sexual activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as exposing the child to, or involving the child in, pornography, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- iii. Emotional and psychological abuse:** Emotional and psychological abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child that adversely affects his or her self-perception and emotional development. Without providing an exhaustive list it may involve conveying to the child that he or she is worthless, unloved, and inadequate, or imposing inappropriate expectations upon him or her. Acts include restricting movement, threatening, scaring, degrading, bullying, scapegoating, blaming, humiliating, ridiculing, discriminating, corrupting, or any other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.
- iv. Neglect:** Neglect is defined as the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child, where they are in a position to do so, with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or emotional development and well-being.

3. Safeguarding Practices

3.1. Safeguarding in Human Resources & Recruitment

Child safeguarding is not just associated with the design and implementation of programmes (see section 3.3) but extends to cover the whole organisation and is associated with its various activities. It is an approach that should be embedded in everything that the organisation does.

GCERF seeks to recruit staff who are committed to the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. This goes beyond simply complying with rules and regulations and extends to ensuring that individuals have an appropriate set of personal and professional values and are committed to promoting the safety and well-being of children and youth. This also applies to GCERF's recipients who are expected to take the same approach in the recruitment of their staff, volunteers, consultants etc.

i. Safe recruitment

- All staff (as defined above) should be required to sign and comply by the Code of Conduct upon joining and on a yearly basis. For GCERF, this is the equivalent to the document called "Standards of Conduct for GCERF Staff" until the Code of Conduct is developed. For a GCERF's recipients this is the equivalent to the document called "Code of Conduct for Recipients of GCERF Funding", in addition to the code of conduct of the recipient itself. This sets out expectations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- All staff should be required to provide at least two references (phone and/or email references) as part of robust recruitment procedures. In addition, staff, consultants and volunteers who will be working directly with children must nominate at least one referee who has knowledge of the person's professional interaction with children.
- All recruitment procedures must be based on a detailed analysis of each job or volunteer task and the level of contact with children. For staff roles that include contact with children and youth, questions should be included in interviews relating to safeguarding.
- Individuals expected to work with children should not commence work until all recruitment processes have been followed and background checks and guidance on Child Safeguarding have been completed. However, it is recognised that in some exceptional circumstances there may be a long delay, or for operational reasons it may be necessary to start work at short notice. In such situations, additional measures must be put in place so that GCERF and its recipients can be confident that the risks for children are minimised. For example, providing additional supervision and ensuring the staff member in question does not work alone.
- Records of robust recruitment practice, such as references etc. must be treated confidentially and kept in HR files. This information must be kept and destroyed in accordance with applicable data protection rules.

ii. Training, advice & support

GCERF and its recipients shall provide training and support designed to ensure that everyone required to comply with these guidelines understands their safeguarding responsibilities and has adequate knowledge and skills to fulfil their obligations.

- Within their probationary period, and no longer than three months after appointment, all staff must receive and read the Child Safeguarding Guidelines and be guided on their responsibilities towards safeguarding children.
- Staff must be given the opportunity for regular updates on safeguarding children – either formally, such as through training or supervision, or more informally, for example through discussion at team meetings.
- Staff, consultants and volunteers with specific responsibilities for child or youth safeguarding must have access to the resources and tools necessary to execute their responsibilities.
- Requests for advice or support on child safeguarding must be taken seriously at all times and not perceived as a lack of capacity or knowledge on the subject. Such requests may be directed to GCERF’s Child Safeguarding Focal Point (please see section 3.1.iv) but could be discussed with other relevant individuals like the GCERF Ethics Officer and GCERF Safety and Security Officer.

iii. Awareness raising

Awareness raising is a critical step towards nurturing an environment where individuals have adequate knowledge on child safeguarding and a realisation of the importance of the subject.

- The Child Safeguarding Guidelines must be shared with staff, as well as partners, other stakeholders and all those working with/for GCERF and its recipients. The guidelines should be made available on request for communities (including its French version), families and children as well as publicly available via the website. Furthermore, all these stakeholders need to be acquainted with how to report a concern and what happens after they do so. This should be done in ways that are appropriate and accessible given the context. Further details on this are outlined in section 4 of these guidelines.
- GCERF’s Portfolio Management Unit (PMU) staff are responsible for ensuring that children at beneficiary countries are given special consideration on how they can help keep themselves safe and how to report their concerns. This could take the form of child friendly posters or booklets with pictures developed by the organisation handling a programme involving children and youth.

iv. Child safeguarding focal point (CSFP)

