



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SRI LANKA

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இலங்கை மனித உரிமைகள் ஆணைக்குழு
Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

COMPLAINTS INVOLVING CHILDREN

Version 1.0

10 June 2026



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நீதித்துறைக்கான அனுசரணை திட்டம்
Support to Justice Sector Project

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The HRCSL also acknowledges the continued partnership and technical support of UNICEF Sri Lanka in advancing child-friendly justice and strengthening mechanisms for the protection and promotion of child rights in Sri Lanka.

The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka remains committed to ensuring that complaints involving children are handled in a child-centered, rights-based, and child-friendly manner, consistent with the best interests of the child and the principles of meaningful child participation.

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INTRODUCTION

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) sets out the process to be followed by officers of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) with respect to complaints that involve a child as a victim or a witness. This SOP supplements the General SOP on Complaints and shall be read together with it. It outlines the process from the point of receiving a complaint to the enforcement of the HRCSL's recommendations, with additional safeguards and standards applicable to children.

This SOP is grounded in Sri Lanka's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly the State's responsibility to ensure the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of the rights of every child without discrimination. In accordance with Article 12 of the UNCRC, the HRCSL recognizes the child's right to be heard and to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and the corresponding obligation to give those views due weight according to the child's age and maturity. Accordingly, child participation is placed at the centre of the HRCSL's complaints handling process.

The primary aim of this SOP is to ensure that the complaints procedure at the HRCSL is child-centered, rights-based, and consistent with the principle of the best interests of the child. Where any inconsistency arises between this SOP and the General SOP on Complaints, the provisions of this SOP shall prevail in all matters concerning children.

The Board of Commissioners of the HRCSL may, from time to time, revise or adapt this SOP to better fulfil the mandate of the HRCSL and ensure compliance with national and international standards on the protection and promotion of child rights.

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS

1.1 For the purposes of this SOP, any person below the age of eighteen (18) years shall be considered a child.

1.2 All officers handling complaints involving children shall have specialized training on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols, and the Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime, and shall apply these standards in the implementation of this SOP.

1.3 All officers of the HRCSL shall uphold the following principles when handling complaints that involve a child as a victim or witness:

- a) **Best Interests of the Child** – The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions and decisions taken in relation to a complaint.
- b) **Do no harm** – No action, communication, or intervention shall cause physical, psychological, emotional, social harm to the child. All interactions with the child shall be conducted with caution and sensitivity, avoiding practices that may revictimise or intimidate the child, or increase the child's vulnerability.

- c) **Non-Discrimination and Attention to Vulnerability** – No child shall be discriminated against on any grounds, including gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status. Relevant measures should be implemented to address the needs of children in particularly vulnerable situations, including relevant adaptations and referral to support services
- d) **Accessibility** – All procedures shall be accessible to children, including those with disabilities, language barriers, or other special needs.
- e) **Privacy and Confidentiality** – The privacy of the child shall be respected at all stages. Confidentiality of information shall be maintained unless disclosure is necessary to protect the rights or safety of the child.
- f) **Access to information** – Information on the process, timelines, possible outcomes and possibilities to challenge the decisions shall be provided to the child and the child’s parents/guardians as relevant bearing in mind the child’s best interests in an accessible manner, taking into account the child’s age, evolving capacities and specific situation.
- g) **Informed Consent** – Efforts shall be made to obtain the child’s informed consent, in a manner appropriate to their age and level of understanding, before engaging them in any process. Where necessary, the consent of a parent or guardian shall also be obtained, unless doing so would be contrary to the child’s best interests or may place the child at risk.
- h) **Responsiveness and Communication** – Communication with children shall be clear, child-friendly, and adapted to the child’s level of maturity. Officers shall respond to children with patience and sensitivity.
- i) **Thorough, impartial and fair** – All complaints shall be handled with thoroughness, impartiality and fairness, bearing in mind the unique vulnerabilities of children.
- j) **Efficient and Timely** – Complaints involving children shall be handled expeditiously, recognising that delays may cause distress, exacerbate harm, or undermine the child’s wellbeing.

1.4 In applying these standards, officers shall be mindful of the principle of the evolving capacities of the child. This principle recognises both the child’s gradual acquisition of autonomy and maturity, and the responsibility of officers not to demand or expect from a child anything that is inappropriate to their stage of development.

1.5 All officers shall ensure meaningful child participation throughout the process in a manner that is safe, voluntary, respectful, and appropriate to the child’s circumstances.

2. CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES

2.1 All complaints involving children should be handled in child-friendly environments that promote safety, comfort, dignity and sense of security.

2.2 A child-friendly room should be provided within the HRCSL Head Office and, where possible, in regional offices. This room shall serve both as a waiting area for child victims or witnesses and as a child-friendly inquiry room where inquiries may be conducted when appropriate. The room should be safe. The room should be welcoming with appropriate furniture, a non-adversarial layout, and activities such as books, drawing material and toys appropriate for different ages.

2.3 The child-friendly room shall be used as follows:

- a) Waiting area – All child victims and witnesses may remain in the child-friendly room while awaiting their meeting/discussion with the Child Rights Officer (CRO) or Inquiry Officer.
- b) Inquiry Room – Inquiries involving children below 12 years, as well as those involving children above 12 years who prefer a child-friendly environment, shall ordinarily be conducted in the child-friendly room.

2.4 Inquiries involving children above 12 years who prefer a more formal setting may have their inquiry conducted in the general inquiry room, provided that the environment remains safe, upholds the child's privacy, and is free from any disturbance.

