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WHISTLEBLOWING & COMPLAINT INSTRUCTION

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Contents

1. Purpose

This procedure establishes a comprehensive mechanism to address cases of misconduct and complaints within Berytech, ensuring transparency, accountability, and fairness. It reflects Berytech's commitment to upholding the highest standards of integrity and creating a safe, ethical, and transparent working environment for all stakeholders.

The procedure outlines clear steps for whistleblower reporting, protection retaliation, and adherence to the organization's Code of Conduct. It aims to protect individuals from harm, prevent unethical practices, and maintain trust across all operations. By fostering an environment of openness and accountability, Berytech ensures that all cases are handled promptly, fairly, and in alignment with its core values.

This procedure undergoes an annual review to remain aligned with Lebanese legal requirements, international best practices, donor compliance obligations, organizational needs, and stakeholder feedback. By implementing this robust mechanism, Berytech reaffirms its commitment to upholding integrity and fostering a safe and respectful environment for all.

2. Scope

Whistleblowing refers to the act of reporting, in good faith, any misconduct, illegal activity, ethical violations, or regulatory breaches that threaten the integrity, security, legal compliance, financial stability, or ethical standing of Berytech.
This includes but is not limited to fraud, corruption, bribery, financial mismanagement, criminal activity, sexual harassment, endangerment of individuals, retaliation, and breaches of donor compliance obligations. Whistleblowing does not include personal grievances, workplace disputes, or HR-related concerns unless they involve misconduct that impacts legal, ethical, or regulatory obligations.
The procedure is designed to facilitate the steps for reporting on an incident or disclosing improper conduct, protection of the whistleblower by law, and mechanisms set in place internally by the organization to handle such reporting and action to be taken. It serves as a roadmap to its users whether they are Berytech's employees, board members, community partners, service providers or program beneficiaries.

2.1. Whistleblower Complaints vs. General Complaints

Berytech recognizes the need to distinguish between whistleblower complaints (which involve legal, ethical, or regulatory breaches) and general complaints (which may relate to programmatic, operational, or administrative concerns).

2.1.1. Incidents Cases covered under Whistleblowing (Whistleblower Complaints):

A whistleblower complaint refers to a formal report of:

- Fraud
- Corruption
- Bribery
- Blackmail
- Criminal offences such as breach of trust, theft or embezzlement

- Failure to comply with a legal or regulatory obligation
- Endangerment of health, safety or security
- Sexual harassment or abuse
- Conflict of interest
- Concealment of any or a combination of the above.
- Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)
- Hostile Work Environment (Physical or Verbal Misconduct)
- Retaliation Against a Whistleblower

These reports are handled through Berytech's Whistleblowing Procedure and are subject to strict confidentiality protection and legal compliance.

2.1.2. General Complaints (Operational & Administrative Issues)

A general complaint refers to any grievance or concern related to Berytech's programs, services, or operational matters, such as:

- Issues related to program implementation (e.g., delays in grant payments, eligibility concerns).
- Complaints from program beneficiaries regarding access to services or perceived unfair treatment.
- Concerns regarding internal processes, staffing, or project execution.
- Feedback on donor-funded projects that do not involve legal or ethical breaches.

While these do not qualify as whistleblowing incidents, Berytech acknowledges the importance of addressing such concerns. General complaints may be submitted through the same reporting channels following the same mechanism. They will be handled on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with internal policies and operational feasibility.

2.2. Whistleblowing incidents definitions

Fraud

Fraud refers to intentional deception, misrepresentation, or falsification of facts to obtain an undue advantage or cause harm to another party. This includes financial fraud, document forgery, identity fraud, and false reporting in financial statements or official records.

Corruption

Any abuse of entrusted power for personal gain. It includes acts such as bribery, nepotism, extortion, misappropriation of public or private resources, and illicit enrichment.

Bribery

Bribery involves the offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of anything of value (monetary or non-monetary) to influence the actions of a decision-maker in a way that violates their lawful duty.

Blackmail

Blackmail is the act of threatening to reveal private, damaging, or false information about an individual or entity unless a demand (often financial or contractual) is met.

Criminal Offences (Breach of Trust, Theft, Embezzlement)
Breach of Trust: The misappropriation or misuse of funds, assets, or confidential information entrusted to an individual for personal gain.
Theft: The unlawful appropriation of another person's property without their consent and with the intent of permanently depriving them of.
Embezzlement: The fraudulent misappropriation or diversion of funds or assets by a person in a position of trust, particularly within an organization or workplace.

