



India Sponsorship Committee

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

October 2020



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Foreword

It is an accepted fact that children need protection. Protection from violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. The threats children face include physical hurt, emotional distress, mental torture, deprivation of development opportunities, and sexual abuse.

At the global and national levels the rights of the Child have been provided for both in and out of the home. At the institutional level too, it is required to spell out the responsibility, and procedures of the different levels of care givers.

ISC runs a home and a school in Lonavala and thus has a dual responsibility. In Pune its "Suraksha" programme teaches the community children to protect themselves from the threats they face.

Ms Harsha Parekh

President

October 2020



Introduction

India Sponsorship Committee (ISC) was established in 1967 to work for the welfare and development of children, who we see as the greatest asset of the nation and the future of our country.

Children are by definition vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and India Sponsorship Committee (ISC) is committed to protecting every child's right to identity, health, education, protection, growth and development. ISC plays an important role in raising children without their own families through a family-based sponsorship program.

As responsible first care takers of our children, in Balgram or in school and communities, everyone from the ISC family, the trustees, the management, our field teams and our partners and volunteers are committed to providing a safe and protected environment to our children for their growth and development.

We believe in **safeguarding** children's rights and also **protecting** them from any form of abuse. This Child Protection Policy and the practices listed herein are the ways of safeguarding to keep children safe and promote their well-being. Child Protection will be all those activities undertaken to protect our children who are affected or likely to be affected due to any form of abuse. This approach is directed to every aspect of their lives, physical, psychological and especially sexual.

Incremental milestones for ISC Child Protection Policy

Step 1 – Draft and publish the ISC Child Protection Policy Version 2020, share it with the Governing Council before AGM 2019-20

Step 2 – Translate the ISC Child Protection Policy in Marathi and Hindi and create awareness flyers, posters, infographics for all locations

Step 3 – Everyone as defined in the Policy, is required to read and sign the **ISC Code of Conduct** form and submit it to your reporting manager, manually or a scanned copy before 30th November 2020.

Step 4 – Institute the CPP Implementation team by Dec 2020

Step 5 – Form CPP teams in field and create awareness and educational and training materials

Step 6 – Conduct training for all employees before March 2021

Vision

A Society in which ALL children without distinction of any caste, creed or gender, enjoy their rights and are empowered through education to develop to their full potential embracing values, learning to live together with faith in the human race.

Mission

The mission of the India Sponsorship Committee is to provide children in need the support required by them for an education that offers them opportunities that develops their full potential. Further, it seeks to create opportunities for children to become responsible, contributing members of society by helping them meet their family, social, emotional, physical and spiritual needs.



Scope

Our Child protection policy is aligned to our vision and mission and embodies the cornerstones of protection, care and safeguarding the rights of children at all the times.

The epicenter of our work is at Antar Bharati Balgram (ABB), Antar Bharati Balgram School (ABBS) and our community-based projects in Pune. These are the spaces where we provide care, education and opportunities for growth and development to our children who are deprived of a normal childhood due to unfavorable situations or backgrounds. Sometimes our children are orphaned or belong to a single parent unit. It's therefore so integral to our approach that we provide not just the comfort and care but a safe and protected environment and opportunities for children to integrate into society as financially independent adults.

Guided by the principles of the convention of the rights of the child (UNCRC) and the constitutional provisions of the Government of India; we at India Sponsorship Committee, including the Antar Bharati Balgram (Child Care Institution), the ABB School (ABBS), Industrial Training Institute (ITI), and Pune projects, are committed to the safety of children, both within the organization and in the communities. We as a recognized and licensed childcare and development organization have undertaken responsibilities for care and protection of our children. This calls for additional awareness, sensitivity and measures to ensure that children within our care are safe all the time, in all aspects - physically, emotionally and sexually. This policy will remain a live document at all our project sites and Head office and every person directly or indirectly working with our children will sign this before any term of engagement.