2.5 In the absence of a designated child-friendly room, especially in the HRCSL Regional Offices, at least a child-friendly desk should be made available, designed and arranged to put children at ease during interactions with HRCSL officers. This is to avoid a child complainant who is present at the Commission either alone or with a responsible adult to submit a complaint is not made to stay for prolonged hours before submitting the complaint.

2.6 Child-friendly spaces should be:

- a) Accessible to children with disabilities;
- b) Equipped to ensure privacy and confidentiality
- c) Free from any materials or symbols that may intimidate or stigmatise children.

2.7 Where resources permit, officers of the Child Rights Unit should periodically consult with child protection experts and children themselves to improve the design and use of child-friendly spaces.

2.8 Officers interacting with children in child-friendly spaces should receive training in child-sensitive communication and behaviour, including the use of appropriate tone, language and body language, and in avoiding practices that may cause fear or distress.

3. ADDITIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 In addition to the roles identified under the General SOP, the following officers shall be designated for the purpose of handling complaints involving children:

- a) Child Rights Officer – Child Rights Unit (CRO – CRU)
- b) Child Rights Officer – Admissibility Unit (CRO – AU)
- c) Child Welfare Officer (CWO)

3.2 These roles are established to ensure child-centered handling, protection, and meaningful participation throughout the complaint process.

3.3 The **Child Rights Officer of the Child Rights Unit (CRO-CRU)**, shall be an officer in the grade of Human Rights Officer attached to the Child Rights Unit, with the required knowledge and training in child rights and child protection.

3.3.1 The role of CRO-CRU shall be equivalent to that of the Duty Intake Officer under the General SOP, with additional child-specific responsibilities. Accordingly, the CRO-CRU shall;

- a) Receive complaints submitted by a child, or by an adult on behalf of a child, in person at the HRCSL Head Office or Regional Offices
- b) When receiving such complaints;
 - i. Provide the complainant with the complaint form, relevant guidelines, and a clear explanation of the complaint procedure in a child friendly manner as outlined in this SOP (Sections 4.5 & 4.6)
 - ii. Issue acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint (Section 4.5 of the General SOP)
- c) Receive complaints relating to child rights submitted to the Commission through HRCSL website portal, hotline, fax, or post
- d) Monitor credible and relevant media reports and publicly available information relating to alleged child rights violations, and, where appropriate, inform the I&I Director in accordance with Section 4.3 of this SOP
- e) Perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this SOP

3.4 The **Child Rights Officer of the Admissibility Unit (CRO-AU)**, shall be an officer in the grade of Legal Officer or Human Rights Officer attached to the Admissibility Unit, equipped with the required expertise in child rights.

3.4.1 In accordance with the Admissibility Guidelines in the General SOP and the provisions of this SOP, the CRO-AU shall:

- a) Assess the admissibility of complaints involving children forwarded by the CRO-CRU
- b) Request and receive information from the complainant where additional information is required to ascertain the admissibility of the complaint, while ensuring such communication is child-appropriate
- c) Apply the admissibility criteria in a manner that is sensitive to the specific circumstances and vulnerabilities of children
- d) Follow the procedure for accepting or not admitting a complaint as set out in the General SOP, ensuring that decisions are reasoned, documented and in line with the underlying principles of the SOP
- e) Perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this SOP

3.5 The **Child Welfare Officer (CWO)**, shall be an officer in the grade of Management Assistant who has received appropriate training in child-sensitive engagement.

3.5.1 The primary role of the CWO shall be to accompany and assist a child throughout the complaint process, where the child indicates that such support is needed or desirable. This may include to;

- a) Accompany the child in the waiting area until the child meets the CRO or Inquiry Officer
- b) Assist the child in filling out the complaint form as stated in Section 4.7 of this SOP
- c) Accompany the child during inquiries, mediation, or conciliation proceedings, where the child requests such presence
- d) Provide reassurance and practical support to enable the child's safe and meaningful participation
- e) Perform such other functions as may be prescribed in this SOP

3.5.2 The CWO shall not;

- a) Influence, coach, or direct the child's views or statements
- b) Act as the child's legal representative or advocate or
- c) Interfere with the independence or impartiality of the complaint handling process

3.5.3 The CWO shall perform their duties in an impartial, non-directive, and child-sensitive manner, with due regard to the child's dignity, autonomy, and best interests.

3.5.4 Where, in the course of providing assistance, the CWO observes signs of distress, fear, intimidation, or any risk to the child's safety or well-being, the CWO shall promptly bring such concerns to the attention of the CRO or the Inquiry Officer for appropriate action.

4. RECEIVING COMPLAINTS

4.1 A complaint involving a child may be made by the child directly, by an adult on behalf of the child, or by a referral institution. Complaints may therefore be **child-led** or **adult-led**, depending on who initiates the process.

4.2 Any person who wishes to make a complaint shall be entitled to receive a Complaint Form together with written guidelines on how to complete it.

4.3 Complaints may be submitted in person or by other means, including the hotline, HRCSL website portal, email, or fax.

4.4 In the case of complaints made in person:

- a) At the Head Office, the CRO at the Child Rights Unit (CRO-CRU) shall be the receiving officer
- b) At regional offices where no CRU exists, the CRO at the child-rights desk shall be the receiving officer

4.5 The receiving officer shall first explain the complaints procedure, including the scope of the HRCSL's mandate and what to expect after the complaint is submitted. A copy of the flow chart outlining the complaint process may be shared with the complainant, if the complainant so requests. (Standard Form 1)

4.6 The officer shall thereafter:

- a) Provide the complainant with a Complaint Form and the accompanying guidelines. The written guidelines provided to children shall be the child-friendly version of the written guidelines. (Standard Form 2)
- b) Give clear instructions on how to fill the form in the preferred language of the complainant (Sinhala, Tamil, or English)
- c) Where the officer is not competent in the preferred language of the complainant, immediately obtain the assistance of a competent officer.

