

# THE CARE LEADERS COUNCIL

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### I. Introduction

The Care Leaders Council is a global group of care experienced advocates from across the world championing the rights of care-experienced people as well as children without parental care. The council does this through research, training, policy advocacy, and socio-economic empowerment of care leavers.

The Council works in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders, including institutional donors, civil society organisations, and care-experienced networks around the world to be champions of alternative family-based care.

Each year care experienced individuals who have been in the care system (orphanages/institutions, residential care facilities, kinship care, foster care, and adoptees), join the Council for a period of 2 years.

The Council will work closely with members of the Transforming Children's Care Global Collaborative, family-based care focused organisations, Care leavers networks and regional and international bodies, including inter-governmental bodies (e.g. United Nations, African Union) and international human rights mechanisms.

### II. Vision and Mission

#### A. Vision:

A world where care experienced people are empowered and their voices amplified to influence stakeholders (governments, donors, families, communities, media) to uphold the rights of all children and young people living in alternative care and people who have left care; improve policies and services to provide better care for all vulnerable children, preventing family separation and reforming care systems to strengthen family care globally.

#### B. Mission:

To be a platform that acts as a global bridge for organisations, groups, and networks of care experienced young people which facilitates spaces and opportunities for participation, community building, knowledge sharing, connecting, supporting initiatives and advocacy by care experienced people with different actors and decision-makers globally.

### **III. Objectives of the Council**

#### **A. Overall goal:**

**To advocate for the rights of care-experienced people and children without adequate parental care worldwide.**

To achieve this, the Council will work in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including institutional donors, civil society organisations working to reform child protection and alternative care systems, and networks of care experienced individuals around the world to advocate for policies and practices that promote the well-being of these individuals, and their leadership, skills, talents, and participation in reform processes.

#### **B. Key Objectives**

##### **1. Engagement and support for networks of young people with care experience**

- a. Strengthen the capacity and influence of young people with care experience to organise, mobilise and act at national and regional levels.
- b. Provide more relevant opportunities for care leavers and care experienced networks at national and regional levels to come together to engage and influence international institutions and governance processes.
- c. Empowering care leaders to mobilise their communities and public services to better support the care leavers.

##### **2. Advocacy and Influence**

- a. Advocate for care reform and better transitions from alternative care systems.
- b. Advocate for a global budget dedicated to the protection of care leavers, including their economic empowerment, housing, and social protection.
- c. Increase the engagement of council members in new and impactful initiatives conceived by diverse actors globally that result in direct action to drive change toward a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world for care leavers and their families.
- d. Advocate for free legal services for care leavers to access if they need assistance and empower care leavers to access justice if they face any problem during their lifetime with any of their persecutors.

- e. Support resource mobilisation to fund initiatives by care experienced individuals and networks at national, regional and global levels.
- f. Advocate for care leavers to be identified as a marginalised group and initiate a day for global recognition of care leavers.
- g. Advocate for retroactive laws at national levels to seek justice for crimes committed against people with lived care experience.

### **3. Technical Guidance & Programs**

- a. Support regional and national programs and activities by care experienced networks.
- b. Develop guidance for governments, donors, IGOs, and NGOs with examples of good practice and policies aimed at protecting the rights of care experienced people globally, including ensuring their safety and the safety of their networks or organisations, and their access to justice and accountability for human rights violations.
- c. Work to shape the policy for independent living standards and ensure the best quality of life for care leavers and children currently in care.

### **4. Monitoring & Research**

- a. Monitor and support the implementation of socio-economic programs at the national, regional, and global, levels by and for care leavers' well-being.
- b. Generate research, knowledge, and data systems to inform evidence-based care reform policies and programs, with a particular focus on the situations, actions and solutions identified by care experienced actors.
- c. The council will proactively involve and regularly evaluate its activities and results and adjust its strategies and action plans as necessary to ensure the desired impact.

## **IV. Composition and Structure of the Council**

### **A. Membership of the Council**

#### **1. Number of Members and Representation**

- a. There shall be 16 active members on the council at any one time.
- b. Members shall serve for a term of 2 years with half of the members of the Council being appointed at 1 year interval to ensure the Council is composed of both new members and existing members.