Statement of Commitment

1. India Sponsorship Committee is committed to the rights and welfare of children in India and opposes all forms of child abuse, especially child sexual abuse and exploitation.
2. India Sponsorship Committee is also committed to upholding the law on child rights and welfare, as outlined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and various legal statutes of the prevailing law in India.

UN Article 19

No one should hurt you in any way. Adults should make sure that you are protected from abuse, violence and neglect.

UN Article 34

You have the right to be protected from sexual abuse. This means that nobody can touch you or take pictures of you or make you say what you don't want to.

3. India Sponsorship Committee believes that all children have a right to protection from abuse irrespective of race, social background, age, gender, skin color, disability, religion, caste or beliefs.
4. India Sponsorship Committee believes that child abuse and exploitation is not acceptable in any form including keeping silence against it.
5. India Sponsorship Committee believes that children have the right to participation through any form of expression.
6. India Sponsorship Committee will review this policy every year. All the stakeholders connected with ISC will sign a copy of the policy and keep it alive in their day-to-day dealing with the children.



Domains of Children's Privacy and Protection

Physical

Any harm intentional or otherwise is a threat to the physical wellbeing of a child. Corporal punishment, physical activities that are not appropriate for and consistent with the age of the child, even under the disguise of discipline or corrective measure should be avoided at all times.

Medical support services

Children's safety and wellbeing is a priority and children who show symptoms of illness or injury will be provided with necessary medical services at the earliest by a trained staff. ISC has to keep all contacts and resource lists of healthcare professionals and services available to support our children as and when needed round the clock.

Emotional

Any verbal or physical act of unpleasantness that may lead to the child feeling emotionally low and deprived must be avoided at all times. It is advised to maintain a balance between a positive and healthy atmosphere while providing guidance for right and wrong behaviors.

Social

Any form of bullying by seniors to juniors or among the genders or by caregivers must be avoided, monitored against and reported at all the times. Name calling, stereotyping, or shaming because of any reason, virtue or vices should be immediately reported and acted upon by authorities responsible at the site of action.

Historical data

Any information about a child's history, medical condition and family background has to be stored carefully in the ISC administrative records. These data are to be handled confidentially and with discretion. Access to this information should be password protected.

Social and Print Media

The protection of a child's privacy in social and print media refers to using private and personal data or information of children without their consent or showing them in poor light in the form of photographs, personal photos, texts, films, sound bites etc. for fundraising, publicity or any event projecting the organization. A child's privacy is, for instance, violated by the production of unauthorized publicity material (pictures, films, texts, etc.) featuring the boy or girl; or by presenting sensitive information within a context that reveals the child's identity. ISC 'respects the child's right to privacy.



Guidelines for protecting the privacy in social and print media:

1. When producing publicity material featuring a child, ask both the child and their legal guardian for permission to do so
2. In all ISC authorized photographs, films, videos and DVDs, it's important to represent children in a dignified and pleasant manner. Children must be well attired and if speaking the language should be appropriate and meaningful
3. All unpublished images of children that may be used for records or evaluation of program should be securely stored on Google drive (domain specific) and password protected, and access controlled by authorized signatory.
4. Do not actively ask children to do or say anything that might make them feel displayed as 'objects of pity' (e.g. to speak about their past or ask for donations)
5. Safeguard children's names, especially in connection with sensitive information about the children (e.g. the family background, their medical condition, disability or negative behavior/background).
6. Avoid/Act with caution when it comes to combining textual and visual information whenever a text includes sensitive information about a child and whenever a photo or video track shows sensitive aspects of a child's life and reveals his or her identity.



Key Messages for Stakeholders

Child protection is everyone's business. It is an integrated part of our work and affects everyone in India Sponsorship Committee and anyone who comes into contact with our organization.

Children

- You have rights and this includes the right to say 'No'.
- Violence in any form by you or to you is not allowed
- We listen to you and take you seriously

Executive/Management/Board/Trustees

- You are policy influencers
- You play an important role in making sure all stakeholders are involved and the child's view is respected
- You have the right to favor a child's well-being over information or fundraising needs

Caregivers (people who work directly with children for ex. ISC mothers, assistants etc.)