4.7 In the case of child-led complaints where the child indicates a need for assistance, the following process shall apply:

4.7.1 A Child Welfare Officer (CWO) shall be assigned to assist the child throughout the procedure. The CWO may assist the child in filling the Complaint Form, deciding the required supporting documents, and providing other necessary support. Children with disabilities, in particular, shall be offered such support as a matter of course.

4.7.2 Where the Complaint Form is completed with the assistance of the CWO, a note shall be made on the Complaint Form stating that the form was completed with such assistance. The note shall include the name, designation, and signature of the CWO.

4.7.3 The CWO shall read the completed contents of the Complaint Form back to the child in a manner appropriate to the child's level of understanding. The officer shall ensure that the child agrees with the contents before the form is finalised.

4.7.4 The relevant officer may keep an audio recording of the contents of the Complaint Form after obtaining the consent of the child for such recording and upload it to the HURIN system. The officer shall:

- a) explain clearly to the child the purpose of the recording;
- b) obtain consent in a manner that does not cause the child to feel pressured or intimidated;
- c) ensure that the recording process is stopped immediately if the child expresses discomfort and make a note stating the recording was paused or stopped.

4.8 A dedicated hotline shall be established for receiving complaints involving children. Complaints involving children may be received through either the dedicated hotline or the general hotline, as determined by the nature and circumstances of the complaint.

- 4.9 The CRO shall summarise the relevant details of the complaint and complete a Hotline Report to ensure that all relevant details are recorded.
- 4.10 Complaints received via the HRCSL online portal shall be forwarded by the Network Administrator directly to the CRU.
- 4.11 Any officer of the HRCSL who receives a complaint involving a child by post, fax or email shall forward such complaint to the CRU without delay.
- 4.12 All complaints involving children shall be promptly acknowledged in writing. Such acknowledgment shall clearly state that it is only a confirmation of receipt, and not a determination of admissibility or acceptance.

5. DETERMINING ADMISSIBILITY AND ACCEPTANCE

- 5.1 In the case of complaints involving alleged torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, arbitrary arrest or detention, or corporal punishment, the CRO receiving the complaint shall serve as the Admissibility Officer (AO). This officer shall initially determine whether such a complaint is admissible.
- 5.2 In cases where there is an immediate risk of harm to the child, the CRO-CRU should immediately follow the procedure laid out in Section 8 of this SOP to refer the child to the relevant authorities.
- 5.3 In cases where the CRO-CRU receives an anonymous complaint or identifies a matter through credible media reports (as per section 3.3.1 (d) above), and upon preliminary assessment, is of the view that the information disclosed indicates a real or potential risk to the safety, security, or well-being of a child, or an imminent infringement of child rights, the CRO-CRU, shall immediately inform the Inquiries and Investigation (I&I) Director.
- 5.3.1 The I&I Director, upon being informed of such complaint, in consultation with the Commissioner in charge, may, where warranted by the nature and seriousness of the allegations:
- a) initiate a fact-finding mission in accordance with the Commission's mandate and procedures or
 - b) invoke the *suo motu* jurisdiction of the Commission, notwithstanding the absence of an identified complainant
- 5.3.2 In taking such action, primary consideration shall be given to the best interest of the child and the need to prevent harm, without requiring disclosure of the identity of the complainant
- 5.4 All other complaints that do not fall within the categories set out in section 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 shall be forwarded to the Admissibility Unit in accordance with the procedure set out in the General SOP subjected to the following additional safeguards;

- 5.4.1 All cases involving child victims shall be assigned to a designated officer of the Admissibility unit to minimize delays and leverage on efficiency acquired through specialization
 - 5.4.2 Such Officer may prioritize and expedite cases which are time sensitive and entails a higher risk of potential harm to the safety of the child
- 5.5 In determining admissibility, the AO shall apply the Admissibility Guidelines contained in the General SOP.
- 5.6 In the case of *child-led complaints* determined to be inadmissible, the Admissibility Officer shall forward the case to the CRO and the CRO, shall carefully explain to the child reasons for inadmissibility and respond to any questions the child may have. Such communication shall be made in a language appropriate to the age and level of understanding of the child.
- 5.7 Complaints determined to be admissible shall thereafter be accepted in accordance with section 4 of the General SOP.

6. ASSIGNING CASES

- 6.1 The same procedure set out in the General SOP shall be adopted to assign cases to officers. The Director of Investigations and Inquiries (I&I) shall assign child rights complaints to a Legal Officer or Human Rights Officer specialised in child rights.
- 6.2 Any Legal Officer or Human Rights Officer assigned to a child rights complaint shall have received training in child rights and child-sensitive procedures, including child-friendly interviewing, communication, and safeguarding practices.
- 6.3 The Legal Officer or Human Rights Officer assigned under section 5.1 shall serve as the Case Officer for the complaint. The Case Officer shall be responsible for handling the matter in accordance with the provisions of this SOP and the General SOP.
- 6.4 Where the number of complaints involving children increases significantly, the HRCSL shall ensure that one or more dedicated Legal Officers and/or Human Rights Officers are progressively appointed to the Child Rights Unit to manage such cases.

7. INITIAL PREPARATION

- 7.1 The same procedure set out in the General SOP shall be adopted except where the following shall apply.
- 7.2 Where the Case Officer, in the process of understanding the nature of the complaint, encounters difficulty in accurately assessing the nature of the case or the interventions required, the Case Officer shall consult a Senior Officer of the Commission or an external expert as appropriate, in order to minimise the risk of potential harm to the child.