- c. Revisions to the number of members can be made by decision of the Council to support its mission based on criteria for membership and availability of funding.
- d. The composition of the council shall reflect its global nature by having representatives from the following regions:
  - Southern Asia: 2 members
  - South-eastern Asia: 2 Members
  - Europe and Central Asia: 2 members
  - Latin America and the Caribbean: 2 members
  - Eastern Africa: 2 members
  - Southern Africa: 2 members
  - Western and Central Africa: 2 members
  - Middle East and North Africa: 1 member
- e. In addition, at least 1 member of the council will be selected to be representative of care experienced young persons with disabilities or LGBTQI+ communities.
- f. To ensure that all countries in a region are fairly represented when members are replaced, the new members from their region cannot also be from the same countries.

## 2. Criteria of Selection for Members<sup>1</sup>

- a. Members must have personal experience of living in the alternative care system (foster care, residential care, kinship care or adoption). Particular attention will also be placed on including members who have had no forms of family support while growing up.
- b. Members should be at least 18 years of age and with a sufficient level of maturity and experience to allow them to contribute significantly to the organisation.
- c. Members must be a current resident of the region that the member represents.
- d. Members must have direct links and connections to networks of care experienced people at national and/or regional levels.

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<sup>1</sup> These membership criteria ensure that the CLC is composed of individuals with the expertise and commitment necessary to effectively advocate for the improvement of the alternative care system and the protection of the rights of children and adolescents and their families. In addition, they encourage diversity of perspectives and member turnover, which contributes to a dynamic organisation that is responsive to changes in the alternative care field. Let's look at each of the criteria and their relevance.

- e. Members must have experience of leading youth organisations, with knowledge of international policies and declarations on the care and protection of children and adolescents.
- f. Members must have experience of leadership and/or advocacy at national level that demonstrates an active commitment to improving the system of care and promoting the rights of care experienced children and adults.
- g. Having a demonstrated ability to formulate policy and monitor rights is also a desirable criterion for members - This ensures that members are not only advocates, but also experts in designing and evaluating policies that affect children in care.
- h. Members having a strong and active online presence as a powerful tool for advocacy and dissemination of relevant information is also a desirable criterion for selection of members.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities of Council Members**

All members of the council are expected to take on the following roles and responsibilities:

- a. Dedicate the necessary time and effort to actively participate in council activities, meetings, and initiatives.
- b. Contribute to agenda development, co-facilitation and attend the respective meetings designated by the council.
- c. Lead and/or contribute to working groups/ task forces to support the fulfilment of the council's mandate and strategic objectives, including the recruitment of new members of the council, the development of strategies and activity plans, including fundraising, the development of guidance, policies, or advocacy tools, as well for the purpose of consultations with key actors.
- d. Present at the Council meetings activities from respective national and regional care leaver networks and identify areas of collaboration and joint effort.
- e. Regularly report back to respective care leavers national and regional networks and support next steps for implementing joint efforts identified.
- f. Act as role models and mentors to inspire, empower, and guide other care-experienced individuals.
- g. Develop concept notes to support initiatives by care-experienced individuals and networks and present to potential donors.

- h. Provide regular reports to stakeholders and partners on the progress and impact of Council initiatives.
- i. Participate in needs analysis, programme, and M&E design of initiatives.
- j. Build partnerships with other actors in the sector, representing the Council in those discussions, including global and regional initiatives.
- k. Engage in international advocacy and networking activities to amplify the voices of care-experienced individuals on a global scale.

## **B. Council Governance and Structure**

### **1. Council Structure**

The Council shall be structured as follows:

- a. Coordinators Team
- b. General Membership
- c. Advisory Group
- d. Alumni Group

### **2. The Coordinators Team**

- a. Three members of the Council will be appointed by a simple majority of members as members of the Coordinators Team.
- b. They shall serve for a term of one year in that role.
- c. All members of the Council with at least one year of experience as a general member can propose their candidacy to serve as a Coordinator.
- d. The appointment of the coordinators will take into consideration geographical representation to reflect the global nature of the Council.
- e. The Coordinators Team will be responsible for providing overall leadership of the council, setting agendas, coordinating the activities of the council, and ensuring the implementation of council decisions, and representing the council externally. Among other things, they will be responsible for:
  - i. Organising and facilitating relevant meetings.
  - ii. Taking the lead on developing/drafting agendas, action plans, and policies.

- iii. Handling high-level documentation and communication.
- iv. Organising the recruitment of new members of the Council to fill vacancies on the council promptly through new member recruitment and interviews.
- v. Taking the lead in developing the yearly activity plan for the council in consultation with members.
- vi. Managing healthy communications and partnerships among members, the Advisory Group, and the Alumni Group.
- vii. Taking the lead in fundraising and administering and distributing resources and providing accountability to the members of the Council and the donors.
- viii. Holding coordination meetings every other month to discuss the running of the council and check in on the progress of the council.