Child safeguarding responsibilities rest with everyone working with/for GCERF and its recipients. However, for the purpose of providing a point of contact for advice and support, GCERF’s compliance function acts as the child safeguarding focal point for GCERF and its recipients. This focal point can be contacted on the following email: compliance@gcerf.org, in case of child safeguarding questions, concerns or clarifications of any kind. This email is managed very securely with access given only to GCERF’s compliance officer. Anything received through this email is treated in a confidential manner.

v. Partners

- When partnering with other organisations and agencies, GCERF and its recipients must pay careful attention to whether the potential partner has a suitable track record of working with children, especially if the programme involves children and youth. This includes whether the potential partner has policies and procedures on child safeguarding and clearly defined responsibilities under this subject. This is in line with the due diligence process that GCERF follows prior to engaging with a partner.
- If child safeguarding concerns arise in relation to an existent partner, steps must be followed (see section 4 below), to report the concerns to GCERF (or in line with the recipient's reporting process if reporting to the recipient). Reported concerns must be treated in a serious manner and investigated appropriately. Where necessary, GCERF and its recipients can choose whether to end the partnership and/or withdraw funding and support. The decision to continue with the partnership must consider the partner's approach to the situation and their commitment to addressing it, such as prioritising the best interests of the child, responding to advice on managing the situation, terminating the employment of the subject of allegations and agreeing to seek support through training and guidance.

vi. Occasional volunteers & visitors

- It is the responsibility of the GCERF recipient managing the programme to ensure that visitors (official and unofficial) are properly briefed on child safeguarding requirements and accompanied throughout their visit, where that visit involves interaction with children
- All occasional volunteers and visitors must be accompanied at all times and in no circumstances should they be left unattended with children, unless there are clear reasons for doing so (only possible for official visitors or where express permission is granted by the GCERF recipient). Before granting permission, the recipient must ensure that the visitor does not pose a risk to children.

3.2. Safeguarding in Media & Communication³

These rules apply to GCERF Staff and partners in-country. They refer to the use of photographs and videos containing images of children – for example for posting on social media. The steps outlining how to seek and record consent are listed, as are responsibilities around training of grantees and their partners in the appropriate use of social media.

i. Rules on use of media (photos & videos)

³ This section is in accordance with the "GCERF Grantee/Sub-Grantee Communications Guidelines". For more detailed information on rules in communications, please refer to the document.

- Ensure that the safety of the child will not be compromised when disseminating images of him/her or of his/her home, community or environment.
- Obtain written permission of an adult who is the holder of parental responsibility over the child (the person who is legally responsible for the child). This should take the form of a written informed consent (a parental consent form is provided in the annex). Where consent is not possible, photography and videos will ensure that individual faces and bodies are unrecognisable.
- Ensure that no image of a child is exploitative or offensive. This includes making sure that the child does not pose in any inappropriate manner (sexual connotations etc.) and is not naked or dressed inappropriately when taking or publishing photos of him/her.
- Respect the child's dignity and do not represent him/her as weak or a victim. Stories and images of children should not only focus on the negative aspects but also on their strengths and engagement with GCERF's mission.
- Pictures and videos involving children shall only be taken and shared for professional use.
- Media content must not include any sort of personal information (names, addresses or other identifying features) that could be used to identify the child exposing him/her to any sort of risk.
- Only media content indicated for public use by GCERF and its recipients may be used.

ii. **Online protection & information technology**

- GCERF and its recipients should ensure that their staff and volunteers are provided with sufficient guidance on the use of technology including internet, mobile phones and social media.
- Filters and blocking software should be installed to prevent access to offensive and inappropriate sites, especially those that promote child abuse.
- If offensive material is received or accidentally downloaded, a report must be made to the line manager.
- IT equipment must not be used in ways that would prevent employees from exercising their professional activities or pose a reputational risk to the organisation.
- Voluntary access to inappropriate websites detrimental to the reputation of GCERF and/or its recipients is not tolerated and strictly forbidden, with consequences reaching dismissal.

3.3. Safeguarding in Programme Design & Implementation

Child Safeguarding should be treated as a priority when designing and implementing a programme. It needs to be addressed formally across all activities while assessing the associated risks through a proper risk assessment.

- Safeguarding should be considered by the GCERF recipient at every stage of the programme, starting with its design and monitored over the course of the programme.
- A risk assessment should be conducted by the recipient prior to undertaking activities in order to locate any potential risks to children and implement the adequate mitigation measures beforehand. Activities should not be conducted in case the assessment concludes that there is/are serious risk(s). Even one sufficiently serious risk which has not been mitigated as low as reasonably practical should be enough to warrant a programme being stopped.
- When designing the programme as well as during the course of implementation, the recipient should be ready to provide any additional guidance needed to its staff, consultants, volunteers, partners and children and communities that it is working with.
- The recipient should review safeguarding activities and apply lessons learned to perform adjustments and updates where necessary, both during and after the programme finishes.
- A written permission of an adult who is the holder of parental responsibility over the child (the person who is legally responsible for the child) must be obtained by the recipient prior to the commencement of the activities (a parental consent form is provided in the annex). Where parents/children are illiterate, a staff member or volunteer can sign on their behalf in their presence, so long as the form has been discussed.
- Child safeguarding must be considered by GCERF when reviewing proposals and carrying out monitoring of programmes implemented by the recipient.