7.3 The default position shall be that the child and the respondent are not summoned to the Commission at the same time. This is to prevent intimidation, distress, or re-victimization, and to safeguard the child's physical and emotional wellbeing.

7.3.1 In the event a child expresses a preference to have the inquiry conducted in the presence of the respondent, the Inquiry Officer shall carefully assess the suitability of summoning both parties together, taking into account:

- a) The best interest of the child
- b) The child's age, maturity, and psychological state
- c) The nature and gravity of the allegations
- d) Potential risks to the child's safety, dignity, privacy, or emotional wellbeing
- e) The possibility of coercion, manipulation, or undue influence

7.3.2 A joint appearance shall only occur where the Inquiry Officer can clearly establish that the setting is safe and appropriate.

8. INFORMING A RESPONSIBLE ADULT

8.1 The decision to inform a parent, guardian, or other responsible adult of a complaint involving a child shall be guided primarily by the best interests of the child, with due regard to the child's safety, protection, dignity, privacy, and evolving capacities.

8.2 Such decision shall be made on a case by case basis, based on specific circumstances of the complaint by the Case Officer in consultation with the Director of Inquiries and Investigations and shall be documented with reasons grounded in the best interests of the child.

8.3 In determining whether to inform a responsible adult, the following factors, although not exhaustive shall be taken into consideration;

- a) The nature and seriousness of the complaint
- b) Any actual or potential risk of harm, intimidation, retaliation, or undue influence on the child
- c) The evolving capacity of the child, maturity, circumstances, and expresses views, where appropriate and
- d) The likely impact of informing or refraining from informing a responsible adult on the child's safety and well-being.

8.4 Regardless of whether a responsible adult is informed, the child shall, as far as possible, remain involved in the process. Officers shall ensure that the child is enabled to express their views and participate in decisions affecting them, in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities.

9. SUPPORT SERVICES/REFERRALS

9.1 A multi-sectoral approach shall be adopted in handling cases, recognising that no single institution can address all aspects of a child's wellbeing. The Commission shall therefore

make referrals to appropriate government agencies and civil society organisations where necessary to secure the best interests of the child.

9.2 Where support services are required, pending inquiry or investigation, the CRO (as mentioned in Section 5.2) or the Case Officer shall in consultation with the I&I Director identify and inform the relevant referral institution(s) from the National Child Rights Directory available at the CRU. The Directory shall contain a list of national and regional government organisations and verified civil society organisations providing child protection, health, counselling, shelter, education, and related services.

9.2.1 A Referral Form (Standard Form 3) shall be issued to the complainant by the CRO or the Case Officer, detailing:

- a) the name of the referral institution;
- b) Contact details, address and focal point; and
- c) A copy of the Referral Form shall be forwarded to the referral institution. Information shall be shared on a 'Need to know basis', only to the extent strictly necessary to facilitate the referral, and shall be handled in accordance with the principle of confidentiality.

9.2.2 The Child Welfare Officer shall follow up on actions taken by the referral institution to ensure that the services provided are effective and that the best interests of the child are safeguarded. Records of follow-up shall be uploaded into the HURIN System.

10. CONCILIATION AND MEDIATION

10.1 The procedure for conciliation and mediation shall be the same as provided in the General SOP.

10.2 Additionally, a CWO shall be made available to assist the child throughout the conciliation or mediation process. The CWO shall:

- a) provide reassurance and guidance to the child
- b) ensure that the child's views are heard in a manner appropriate to their evolving capacity and maturity and;
- c) Safeguard against any undue influence, intimidation, or re-victimization during the proceedings.

10.3 The Case Officer shall ensure that the child is not forced or pressured into accepting a solution they do not find satisfactory.

10.4 Conciliation or mediation shall not proceed in circumstances where doing so may endanger the rights, safety, or best interests of the child. In such cases, the matter shall proceed directly to inquiry or investigation, as appropriate.

11. INQUIRY & INVESTIGATION

- 11.1 The procedure for inquiries and investigations shall be the same as set out in the General SOP, subject to the additional responsibilities provided below.
- 11.2 The inquiry shall be conducted in the child-friendly room or the general inquiry room as set out in section 2 of this SOP, or, where necessary, online.
- 11.3 Where the inquiry is conducted in-person at the HRCSL, the Inquiry Officer shall confirm that the child is comfortable in the designated space and make reasonable adjustments if required.
- 11.3.1 Based on the age, maturity and evolving capacity of the child, the child shall be informed that they may participate:
- a) With a parent, guardian, or other support person which includes the CWO or
 - b) On their own, if they so prefer, provided that this is assessed to be safe and in the child's best interests
- 11.3.2 Efforts shall be made by the Officer to respect the child's preference to the greatest extent possible
- 11.3.3 Where a parent or guardian is present during the inquiry, the Inquiry Officer shall ascertain that they are acting in the best interests of the child and shall take measures to ensure that the child is not manipulated by any parent, guardian, or other person.
- 11.4 Where the inquiry is conducted online, the Inquiry Officer shall ensure that;
- a) The inquiry is conducted in a private and secure environment
 - b) Background noise and interruptions are minimized
 - c) The child is familiar with the basic functions of the platform
 - d) Only persons whose presence has been assessed as appropriate and necessary, and who do not pose a risk of influence, intimidation or interference, are present within the physical or virtual space from which the child participates
- 11.4.1 The Inquiry Officer shall confirm, at the outset, who is present with the child and may require any person to leave if their presence is assessed to be contrary to the best interests of the child
- 11.4.2 The recording of the inquiry shall be uploaded to the HURIN system at the conclusion of each inquiry.
- 11.5 At the commencement of the inquiry, reassure the child that their statements will be treated confidentially, except where disclosure is legally mandatory. necessary to safeguard their wellbeing.
- 11.5.1 The inquiry Officer shall ensure that the child is afforded a meaningful opportunity to express their views during the inquiry, regardless of whether the complaint is child-led or adult led.