- Love and affection are essential for building long lasting and stable relationships in ISC family
- You get support in positive parenting
- You are not alone concerning child abuse

Child Development Co-workers (Educators, teachers, social workers and psychologists)

- Say NO to corporal punishment
- Don't get personal about their past
- You are role models and are listened to
- Listen to children: pay attention to possible signs of abuse; take your responsibility and be there for them when they need your support

Alumni

- You are a stakeholder too
- We listen to you and take you seriously
- Support your brothers and sisters – make them aware of their rights

Extended Direct or indirect stakeholders

- Protection is everybody's business; you are part of the team.



Structure and Guidelines

CPP Teams in ISC

CPP Committee

ISC will institute a committee under the leadership of Director Operations. This committee will comprise:

- Project Director Balgram
- Principal ABBS
- Project Head Pune
- Head of Finance
- Member of ISC Board

This committee is responsible for oversight and a timely responsive mechanism to ensure that any person guilty of any infringement is held accountable in the job and/or under law.

The CPP field teams will share the reports as well as planned and surprise visits and findings to this committee from time to time. For the role and function assigned as a member of CPP field team, the members will report to their respective line managers.

CPP Field Teams

At every location, Lonavala and Pune following team will be responsible for carrying out all procedures as defined in the Child Protection SOP guidelines.

1. Child Safety Officer (**Receives complaint and create Incident Report Form**)
2. Co-worker
3. Senior Child Representative (Above 18)

SOP Guidelines

These are the standard operating procedures to be followed regarding detection, prevention and response to Child protection in ISC.

1. Every employee, consultant, partner, and all governing council and board members must sign the ISC CPP 2020
2. Every employee/ field staff must attend the CPP training before end of December 2020
3. Everyone must know and have access to the members of the CPP team as first respondents
4. If you foresee or witness any Incident that's not appropriate and you think there's a possible harm to the child, please immediately bring it to the notice of local CPP team
5. Cooperate with the CPP team, to document the findings and give the facts and details as happened



6. CPP team should create a report and send it to the HO team and also get in touch with the local Project Head to ensure safety and protection of the child concerned
7. Keep the entire process private and do not threaten or misuse the access to information
8. Investigate the Incident on facts and evidence and report findings for an early analysis and remedial or corrective action as required
9. File the case in records and make sure similar Incidents are avoided
10. Every six months, the Director Operations will conduct an audit of the process and review the actions
11. ISC annual report will publish the highlights of the CPP audits and findings.



ISC Policy Framework



Aware

Raise awareness of child abuse and underlying risks and consequences

The promotion of an open and responsive culture in all ISC facilities and projects and within the communities is extremely essential for safeguarding children. We, as an organization and individuals need the courage to break the silence and taboo of discussing child abuse. We encourage positive and critical feedback through a protected, clear, and honest communication within teams and departments.

Awareness gradient

We take the metaphor of Bloom's taxonomy for building awareness on Child protection and policy

Know - that Child Protection Policy exists

Comprehend – the underpinning Goals, Objectives, Jurisdiction, structure and Framework of child protection and abuse

Application – Use, avail the opportunity or platform to voice or report concerns

Analysis - In cases of conflicting interests, provide a clear priority to the child's welfare

Synthesis – Roles and responsibilities regarding child protection are clearly defined and communicated. All employment contracts and codes of conduct are signed and representatives of the organization also refer to the child protection policy in a good light



Prevent

Provide support on how to safeguard children from abuse

To prevent child abuse, we need to create and maintain an environment which promotes our organization's core values in the Balgram, School and any other facilities and programs of ISC.

Selection and Recruitment Norms

- A wide range of actions can support that: The main focus is on implementing suitable human resource recruitment and development approaches. Combined with this, it is essential that we listen carefully to children, take their views seriously, encourage them to participate in discussions on child protection issues, and offer them the opportunity to build trust-filled relationships. It is clear that child abuse is less likely to occur within a context that fosters child participation at all levels.
- The highest standards of selection, recruitment and verification procedures are applied. Applicants for any position, whether co-worker or volunteer, should disclose any previous criminal record. This is accomplished through providing a police check or any other appropriate check, and cross-checking of references.