Failure to Comply with a Legal or Regulatory Obligation
The deliberate or negligent non-compliance with applicable national or international laws, regulations, or contractual obligations, which could result in legal liabilities, financial losses, or reputational damage.

Endangerment of health, safety or security
Any act or omission that poses a serious risk of harm, injury, or death to employees, partners, or beneficiaries. This includes failure to maintain workplace safety standards, reckless conduct, or exposure to hazardous conditions.

Sexual Harassment or Abuse
Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment in the workplace or any professional setting.

Conflict of Interest
A conflict of interest arises when an individual's personal, financial, or professional interests compromise or interfere with their duty of loyalty, objectivity, or integrity in decision-making within the organization.

Concealment of Misconduct
The act of deliberately hiding, failing to report, or covering up an act of misconduct, fraud, or illegal activity, preventing accountability and remedial action.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)
PSEA refers to the abuse of a position of power or trust to exploit individuals for sexual purposes. This includes:

- Sexual Exploitation: Coercion, threats, or manipulation to gain sexual favors in exchange for services, benefits, or employment.
- Sexual Abuse: Any form of sexual violence, including assault or coercive sexual acts.

Hostile Work Environment (Physical or Verbal Misconduct)
Repeated or severe physical, verbal, or psychological misconduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, or abusive work environment. This includes threats, intimidation, bullying, or workplace harassment that significantly impact an individual's well-being or job performance.

Retaliation Against a Whistleblower
Retaliation refers to any adverse action taken against an individual in response to their report of misconduct. This includes but is not limited to:

- Dismissal or demotion.
- Harassment, threats, or intimidation.
- Workplace discrimination or unfair treatment.
- Denial of promotions or benefits.

2.3. Reporting Channels

Berytech provides accessible and secure channels for reporting concerns. These include:

- Email: A dedicated email address (feedback@berytech.org) for confidential reporting.
- Online Form: An anonymous submission platform available on Berytech's website.
- In-Person Reporting: Meetings with a designated team member (refer to Responsibility section).

The whistleblowing procedure is publicly available on Berytech's website and shared with employees, partners, and program beneficiaries through onboarding and awareness materials.

3. Responsibility

The following are the responsibilities of each role in Berytech's whistleblowing policy implementation.

Compliance and Ethics Committee

Role: The Compliance and Ethics Committee, appointed by Berytech's management, is responsible for overseeing the effective implementation of the whistleblowing procedure and ensuring alignment with Lebanese law and international standards.

Responsibilities:

- Receive and review reports of misconduct, assessing their validity and severity.
- Oversee impartial investigations and ensure they are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and standards.
- Provide legal advice and guidance, particularly in complex or sensitive cases.
- Coordinate with external legal bodies when necessary.
- Recommend and monitor the implementation of corrective actions, ensuring fairness, transparency, and non-retaliation.
- Review investigation outcomes and ensure proper documentation.
- Recommend policy updates and improvements to strengthen integrity systems.
- Maintain strict confidentiality throughout all processes.
- Ensure the procedure complies with legal and regulatory obligations and reflects the best international practices. Compliance and Ethics committee members are:

Senior Management (CEO & Deputy General Manager)

Role: Ensure organizational support and resources are available for effective implementation of the procedure.

Responsibilities:

- Promote a culture of integrity and transparency.
- Allocate resources for training and awareness programs.

Human Resources Manager

Role: Member of the Compliance and Ethics Committee and Case Leader when handling incidents involving employees.

Responsibilities:

- Assist in investigations related to staff misconduct.
- Implement disciplinary actions as recommended.
- Provide support and resources to affected employees.
- Ensure training and awareness programs are conducted regularly.

Investigation Committee

Related Director

Role: Member of the Investigation Committee, playing role of Case Leader when related to programmatic cases, providing specialized expertise and departmental oversight in cases relevant to their domain.

Responsibilities:

- Provide domain-specific input during investigations to ensure contextually appropriate recommendations.
- Ensure compliance with departmental policies and address any identified gaps.
- Oversee the implementation of corrective actions within their area of responsibility.

Deputy GM for Operations and Sites

Role: Member of the Investigation Committee for cases related to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), serving as the PSEA focal point to ensure proper handling of related incidents and alignment with organizational and international standards.