11.5.2 Forensic interviewing techniques shall be applied in conducting inquiries, using language that is adapted to the child's age, maturity, and evolving capacities, and avoiding leading, coercive, or intimidating questioning. (Refer Standard Form 4 for inquiry framework)

11.5.3 At the conclusion of the inquiry agree how and when communication will take place going forward.

11.5.4 Prepare a written record of the discussion and share it with the child

11.5.5 Where the complaint is adult-led and the child declines to present their views despite being given the opportunity, the Inquiry Officer shall make a written note of this.

11.6 Where it becomes necessary to share information with a third party, the Inquiry Officer shall inform the child of the following provided it is in the best interest of the child:

- a) the information to be shared;
- b) the purpose of the disclosure; and
- c) the manner in which the information will be shared.

12. DECISION MAKING AND OUTCOME OF THE CASE

12.1 All decisions made during inquiries and investigations shall be in the best interests of the child.

12.2 Where the Commission considers that irreversible harm may be caused to a child before the inquiry and investigation process is concluded, the Commission shall issue interim directives to secure the child's safety and wellbeing.

12.3 In cases where the complaint or incident has attracted public scrutiny or has been reported in the media, the Commission shall forthwith issue interim directives to relevant stakeholders, including media organisations, State institutions, and any other actors involved, to ensure the protection of the child's privacy, dignity, and safety. Such directives may include directions on;

- a) refraining from publishing or broadcasting any information that may lead to the identification of the child
- b) avoiding sensationalized, harmful or intrusive reporting
- c) limiting unauthorized contact with the child or their family
- d) any other measures necessary to prevent further harm arising from public exposure

12.4 All decisions shall be based on facts, reflecting the full complexity of the situation and the implications for the child.

12.5 Where possible, decisions shall be made collectively in order to reduce the risk of individual conscious or unconscious bias influencing the outcome. The collective may include a Senior Legal Officer, Director I & I and the Commissioner in Charge.

12.6 Where multiple potential outcomes exist, the decision maker shall evaluate the likely impact of each option on the child holistically and in terms of their rights, to determine which option best serves the child's interests.

12.7 The outcome of the case shall be formally communicated through a Decision Letter as provided in the General SOP. The contents of the Decision Letter shall be explained by the Case Officer to the child in clear, age-appropriate language, including which views were considered, the reasons for the decision, and the next steps. This includes informing the available avenues to challenge the final decision.

12.8 This explanation may be provided either in person or through a telephone call, based on the preferred mode of communication.

12.9 Where a responsible adult has been involved, the Decision Letter shall also be explained to them.

13. PUBLISHING AND ENFORCING RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The procedure for publishing and enforcing recommendations shall be the same as set out in the General SOP with the additional safeguards enumerated below.

13.2 Two versions of the recommendations shall be prepared by the Case Officer, namely

- a) Official Version for parties and
- b) Public Version for Publication

13.3 The **Official version** of the recommendations shall be issued to the relevant parties for the purpose of implementation and enforcement. This version may include the necessary identifying details of the child victim, to the extent required to give effect to the recommendations, and shall be shared only with person or authorities with a legitimate role in enforcement.

13.4 The **Public version** of the recommendations shall be prepared for publication on the HRCSL website. This version shall exclude all personal information that may directly or indirectly identify the child. Such personal information shall include, but is not limited to;

- a) Full name or initials of the child
- b) Home address or any location specific details
- c) Current school or educational institution attended by the child, if different to the respondent
- d) Names of parents, guardians, caregivers where disclosure may lead to the identification of the child or their whereabouts

13.4.1 An optional paragraph as follows maybe added to the public version of the recommendation stating:

“In the interest of protecting the child’s right to privacy and in accordance with the best interests of the child, all identifying details have been anonymised in this recommendation”

13.4.2 The responsibility of ensuring proper redaction and compliance with this section shall rest with the Case Officer subject to the supervisory review of the I&I Director, prior to it being forwarded to the Network Administrator for publication.

14. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

14.1 The Case Officer may at the conclusion of the case provide the Child Feedback Form (Standard Form 5) to the child and invite them to complete it if they wish to do so, in accordance with the principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality and child’s best interest.