### **3. General Membership**

- a. The remaining members of the Council are part of the General Membership.
- b. They are responsible for representing their regions, sharing their concerns and recommendations, and actively participating and contributing as members in the activities of the Council to promote and fulfil the vision, mission, and goals of the Council in line with members' roles and responsibilities outlined in this TOR.
- c. In order to do so, Members of the Council must commit to attend and contribute actively to all required council meetings, including their planning, and be ready to report on their activities as well as to follow up on decisions taken by the Council.
- d. Participate in identifying potential new council members from their region and actively encourage applications of suitably qualified candidates.
- e. Nominate candidates and vote in the election of members of the Coordinators Team, as well as in all other decisions of the Council requiring a vote with a quorum of members present.

- f. Support the Coordinators Team in developing funding proposals and identifying resource opportunities and partnerships to enable the Council to operate and deliver on its missions and objectives.
- g. Be in strong collaboration with their national (country) and regional care leader networks, connecting to the local government and child welfare agencies in their regions.
- h. All other roles needed to fulfil the key mission and objectives of the Council as outlined under this TOR.

#### **4. Advisory Group**

- a. The Advisory Group is composed of key partners who support the Council in fulfilling its mission and objectives by providing funding and technical support/advice to the Council.
- b. At least one representative to attend general council meetings.
- c. The membership of the Advisory Group will depend on which organisations are funding/advising the Council at a given time.
- d. The role and function of the Advisory Group is as follows:
  - i. Provide strategic advice to the council, aligning with its vision and goals.
  - ii. Provide unbiased support, offer honest feedback, and help in ensuring financial accountability.
  - iii. Advocate and promote the activities of the council with the international community.
  - iv. Provide suggestions on how to expand the influence of the council and spread awareness of the role and work of the Council.
  - v. Guide the council in determining its strategic objectives and how to achieve them.
  - vi. Facilitate the process to ensure the inclusive participation of diverse background care leaders council.
  - vii. Facilitate the capacity building of care leaders to achieve the vision, mission, and goal of the council.
  - viii. Serve as a bridge between the council and key policymakers, stakeholders, and potential donors.



x. Facilitate connections to grants and opportunities, assisting in the identification for partnership and offering advice on key stakeholders.

xi. Provide technical input in the development of modules and materials for the care leavers' network and the council, fostering leadership within these networks.

xii. Assist the coordinators in fundraising and administering and distributing resources, and in providing accountability to the members of the Council and the donors.

## **5. The Alumni Group**

- a. All members of the Council can request upon termination of their membership term to be part of the Alumni Group of the Council.
- b. Members of the Alumni Group do not have an official role but can be consulted by the Council members to provide advice or technical support as needed.
- c. Members of the Alumni Group can be invited to attend a meeting of the Council if the Coordinators Team determines they are needed to provide advice.
- d. Members of the Alumni Group can also share potential opportunities with the Coordinators Team.
- e. Provide information and contact information for their region to the new members of the council and answer questions as they arise.

## **c. Recruitment and Termination of Members of the Council**

### **1. Selection and Recruitment Process of Members**

- a. Members are to be recruited through a process that includes nomination by existing members, national and regional networks, and individual applications received following publication of a global call for new members to be published widely, clearly stating criteria for selection and other requirements.
- b. A Special Recruitment Committee will be set to review all applications, establish a shortlist, and conduct interviews, upon which candidates

that are successful and meeting membership criteria will be appointed by the Committee to serve on the Council.

## **2. Selection and Appointment of Members of Coordinators Team**

- a. The three members of the Coordinators Team shall be elected by the members of the Council by a simple majority of members in a meeting which meets quorum requirements, to serve a term of one year in that role.
- b. Members of the Council who wish to submit their candidature will provide an application providing information highlighting their suitability for the role and demonstrating their capacity and commitment to fulfil this role for, as well as ideas for supporting the work and mission of the Council. This application will be submitted to members of the Council at least one month before the election of the members of the Coordinators Team to inform their decision in the election.
- c. The three members of the Coordinators Team shall be elected by members of the Council each year at the Annual Council Review Meeting for their 1-year term.
- d. Criteria for becoming a member of the Coordinators Team are:
  - i. The applicant must have been a General Member of the Council for one year.
  - ii. The applicant must have been an active member of the Council and have attended all of the quarterly meetings.
  - iii. Regional representation will be an important consideration in the selection of members of the Coordinators Team, including by ensuring that members from all regions represented on the Council have an opportunity at a given time to serve a term as part of the Coordinators Team. The proposed members' region must not have been represented on the Coordinators Team in the previous year.
- e. Every member, including members of the Coordinators Team, gets to vote for one person anonymously during the ACR Meeting.
- f. The three members with the most votes are elected.