Responsibilities:

- Act as the primary contact for all PSEA-related matters, ensuring compliance with best practices and donor requirements.
- Provide guidance during PSEA investigations and ensure sensitivity and confidentiality.
- Collaborate on developing policies and training programs to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Liaise with external stakeholders on PSEA-related issues and monitor organizational practices for continuous improvement

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Manager

Role: Member of the Investigation Committee, responsible for ensuring alignment of organizational procedures and SOPs with best practices, supporting data-driven decision-making, and contributing to the resolution of programmatic incidents.

Responsibilities:

- Provide expertise on organizational procedures, SOPs, and reporting standards during investigations.
- Support the collection and analysis of data related to reported incidents, ensuring accuracy and alignment with organizational reporting frameworks.
- Offer insights into programmatic performance and compliance to guide contextually appropriate resolutions.
- Ensure that corrective actions and policy updates align with organizational monitoring and evaluation standards.
- Collaborate with other committee members to ensure decisions are informed by reliable data and aligned with organizational goals.

Legal Counsel:

- Provide legal advice during investigations to ensure actions are compliant with Lebanese law and international standards.
- Review evidence and investigation steps to ensure they meet legal due process and standards of fairness.
- Support the Case Leader and committee in interpreting legal implications of findings.
- Ensure protection measures for whistleblowers and complainants are in line with legal frameworks.
- Advise on referrals to external legal bodies or authorities in case of serious misconduct or criminal activity.
- Participate in drafting or reviewing the investigation report, particularly where legal risks or breaches are identified.
- Guide the organization in implementing legally sound corrective actions, especially for complex or sensitive cases.
- Maintain confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest throughout the process.

The Compliance and Ethics Committee, assigns a Case Leader from Investigation Committee

Case Leader

Role: The Case Leader is a member of the Investigation Committee, overseeing the investigation and resolution process for assigned cases. In employee-related cases, the Human Resources Manager acts as the Case Leader. For programmatic cases, the related Director takes on the role of Case Leader. In the case of PSEA cases, the Deputy General Manager for Operations and Sites serves as the Case Leader

Responsibilities:

- Lead the investigation process in collaboration with the Compliance and Ethics Committee.
- Ensure all steps are conducted impartially, confidentially, and within the established timeline.
- Facilitate evidence collection and review findings for accuracy and completeness.
- Coordinate meetings with the committee to analyze findings and recommend appropriate actions.
- Report case progress and outcomes to the Compliance and Ethics Committee and other relevant stakeholders.
- Support the implementation of corrective actions and monitor their effectiveness to ensure compliance and improvement.

Important Note on Objectivity and Confidentiality:

If a whistleblowing case or complaint involves or is directly related to any individual mentioned in the above roles (CEO, Deputy General Manager, HR, Case Leader, Legal Counsel, MEL Manager, Related

Director, or any other committee member), that person must recuse themselves from all steps of the process. They shall not be involved in the case assessment, investigation, decision-making, or resolution to maintain confidentiality, objectivity, and fairness in handling the case. A suitable replacement will be appointed by Berytech's management where necessary.

4. Instruction

4.1. Activity & Records Description

4.1.1. Case Assessment

The Compliance and Ethics Committee conducts the initial review and categorization step, which is crucial to ensure that every reported incident is assessed thoroughly and appropriately addressed. This phase validates the report's authenticity by confirming it was submitted through legitimate channels, contains sufficient details, and aligns with the organization's reporting guidelines. Any vague or incomplete request will be clarified as needed. Additionally, Compliance and Ethics Committee determines the severity of the incident, enabling Berytech to respond effectively and efficiently while prioritizing cases based on their potential impact and urgency.

The reported incident is then classified into one of several predefined categories, such as fraud, harassment, or non-compliance (refer to definitions section). This classification helps to streamline the investigation process and ensures the appropriate protocol is followed for each type of incident.

To maintain transparency and build trust, all requests are acknowledged within 5 business days. This confirmation reassures the whistleblower or complainant that their concern is being taken seriously, and action is underway.

The Compliance and Ethics Committee forwards the incident with all collected information to the assigned Case Leader and fixing the deadline for response as 30 days maximum

4.1.2. Investigation

Once a case is received the Investigation Committee conducts a structured and impartial investigation to determine the facts and provide a fair resolution. The investigation committee ensures confidentiality, impartiality, and fairness throughout the process. Case Leader gathers evidence through interviews, documentation reviews, and other relevant methods within the timeline defined by the Compliance and Ethics Committee.