14.2 The Case Officer shall then forward the feedback form to the CRO-CRU to analyse the feedback of the children.

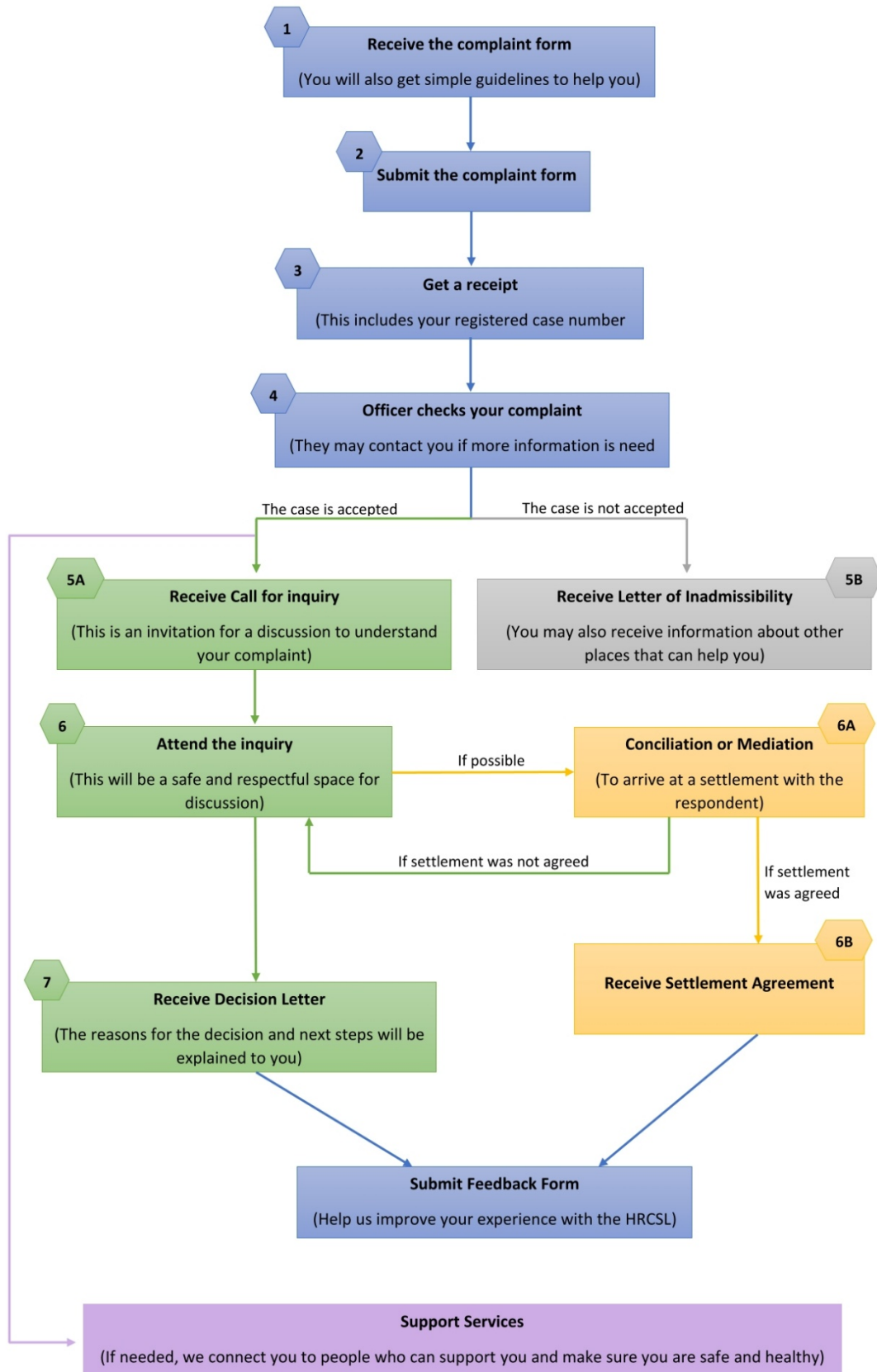
14.3 The Child Rights Unit in collaboration with the I&I Division, shall prepare periodic reports assessing the accessibility, effectiveness, and outcomes of the process, with a view to continuously improving the Commission’s response to complaints involving children. (Standard Form 6)

14.4 Findings from the analysis of cases shall be used to identify policy and legislative gaps that require broader intervention. To that end, the Monitoring and Evaluation Report prepared by the CRU and authorized by the relevant Directors may include a list of recommendations to the HRCSL Board of Commissioners in pursuance of promotion and protection of child rights in the country.



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Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

STANDARD FORM 1



STANDARD FORM 2

Guidelines to fill the Complaint Form

- ❖ This guideline is to help you fill in the complaint form of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL)
- ❖ If you **do not understand any part of this guide** or **need help filling the form**, you may ask for assistance of a **Child Welfare Officer**.
- ❖ Try to answer all the questions. If you do not know an answer or do not feel comfortable answering a question, you may leave it blank.
- ❖ You can answer in your own words.
- ❖ Your information will be kept confidential and will only be seen by authorized officers, unless sharing is needed to protect your safety or rights.

Question 1 (About the person filling the form)

- This question is only for situations where someone else other than the child who was affected is filling the form
- If you are the child affected by the incident and filling the form yourself, you may leave this section blank

Questions 2 – 10 (About the affected child)

- These questions ask for the details about the child who was affected.
- If there is more than one child affected, you may:
 - Write the details of the other child or children on an additional sheet and
 - Attach it to the complaint form
 - The details should include: Name, Address, NIC (if any), age, district, telephone No. (if any), email address (if any), female/male

Question 4 (National Identity Card)

- If you have a National Identity Card, write the number here
- If you don't have a NIC, write your Postal ID number
- If you don't have a NIC or a Postal ID, you may leave this space blank

Question 6 (District)

- Write the district where the affected child lives (For example: Colombo, Kandy, Jaffna, Matara)
- If you are not sure, you may ask for help

Question 7 & 8 (Telephone number)

- If you have your own telephone number, you may write it here

- If you do not have any telephone number and wish to give the number of you parent, guardian, or responsible adult, you may
 - Write their number and
 - mention next to it whose number it is (For ex: mother, father, guardian)

Question 9 (Email address)

- If you have your own email address, you may write it here.
- If you do not have an email address of your own and you wish to add the email address of your parent, guardian or responsible adult, you may
 - Write their email address and
 - mention next to it whose email it is

Question 11 (Who are you complaining about?)