4. Incident Reporting & Management

Staff members, consultants, volunteers, visitors and partners of GCERF and its recipients all have responsibilities in child safeguarding. These responsibilities include reporting any concern, doubt, suspicion and/or detection of any type of child abuse or more generally any breach of child safeguarding rules. Reporting procedures outlined in this section are also to be used by any concerned child, family or community member wishing to report to GCERF.

Informants⁴ can choose to report their concerns to GCERF either directly or indirectly. The indirect method is the one associated with the Integrity Line which offers the possibility of anonymous reporting.

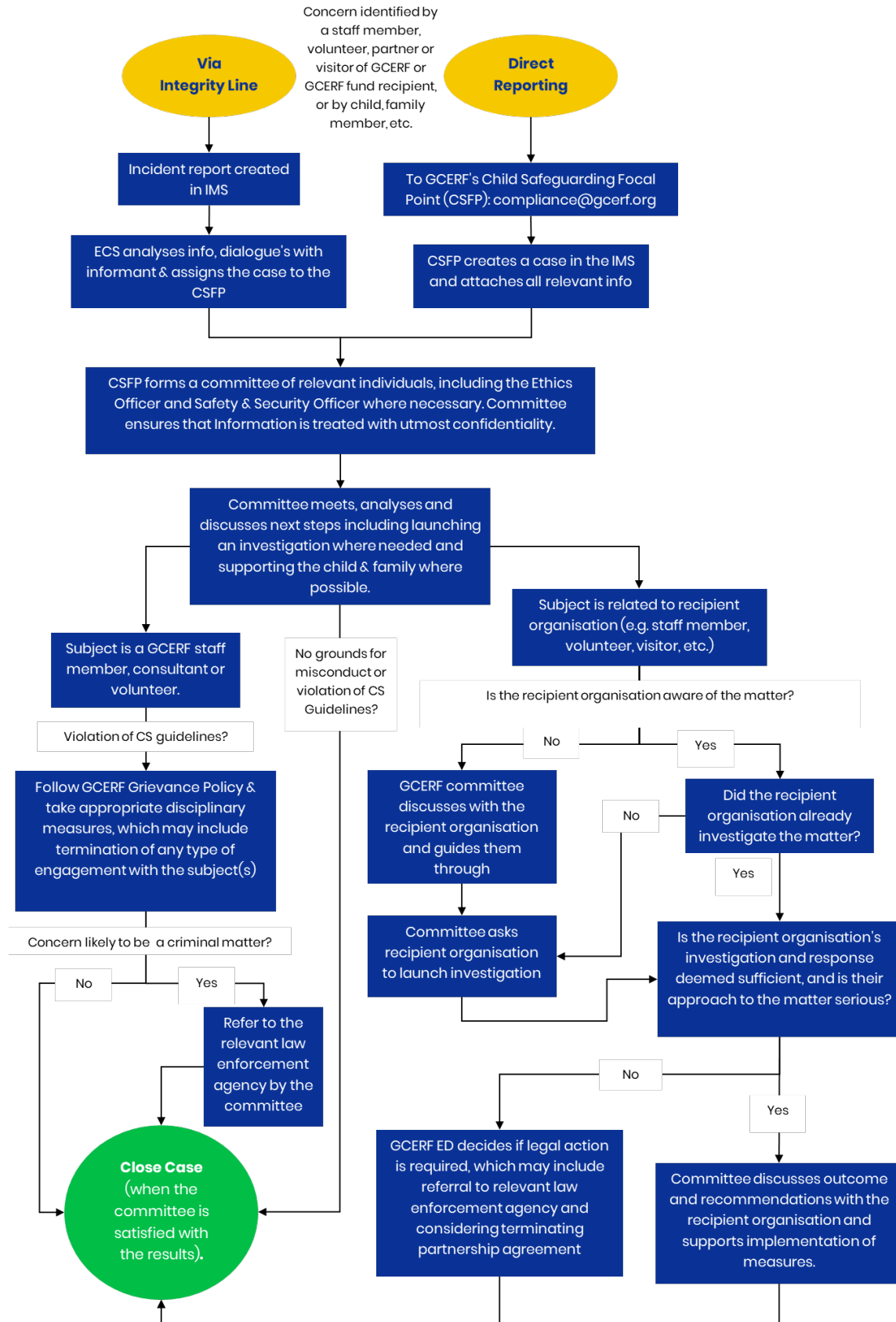
⁴ Any individual reporting a concern.