In certain cases where Berytech lacks in-house expertise or where confidentiality is paramount, third-party specialists are engaged to lead the investigation. A Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) is signed to ensure data protection and privacy. Below examples of third-party involvement but not limited to:

- Accounting Firms: To investigate financial irregularities or fraud cases reported through whistleblowing programs.
- Investigative Firms: To handle specialized cases requiring expertise beyond Berytech's capacity.
- HR Consultants: To ensure best practices in HR-related investigations, assessments, and action plans.
- Legal Counsel: To conduct legal reviews or handle cases involving compliance with external regulations.

All evidence collected by the investigation committee and the third party is thoroughly documented. The investigation committee convenes to analyze the gathered facts, agree on the findings, and recommend appropriate actions to address the case. Finally, the Case Leader prepares a detailed report presenting the findings and recommendations and sends it to the Compliance and Ethics Committee for validation. Any amendments requested by the Compliance and Ethics Committee are discussed with the Case Leader and Investigation Committee to produce a revised report.

4.1.3. Resolution

The resolution phase is crucial to ensure that appropriate actions are implemented based on the findings of the investigation. These actions aim to uphold accountability, maintain organizational integrity, and mitigate future risks. The Compliance and Ethics Committee makes sure that the steps taken during this phase will be guided by best practices to ensure fairness, effectiveness, and compliance with organizational and legal standards.

Below actions can be taken but limited to:

- Tailored Corrective Measures
  Corrective actions will be taken upon incident severity and may include formal disciplinary measures such as written warnings (disciplinary measures matrix), suspensions, or terminations. Where necessary, cases involving legal violations will be referred to by the relevant authorities for further action.

- Policy and Procedure Updates
  To address identified gaps and prevent recurrence, policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated. This includes incorporating learnings from the case into organizational guidelines and strengthening internal controls.

- Capacity-Building and Awareness
  Training will be developed to alert employees to ethics, compliance, and specific issues highlighted during the investigation. Ongoing awareness campaigns may also be implemented to reinforce the organization's values and expectations.

- Restitution and Support for Affected Parties
  Restitution measures will be undertaken where applicable, such as financial compensation, providing psychological support, or issuing public or private apologies. These actions demonstrate the organization's commitment to supporting affected individuals and restoring trust.

- Enhanced Monitoring and Prevention
  Monitoring mechanisms will be introduced or strengthened to detect and address issues proactively. For instance, anonymous reporting channels, or early warning systems can help identify potential risks before they escalate.

- Escalation Protocols
  In cases involving serious misconduct or legal breaches, the organization will collaborate with law enforcement or regulatory bodies. This ensures adherence to legal obligations and signals Berytech zero-tolerance stance on violations.

The Compliance and Ethics Committee ensures that the incident is managed professionally, transparently, and in strict adherence to organizational policies and values, maintaining the highest standards of integrity throughout the resolution process:

- Fairness and Impartiality: Ensure all corrective actions are free from bias and follow established protocols.
- Timeliness: Address issues promptly to prevent escalation and demonstrate organizational commitment to resolution.
- Documentation: Maintain comprehensive records of all actions taken to ensure accountability and facilitate future audits or reviews.
- Collaboration: Involve relevant stakeholders, such as the HR Manager, Legal Counsel, and department heads, to ensure a well-rounded resolution process.
- Confidentiality: Protect sensitive information throughout the resolution phase to maintain trust and integrity.
- Leadership Oversight: The Compliance and Ethics Committee, Investigation Committee and Case Leader will ensure that the incident is handled professionally, transparently, and in alignment with organizational values and policies

4.1.4. Feedback & Closing

Once the resolution actions have been implemented, the Compliance and Ethics Committee will ensure appropriate feedback is provided to the whistleblower or complainant, if identified, while respecting confidentiality requirements. This step reinforces trust in the process and ensures transparency in handling the case. Feedback should include:

- Confirmation that the case has been reviewed and resolved.
- A summary of the outcome, without disclosing sensitive or personal details, in alignment with privacy and organizational policies.

The case is officially closed after the following are completed:

- Documentation: All evidence, findings, actions, and outcomes are thoroughly documented and archived in a secure system for record-keeping and future reference.
- Evaluation: The Compliance and Ethics Committee conducts a review of the case management process to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement.
- Acknowledgment: The whistleblower or complainant is informed of the case closure and thanked for their contribution to upholding organizational integrity.

This final stage ensures accountability, continuous improvement, and alignment with best practices, while maintaining the confidentiality and integrity of all parties involved.

5. Other

Annexes