Question 11 (a) (Institution)

- Write the name of the institution where the person you are complaining about works.
- For example;
 - If the complaint is against the Principal or Teacher in your school write the name of your school.
 - If the complaint is against the Matron of your children’s home, write the name of your children’s home
 - If the complaint is against a Police Officer, write the name of the Police Station

Question 11 (b) (Person or persons responsible)

- This refers to the details of the person against whom you are complaining. It can be more than one person.
- Example;
 - Name: Mrs. T. S Fernando
Designation: Principal
Address: Galewala Central College, Galewala
 - Name: Mr. Karawith
Designation: Master in charge of Sports
Address: Galewala Central College, Galewala

Question 12 (What happened?)

- This space is for you to explain what happened. Write about what happened to you
- Example:
 - Mr Karawita didn’t allow me to participate in the Provincial Level Athletic Meet even though I placed first in the school level selection rounds held to select children for the Provincial Level Athletic Meet.
 - Mrs T. S Fernando didn’t take any action even though I complained about it to her the day before the competition.
- If the space is not enough, you may use an additional sheet

Question 13 (When and where did it happen?)

Question 13 (a) (Date)

- Write the date when the incident happened
- If you can remember the time, add the time of the incidents as well

Question 13 (b) (Place)

- Write where the incident took place
- For example: school, police station, children's home

Question 14 (Basis of the rights violation)

- Write the reason why you believe your rights were violated.
- You may choose from reasons such as: race, language, religion, gender, administrative reasons or political opinion
- If you are not sure, you may write what you feel is relevant

Question 15 (Evidence)

Question 15 (a) (Witnesses)

- If there were other people who saw what happened, write down their names
- If they can give a written statement or an affidavit¹ about the incident tick 'yes' and attach it to the complaint form

Question 15 (b) (Documents)

- If you have any documents that support your complaint, list them here, tick 'yes' and attach copies
- Example:
 - If the complaint is regarding selection for a competition, the score sheet of the selection rounds
 - If the complaint is regarding corporal punishment, medical records obtained from a doctor regarding the injuries

Question 15 (c) (Other evidence)

- Any other evidence than can be submitted to support your complaint
- Example:
 - Photos
 - Audio or video recordings

Question 16 (Complaints made earlier)

- If you complained about this issue to someone in the same institution, write
 - Whom you complained to and
 - What action was taken
- If no action was taken by that person, you may write 'no action was taken'
- Example:

¹ An affidavit is a sworn statement in writing made especially under oath or on affirmation before a person who has authority to administer an oath. This can be a Notary Republic or Lawyer.

- If you complained about the Master-in charge of Sports to the Principal about the Master not allowing you to participate in the Provincial Level competitions and the Principal didn't take any action you may write as 'I informed the Principal on 20th January 2026 but the Principal did not anything about it until today'

Question 17 (Complaints to other institutions)

Question 17 (a)

- Write if this issue has already been reported to any other institution
 - Example: Ombudsman's Office, Public Service Commission, Court, Police etc

Question 17 (b)

- Write the date of that complaint

Question 18 (Outcome of earlier complaint)

- Write the solution given to you from the other institution (if any)
- Provide any document you may have regarding that solution which may include letters

Question 19 (Previous complaint to the HRCSL)

- If you have made any complaints to HRCSL before write the case number of that complaint
- If you complained through the hotline, write the date and time of that call, if you remember

Question 20 (What do you want HRCSL to do?)

- Write what kind of help or solution you want from HRCSL regarding the complaint
- You may list more than one request

Additional information

- ❖ Submit photocopies of the complaint form based on the number of respondents mentioned in your complaint. (Respondent means the person/party against whom the complaint is filed)
- ❖ Example: If there are 3 respondents, submit 3 photocopies
- ❖ If you are unable to provide photocopies, inform the Child Rights Officer or the Child Welfare Officer assigned to you to support you in obtaining the photocopies

STANDARD FORM 3



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Ref No.

REFERRAL FORM

This form is issued by the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka to facilitate the referral procedure of (Add Name of victim) to receive the required support and services from the following institution.

Referral institution: _____

Details of the focal point:

Name : _____

Address : _____

: _____

Contact Details : _____

Purpose:

.....
Director Inquiries and Investigations

HRCSL

.....
Date

Interview Framework for Inquiries Involving Children

This framework is intended to serve as general guidance for conducting inquiries involving children. Recognizing that each child and situation is unique, Inquiry Officers shall adapt this five stage process as necessary, taking into account the child’s age, evolving capacities, circumstances, and best interests.

General Principles applicable across all stages

- Engage with the child in a manner consistent with the child’s age, maturity, and evolving capacities
- Use simple, clear, and age-appropriate language, avoiding technical terms, jargon, or complex vocabulary
- Be attentive to the child’s verbal and non-verbal communication, including body language, and remain conscious of your own body language, tone, and facial expressions
- Demonstrate patience, allowing the child adequate time to process questions and respond without pressure

Stage 1: Preparation

This stage focuses on ensuring that the child feels safe, comfortable, and supported throughout the inquiry or discussion

- Ensure that the child is comfortable in the child-friendly room or general inquiry room (where applicable), prior to the commencement of the inquiry
- Be mindful of physical presence and perceived authority. Where possible, adopt a non-adversarial seating arrangement, as this is generally less intimidating, particularly for younger children
- Take reasonable steps to minimize distraction, including switching mobile phones to silent mode and placing appropriate signage such as “Inquiry in progress – Do Not Disturb” on the door



Stage 2: Rapport Building

This stage involved building trust, rapport, and confidence with the child.