Capacity building

- All co-workers receive adequate training and sign the code of conduct confirming their understanding of and commitment to our child protection policy. All co-workers are provided with orientation regarding the child protection policy during the first month of their employment.
- Child protection is a regular topic in all training programs.
- We support awareness raising and capacity building of parents, community and religious elders on positive discipline, as alternatives to corporal punishment.

Communication using visual and electronic material

- Through training and the sharing of experiences, we learn the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior.
- Child and youth care co-workers treat children with affection, but keep clear and supportive boundaries.
- Children are enabled to assume roles in their own development and protection. They are encouraged to participate in all matters affecting their lives and are involved in discussions on their rights. Children discuss what acceptable and unacceptable behavior is and what they can do if they feel something is not right.
- Each child in our residential facility or in the school will be offered individual development opportunities tailored to his or her needs and potential. Co-workers receive training and support to put child development activities into action.
- Through our advocacy work within communities and societies, child protection systems are strengthened which better prevent and respond to issues of child protection raised by girls or boys.

Counselor access

- All child and youth care co-workers have access to family counseling services when needed.
- Co-workers are encouraged to regularly share experiences within and between facilities and programs regarding how they approach child protection.
- We pay attention to adequate working conditions in all facilities and programs by implementing the standards of the ISC Human Resources Manual.



Report

All reporting is confidential and must be reported, on the Incident Reporting Form to the Field CPP Team or CPP Committee in HO if there is a conflict of interest.

CPP Field team will set up and adhere to a clear and simple reporting procedure

Call for Action – Any person who knows about an incidence, must report it immediately or within **3 days** of knowing about it. The person has to reach the CPP Field team and complete and submit the Incident Report Form to the **Child Safety Officer**. This report is a formal recording of the facts related to the incident. Its primary purpose is to uncover the circumstances and conditions that led to the event in order to prevent future incidents. We should create an incident report as soon as the child is safe after the occurrence of the incident. By recording details immediately, we improve the accuracy of our report and the effects of our corrective actions. Recording the incident in the form of the report is a regulatory requirement.

What's our reporting framework? (5Wand H - Who What Why Where When How)

We take all communications and reporting seriously – be it in Balgram, the residential facility or the school or other programs – and take appropriate action. Each project defines and implements clear reporting and responding procedures, including internal communication lines, and defines the roles and responsibilities of all people involved. Quick and transparent measures that take local legal responsibilities into account are undertaken.

Who

- Anybody can report. Every co-worker is obliged to immediately provide any information regarding a possible case of child abuse to a member of the child protection team.
- A team of three persons is elected (need to have a team/committee) in each facility and program to which child protection concerns can be reported; the members of these child protection teams are known to all children and co-workers. On the one hand, these child protection teams are prepared to react appropriately in crisis situations, and they keep and maintain the records about any child abuse incident. On the other hand, the central aim of their efforts is to raise awareness for – and prevent – abuse. In every project area, the team consists of the director/head, at least one mother/teacher and one other elected co-worker or associated person (e.g. social worker, community leader etc.). Ideally, the voice of children and adults participating in programs of ISC are taken into account in the election of the child protection teams. Of course, alleged abusers must not be members of the child protection team.

What

- Give the first-hand information of anything you suspect or seen or heard and feel inappropriate.
- Reach the right people and report the facts and give data and evidence
- The director of ISC is ultimately responsible and provides a bi-annual report to the board regarding the status of child protection reports in the respective projects and facilities.



How

- Follow the procedure as defined in the SOP guidelines for CPP.
- Confidentiality is of utmost importance when reporting any Incident or case of abuse; information is to be handled with sensitivity. The child or any other person who gives information regarding child abuse must be made aware that if he or she reports the case, information about the alleged abuse will be shared only with those authorized to have access to this information, i.e. the elected child protection team and other persons involved.
- Children, co-workers or other adults who make reports are supported and protected. A person accused of child abuse is given a fair hearing.