The Integrity Line is a whistleblowing hotline. It is an online tool that is directly accessible from GCERF's website by anyone.⁵ The Integrity Line provides a channel of reporting that gives the option of reporting anonymously. Potential informants may not have access to formal channels or may not feel comfortable using those. The GCERF Integrity Line has therefore been set up to allow reporting from people in such situations who can make an anonymous report in confidence. The Integrity Line platform is hosted by a third-party whistleblowing hotline provider, Ethics Point. Reports are all viewed by an independent Ethics and Compliance specialist (ECS) contracted by GCERF who is responsible for gathering information and processing reports, while treating cases with utmost confidentiality.

When a report is made through the Integrity Line, it is directed automatically to GCERF's Incident Management System (IMS). The IMS is a secure and confidential internal system used by GCERF for managing cases. It is monitored by the independent Ethics & Compliance Specialist (ECS) whose responsibility is to review cases and assign them to the appropriate individual(s) in GCERF.

The map below outlines the process followed if a child safeguarding concern is reported to GCERF:

⁵ All information regarding the Integrity Line and its usage is available on the Integrity Line webpage accessible via GCERF's official webpage: www.gcerf.org.



Notes on the process:

- Concerns and reports may be received from a number of sources – including GCERF’s and/or GCERF’s recipients’ staff, volunteers, partners as well as visitors, children and families/community members. All concerns and reports must be taken seriously.
- Concerns and reports must be passed to the Child Safeguarding Focal Point (CSFP). The CSFP can be reached on compliance@gcerf.org.
- GCERF recipients engaging with children, either directly or indirectly, should develop a similar reporting framework/flowchart (if not already available) which identifies how concerns and reports could be reported and how they will be managed. Recipients are required to inform GCERF of any child abuse incident that they become aware of. The main point of referral should be GCERF’s Child Safeguarding Focal Point. This is to ensure that reports are managed in a systematic way, and lessons are learned in terms of the implementation of the guidelines. This does not mean that the Child Safeguarding Focal Point is responsible for action – but he or she should be involved in the process and is responsible for coordinating the committee who manages a child safeguarding-related case.
- Consideration on whether to refer a child to an outside agency for protection must always be made within the legal framework of the country and with consideration for the best interests and wishes of the child and/or his/her family.
- When concerns are raised or reports made, importance must be placed on confidentiality, both of the referrer and also the child(ren)/adults involved. Information must be shared strictly on a need to know basis as necessary to ensure the child is kept safe and appropriate assistance is given.
- Referrals to local child protection agencies/police should be done in the prescribed manner (for example, there may be a particular format for reporting). Where the referral is made verbally it must also be confirmed in writing. GCERF may not be involved in any such reporting, but it would be useful if grantees provided evidence of the official reporting of the incident.
- Written records of all reports received by GCERF are kept and maintained by the Child Safeguarding Focal Point in GCERF’s Incident Management System, which is a secure and confidential location. Similarly, recipients must ensure that all reports received by them are kept in a very secure place.

5. Annex: Parental Consent Form

5.1. Activity Consent

i. I _____ give my consent for my child
(Please print your name above)

_____ to participate in
(Please print child's name above)

_____ activities.
(Please print name of organisation above)

ii. I also authorise _____ to be
(Please print organisation name above)

responsible for my child during these activities and authorise them to make decisions concerning any emergency medical treatment for my child which may be required during this activity.

iii. I affirm that I have full authority to give the consent provided for in this document.

5.2. Media Consent

I _____ consent for my child
(Please print your name above)

(as the parent or legal guardian) _____
(Please print child's name above)

to be interviewed/photographed/video graphed by Global Community Engagement

and Resilience Fund (GCERF) personnel and/or recipients/contractors. I understand that any such personnel and contractors are contractually bound to GCERF to use my child's data only in accordance with GCERF's instructions and any applicable legal requirements. I further authorise that my child's words and/or image may be published and/or distributed for documentation, informational, and/or marketing purposes – including in hard copy, via email, in news media, on the Internet, and on social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, website).

I confirm that I have read and understood the Parental Consent Form, and agree to abide by its contents.

Name of the child _____

Date _____ Place _____

Name of parent / carer / legal guardian _____

Signature _____

Should you wish to withdraw your consent or exercise other legal rights (e.g. have access to your child's data or restrict the processing of your child's data), please contact the GCERF Secretariat at +41 22 30 08 10 or info@gcerf.org.