- At the outset, introduce yourself and clearly explain your role, so the child understands who you are and why you are speaking with them
- Ask the child how they would prefer to be addressed
- Reassure the child regarding their safety and confidentiality, explaining any limits to confidentiality in a child-appropriate manner
- Be yourself and interact with the child normally without over-emphasizing authority or appearing childish or too relaxed.
- Avoid prolonged or intense staring, which may cause discomfort or distress
- Do not touch the child at any time



Stage 3: Free Narrative Account

This stage aims to understand the issue as perceived and described by the child

- Encourage the child to describe the incident or concern in their own words and at their own pace

- The Inquiry Officer’s role is to facilitate the child’s account. To this end, open ended prompts and questions may be used, such as “what”, “how”, “where” questions avoiding yes/no questions.
- Be sensitive to pauses or silences, and resist the urge to speak immediately when the child stops talking.
- Listen to the child’s narrative with an open and attentive mind, remaining aware of and setting aside any personal assumptions or biases.
- Avoid expressing approval, disapproval, disbelief, or judgment regarding what the child says.
- Remain neutral in response to the child’s statements, including neutrality in facial expressions, tone of voice, and verbal reactions.

Stage 4: Questioning

This stage is intended to clarify matters arising from the child’s earlier statements, the contentions of the respondent or other available information or evidence

- Questions at this stage may be more specific than those used during the previous stage, while remaining clear and age-appropriate. (Reformulate what the child has said and ask the child whether you have understood properly)
- Avoid repeating the same question multiple times, as children may alter their responses in an attempt to please the officer
- Clearly inform the child that it is acceptable to say “I don’t know”,
- “I don’t remember” or “I don’t understand the question”
- Respect the child’s right to remain silent and do not compel the child to respond if they choose not to speak
- Where appropriate, identify and clarify the outcomes or support the child hopes

Stage 5: Closing the discussion

This stage is intended to bring the discussion to a close in a calm and positive manner

- Thank the child for their cooperation and for sharing information
- Explain the next steps in simple terms, including what will happen next and the anticipated timeframe
- Provide the child with an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns before concluding the discussion

STANDARD FORM 5



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Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka

Feedback Form

You have the right to share your views about things that affect you.

This form gives you a chance to tell us what your experience with the HRCSL complaint process was like.

There are **no right** or **wrong answers**.

You can skip any question you do not want to answer.

Your views will be taken seriously and will help us improve our complaint procedure.

1. How have you felt throughout the complaint process?

2. Did you feel safe sharing your views with us?

Yes

No

I am not sure

3. Were things explained to you in a way you could understand?

Yes

No

Sometimes

4. Did the officers give you a chance to speak and share what you wanted to say?

Yes

No

Sometimes

5. Were you given enough time to speak, without being rushed or interrupted?

Yes

No

Sometimes

6. Did you understand what would happen next in your case?

Yes

No

A little

7. Is there anything you liked about how your views were heard?

8. Is there anything that made it hard for you to speak or share your views?

9. What can we do better to make the complaint process better for children?

10. If you needed help again, would you feel comfortable sharing your views with us?

Yes

No

Maybe

*Thank you for sharing your views.
Your voice truly matters.*

STANDARD FORM 6

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The following indicators may be used to assess the accessibility, effectiveness and outcomes of the complaint procedure on an annual basis.

Focus Area	Indicator	Source and Relevant Officer	Purpose
Accessibility	Total number of complaints involving children received (Head Office & Regional Office)	HURIN (CRO -CRU + ROs)	To identify the increase/decrease in the number of complaints received during a selected duration. (Disaggregated data on type of cases, age category, gender, location may provide insights on the changes in the number of cases received under each category)
	Percentage of complaints that are child led, adult led, and referred by other institutions	Complaint forms/HURIN (CRO -CRU + ROs)	To identify the proportion of complaints filed by children To inform the mechanisms and partnerships that need to be strengthened with other relevant institutions to receive cases involving children
	Percentage of complaints submitted by or relating to marginalized children ²	Complaint forms/HURIN (CRO - CRU + ROs)	To identify if certain groups are underrepresented despite the issues faced by them
	Percentage of inadmissible complaints received	Letters of inadmissibility (CRO-AU)	To inform advocacy efforts of the Commission in raising awareness on the mandate of the Commission (Disaggregated data on the complainant)

² Marginalized children includes but not limited to children with disabilities, children from minority communities, children in institutional care, children affected by displacement

			category, (Child/adult led), location, type of complaints may provide more specific insights)
	Mode of complaint	Complaint forms/hotline reports/emails/postal complaints/fax (CRO - CRU + ROs)	To identify the most preferred and accessible mode of complaining
Effectiveness	Percentage of cases completed within a year	HURIN (Case Officers)	To identify the type of cases that have been completed within a year To identify the average time required to resolve a complaint
	Level of child-sensitiveness of the Officers as perceived by children	Feedback Forms (CRO –CRU)	To ascertain the quality of the services provided by the Officers and identify training needs
	Level of child centeredness of the procedure as perceived by children	Feedback Forms (CRO – CRU)	To identify the drawbacks in the complaint procedure and make necessary changes accordingly
Outcome	Percentage of recommendations implemented within the stipulated time period and Percentage. of recommendations that have not been implemented	HURIN (Case Officer/Non-implementation Unit)	To make necessary policy changes to ensure implementation of recommendations issued
	Legal/policy/institutional changes that were made following recommendations of individual complaints	 (CRO- CRU)	To document best practices and strengthen public trust in the HRCSL To inform advocacy efforts of the HRCSL

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SRI LANKA

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