Why

- Child abuse is a serious issue, it's not only a day-to-day issue, but if not reported may lead to number of other causes of depression, anxiety and distress in the life of the victim. To be protected and cared is a child's right. Child Protection and reporting is a measure or initiative that addresses or prevents children from situations of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. It helps to reduce their vulnerability in harmful situations.
- Every child has a right to be protected. Any adult who withholds information or covers up any kind of abuse is considered an accomplice.

Where

- In your Project premises, to the main office, where you could meet the member of the CPP Field team, **Child Safety Officer**
- In ISC HO, where you could meet the Director Operations or send an email at cpphelp@indiasponsorship.org

When

- Any time before, during or after the occurrence of any untoward Incident or event of child abuse or harassment or physical harm or injury



Respond

All forms of child abuse are taken seriously in all ISC programs across all locations. Every reported incident is responded to according to the gravity of the offence. We ensure that there is always a response, regardless of whether the abuse committed is considered large or small. By responding we guarantee that a transparent and fair procedure is followed, so that nobody is falsely convicted and the rights of everyone involved are protected.

Call for Action – The **Child Safety Officer** will ensure clear action is taken when child abuse is suspected or reported. The **Child Safety Officer** must respond to the reported case within **48 hours** since its submission and also communicate over call and email, to the CPP Committee as soon as the case is reported to them.

Focus

- In all cases of suspected or proven child abuse or neglect, the focus is placed on safeguarding and protecting the child. At the same time, healing measures are provided, and the protection of all persons involved is guaranteed. The affected persons receive the necessary counseling and support.
- The response to child-to-child abuse focuses on what is best for the development and protection of all children involved in such a case and is in harmony with the law.

Protocol

- Follow the procedure as defined in the SOP guidelines for CPP.
- In the investigation of a child abuse incident, an external expert and a representative from the child protection team must be involved.
- In all abuse cases, an internal investigation is carried out by a neutral person who is not involved in the case. This person presents the findings of the investigation to the child protection team, which makes a decision on further steps.

Course of Action

- If abuse is committed by an adult, depending on the level of abuse, legal steps are taken in accordance with the national reporting and responding system that defines the levels of responding in each individual case. Where necessary, legal assistance is provided.
- There is clear leadership, with one person responsible (Who) for handling information and internal and external communication regarding child abuse incidents. This person is supported by the child protection team.
- Decisions and actions are taken quickly.
- Cases are reported to child welfare authorities according to a procedure defined.
- Written records of all reported abuse cases and their conclusions are kept in the facility or program.



Annexure

Definitions and Terms

Child - Any person under the age of 18, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Co-worker - Any person associated in any way with ISC, including but not limited to, Sponsors, Trustees, board members, partners, researchers, media and donors.

Partner – Any organization with which ISC has signed a memorandum of understanding for a product or service or both.

Donor/Sponsor – Any person/s or agency who has donated to our charitable cause

Employee – A person employed by ISC

Incident – An incident may be an event that causes injury or fatalities or an event that does not cause injury but could have done so, such as accidents, physical violence, sexual offences, serious emotional or psychological abuse and serious neglect.

Physical Abuse – is the actual or potential physical harm caused by an action or lack of action, which is reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. Physical abuse may involve hitting, spanking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning and suffocating. It can also mean causing physical harm to a child by fabricating the symptoms of or deliberately causing ill health to a child. The incidents may be single or repeated.

Neglect and Negligent Treatment -is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child in: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and which causes, or has a high probability of causing, harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child that adversely affects his or her self-perception and development. It may involve conveying to the child that he or she is worthless, unloved and inadequate or there only to meet the needs of another person; or imposing inappropriate expectations upon him/her. Acts include restricting movement, threatening, scaring, discriminating, scapegoating, corrupting, ridiculing, degrading, bullying, humiliating (e.g. asking potentially embarrassing questions, demanding potentially embarrassing action) or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.