



Child Protection Policy

Introduction

Children constitute principle assets of any country. India has the largest child population in the world. Despite significant progress in assuring children their basic rights, much remains to be done. Children need to be empowered, protected and their vulnerability status improved, by safeguarding them from abuses, violence, discrimination, neglect, injustice, hard labour, and trafficking. Therefore, specific concentration is required to improve the life and opportunities of children in general.

Legal and Constitutional Provisions

THE HOPE Child protection policy derives its strength from several Legislations pertaining to children. These include: The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, The Guardian and Wards Act, 1890, etc.

There are several constitutional provisions for children. These include Article 14 providing equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws, Article 15(3) encourages state for making any special provision for women and children, Article 21A directs the State to provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years, Article 23 prohibiting trafficking of human beings and forced labour, Article 24 prohibiting employment of children below the age of fourteen years in factories, mines or any other hazardous occupation, Article 39(e) and (f), Article 45 envisaging that the State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

Further, India acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on 11th Dec., 1992 to reiterate its commitment to the cause of children. India is also party to the Millennium Development Goals and the SAARC Conventions on Child Welfare and Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in SAARC Region.

THE HOPE commits itself in letter and spirit to the objectives laid down in legal and constitutional framework for child protection.

Policy Framework

A Child Protection Policy provides a framework of principles, standards and guidelines on which to base individual and organizational practice in relation to areas such as:

- All THE HOPE workers and projects strictly adhere to the following child protection standards so that children are not exposed to exploitation or abuse at any level at any time.
- THE HOPE will ensure that all communication about children will portray them as dignified citizens of the country. No attempt will be made to portray them as victims' unnecessarily, neither any communication exaggerate or glamorizes the poverty and challenges faced by the child.
- Any one (staff or community) suspected of child abuse or inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with severely, action that may include investigation as well as severance of employment of relationship.
- No corporeal punishment shall be given to any child by any of its staff members.

Definitions

1. **Child:** As per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000 (JJ Act - section 2.k), a "Child" means a person who has not completed 18 years of age.

2. **Child Rights:** The rights of any person below the age of 18 years as recognized by the UNCRC and other concerned international instruments and operational zed through Indian legislations.

3. **Child Abuse:** All forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.

- Physical abuse including hurting or injuring a child, inflicting pain, poisoning, drowning, or smothering.
- Sexual abuse: including direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in inappropriate sexual activities.
- Emotional abuse: repeatedly rejecting children, humiliating them or denying their worth and rights as human beings.
- Neglect: the persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education, and medical attention.

4. **Vulnerable Children:** Children hailing from critical backgrounds including dysfunctional families, working children, destitute, orphans, street children or children in acute vulnerable situations or any environment that is risky and might inhibit the growth and development of the child shall also be considered as critical background, with emphasis on a working child.

5. **Corporal Punishment:** Any deliberate infliction of physical/emotional pain on a child by an adult.

6. **Child Protection:** By protection we mean to safeguard all the children (between 0-18 years) from all forms of physical, sexual, mental, emotional, spiritual, economical and social abuse and exploitation.

THE HOPE Child Protection Policy

CODE OF CONDUCT

THE HOPE believes in and advocates children's rights to survival, protection, development and participation. This Code of Conduct includes guidance on appropriate and expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children, and also of children towards other children. It has been developed with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration and should be interpreted in a spirit of transparency and common sense.

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

Adults should:

1. Provide an enabling environment for children's personal, physical, social, emotional, moral and intellectual development.
2. Encourage and respect children's voices and views.
3. Be inclusive and involve all children without selection or exclusion on the basis of gender, Disability, ethnicity, religion or any other status.
4. Be aware of the potential for peer abuse (e.g. children bullying, discriminating against, victimizing or abusing children).
5. . Develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children from peer and adult abuse.
6. Be aware of high-risk peer situations (e.g. unsupervised mixing of older and younger children and possibilities of discrimination against minors).
7. Develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (e.g. for projects based near water, heavy road traffic, railway lines).
8. Avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position when meeting with children (e.g. being alone with a child in any circumstances which might potentially be questioned by others).
9. Meet with a child in a central, public location whenever possible. Immediately report the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation to the designated committee. Report suspected or alleged abuse to the designated committee.

INAPPROPRIATE STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

Adults should not:

1. Hit or otherwise physically assault a child.
2. Use language that will mentally or emotionally abuse any child.
3. Act in any way that intends to embarrass shame, humiliate, or degrade a child.
4. Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, political persuasion or any other status.
5. Develop a sexual relationship with a child.
6. Kiss, hug, fondle, rub, or touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
7. Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing, and grooming.
8. Encourage any crushes by a child.
9. Initiate physical contact (e.g. holding hands) unless initiated by the child.
10. Suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind.
11. Allow children to engage in sexually provocative games with each other.
12. Stand aside when they see inappropriate actions inflicted by children on other children because it is frequent and commonplace.