### **3. Termination of Membership**

- a. Members' term on the Council will end automatically after they have served 2 years (24 months).
- b. Members of the Council who served in the USAID Care Leaders Council (2020-2023) and who agreed to remain on the Council to support it in this transition period will be allowed to serve only one additional year only and their membership will terminate automatically at the end of that year to allow for the recruitment of new members.
- c. A members term on the Council may be terminated early in the following circumstances:
  - i. Death or critical illness
  - ii. Resignation
  - iii. Expulsion
- d. Council Members shall have the power, by a two-third majority vote, to expel any member of the Council if that member has been found to be inactive or has conducted himself/herself in a way that is not consistent with the roles and responsibilities of the members, the vision and mission of the Council, or has been found to have violated the Council's policies and code of ethics and behaviour.

## **V. Formal Council Meetings**

### **A. Annual Council Review (ACR) Meeting**

The Annual Council Review Meeting shall be held once each year at a time to be determined in the Council's bylaws. Among other things, the purpose of this meeting will be as follows:

- a. Review the terms of reference and other policies (by-laws)
- b. Introduce the new members of the council.
- c. Evaluate Council's activities and plans for the year.

## **B. Quarterly Council Meetings (QCM)**

The Quarterly Council Meetings shall be held once every quarter. Among other things, the purpose of these meetings is as follows:

- a. Discuss general or specific council matters.
- b. Undertake training.
- c. Hear updates from regional council representatives and other members.
- d. Evaluate activities and progress.
- e. Review plans and discuss opportunities or new initiatives.

## **C. Coordinators Team Meetings**

- a. The Coordinators Team shall meet at such times as are necessary but shall meet at least once every two calendar months.
- b. Members of the Advisory and/or Alumni Groups can be invited as necessary.

## **D. Other Meetings**

- a. Other meetings shall be scheduled as and when necessary to carry out the work of the Council, including through the establishment of Task Forces or sub-groups to enable the members to work together and implement activities, develop tools, resources, or other outputs as agreed in the Council's work plans.

## **VI. Compensation (Honorarium and Stipend)**

- a. General Council members shall receive a \$300 stipend per year of service to be paid annually upon the start of their Council membership to defray internet and other related costs to participate in Council meetings.
- b. General Council members shall also receive a \$700 honorarium per year to be paid 50% upon the start of their Council membership and 50% upon the successful completion of each year of their Council membership.

- c. The Honorarium for the members of the Coordinators Team will be \$1000 per year, in addition to the \$300 stipend provided, in recognition of the additional roles and responsibility they are undertaking.
- d. The Council can decide to review and revise the level and appropriateness of the stipend and honorarium once a year, taking into account the level of work, engagement of members, and the availability of budget as well as inflation rates.

## **VII. Funding and Sustainability**

- a. To ensure it is able to operate effectively and sustainably, the Council will need adequate sustainable funding. Securing sufficient funding for the Council's day-to-day operations will be the responsibility of the Coordinators Team in partnership with the Advisory Group.
- b. Members of the Council will support the Coordinators Team in this process, including by providing required documentation for reporting to donors on the Council's activities and by contributing to the development of funding proposals, strategies, and plans.
- c. Council members will explore a range of fundraising means, including but not limited to the following:
  - The development of online leadership short courses of engagement, with organisations paying a fee to access them.
  - Paid engagement for consulting with Care Leaders.
  - Joint funding opportunities/ Grants
  - Advocating for funding for care leavers Activities
  - Fellowships/ Academy

## **VIII. Guiding Principles and Values**

- a. The Council will develop, adopt, and implement policies to ensure the Council operates in ways that:
  - encourage full inclusion and participation,
  - ensures that no discrimination of any kind is tolerated,
  - promotes respect for each other and safety at all times for members and in their dealing with partners and stakeholders, including children and young people through a Safeguarding policy,
  - recognises and addresses the impact of trauma and other adverse experiences, including having a disability, which may include providing

specific support to members' affected to ensure they are able to contribute fully or engage in their role as leaders,

- promotes a culture of responsibility and accountability in all of its operations and is consistent with fundamental human rights and professional ethics.