

Child Protection Policy

REACH INDIA

2015

The Child Protection Policy of REACH India is a document that reflects organisation's commitment to protect the core value of creating safe spaces for children who we work with and also reinforces the trust that it holds upon its employees, volunteers and other persons and agencies associated with the organization in working for the protection of children.

Preamble

Through this policy,

REACH INDIA recognises that

- *A child is any person below the age of eighteen years;*
- *Childhood is an integral part of life with a value of its own;*
- *Children are not a homogenous group and their different needs need different responses, especially the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities experienced by children in different circumstances;*
- *A long term, sustainable, multi-sectoral, integrated, participative and inclusive approach is necessary for the overall and harmonious development and protection of children;*
- *Civil society organisations including community have a role in ensuring protection of children.*

REACH INDIA reaffirms that

- *Every child is unique and gifted with inherent capacity and potential to become a responsible citizen;*
- *Its interventions with children, families or the communities, whether directly or indirectly, would also aim to reduce vulnerability of children, to create a safe and violence free space for children and to strengthen the protective framework around children and their families.*
- *All the persons associated with the organisation in different capacities shall be oriented on the provisions of the policy and they shall abide by the norms of the policy to the extent applicable.*
- *Appropriate response would be taken against any person found violating any provision of this policy that may put the child at risk of exploitation or abuse or increases the child's vulnerability.*
- *Special measures and affirmative action would be undertaken to mitigate conditions that cause discrimination, exploitation, or any other vulnerability.*

Introduction

REACH INDIA, like any other responsible organisation, which is working with children, either directly or indirectly, has a moral and constitutional duty to protect children within their care from both intentional and unintentional harm. Over the years, the Organisation, through its direct experience of working with women and adolescent girls and their families, has come to believe that the issues related to health, livelihood and empowerment are closely interlinked with each other and cannot be seen in isolation. The issues of protection and safety of children in general and girls in particular from abuse, violence and discrimination and related indicators have close bearing on the way outcomes of our intervention take shape. The issue of protection, by its very nature is integrated with other developmental issues concerning our target groups, especially female children. Therefore, there is a risk of the issue of child protection getting diluted with the immediate mandates of the project or not being able to get prioritized in the overall scheme of interventions. It is therefore imperative upon an organization like REACH India which strategises its interventions through a Rights Based Approach, to have a policy on child protection to guide its personnel including the members of its Governing Body and also to inform the planning process, organizational policies and intervention designs. Further, having a Child Protection Policy also reflects the sense of commitment of Reach India towards protecting vulnerable child and strive to provide quality care and services to children by becoming a *child safe* organization. The advantages of having a Child Protection Policy for the organization are manifold. While on one hand, it protects children and minimizes the risks of vulnerability, abuse and exploitation to children, on the other hand it also protects employees and members associated with the organizations by setting standards and by letting the representatives know about how they are expected to behave with children and what to do if there are concerns about the safety of a child. The policy will also deter potential abusers from joining the organisation. Since REACH India works with vulnerable children and marginalised communities in different geographical areas of the country, there are chances that the associated vulnerabilities may create a stereotyped perception about the community and children living there. The Child Protection Policy would address such stereotyped notions of vulnerabilities as well.

This Child Protection Policy has been developed through a detailed deliberation within the organization, field-level consultations with groups of children and adolescent girls with whom the organization works and on the basis of inputs received from persons having rich experience in different reams of child protection, child health and development.

We believe the Child Protection Policy of the organization to be an organic document to incorporate newer ideas and feedback as it grows and expands and to be able to review at regular intervals to assess the document in the light of challenges and opportunities that the organisation may come across in the course of its work.

Scope of the Policy

This Child Protection Policy applies to:

- **Reach India:** To include all staff, Board members, consultants, interns, volunteers.
- **Funding Partners to Reach India:** To include representatives of the funding partners visiting the Organisation for meeting or for any supportive supervision, monitoring and evaluation purpose.
- **Civil Society Partners to Reach India:** To include the representatives of the partner civil society organizations including NGOs partners, media or publication houses, community based organizations visiting the intervention area through or on behalf of the organization.
- **Service Providers to Reach India:** To include Vendors, Suppliers and their personnel or staff, Auditors, Sponsors visiting the premises or project area of Reach India.
- **Project Evaluation Team:** To include the members of any project monitoring or evaluation team visiting the premises or project area of Reach India and which is under the signed contract with Reach India or its Funding Partner(s) to carry out the assigned tasks.

Therefore, this Policy shall apply to all persons or groups who are associated with the organization whether directly or indirectly and in whatsoever capacity. The applicability of the policy would be, however, limited for the period for which the person or the group is associated. However, it is expected that the persons or the groups adhere to the norms of the policy even after they are not associated with REACH INDIA as any reported gross violation of the policy provisions during the period which is prior to such association or after would be a factor to determine partnership.

The policy shall cover within its ambit all children coming into direct or indirect contact with the organization during intervention.

Review of the Policy

REACH India will undertake the review of this policy after every five years. It may be reviewed before this period also if a need is felt to do so.

Important Terms

Who is a child?

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 1) a child is every human being below the age of 18 years. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 (As amended in 2006) also defines a child as a person who has not completed eighteen years of age. Further, a child as defined by the NATIONAL POLICY OF CHILDREN 2013 is '*a person below the age of eighteen years.*' In the context of REACH India's work, the term child should include all children in general and female children in particular.

REACH India also recognizes that sex selective abortion and cases of female foeticide resulting into the skewed child sex ratio is in fact violation of the unborn child's right to life. A child may therefore include the unborn children also. Similarly, a person who is mentally challenged and has the intellectual capability of a child is also recognised as 'child' for the purpose of this policy.

What is child protection?

Child Protection refers to protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. It is integrally linked to every other right of the child. Every child has a right to protection. This not only includes children who are in difficult circumstances and those who have suffered violence, abuse and exploitation but also those who are not in any of these adverse situations and yet need to be protected to maintain and/or increase the existing environment of safety and positive development.

Child Protection is about protecting children from or against any perceived or real danger/ risk to their life, their personhood and childhood. Child protection is about reducing the vulnerability of the child to any kind of harm and in harmful situations. It is about protecting children against social, material, physical, psychological and emotional insecurity and distress. All efforts at protecting children must ensure that no child falls out of the social security and safety net and those who do, receive necessary care and protection to be brought back into the safety net.¹

¹ Integrated Child Protection Scheme Guideline, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India

Child Abuse- Definition and Different Forms

Children, due to their young age are vulnerable to various forms of abuse and assaults. The incidents of abuse are not just perpetrated upon children by the strangers but even by those who are closer to children. In fact, in most of the cases of abuse, children have been found to have been abused by those who are in position of trust to children or those who are known to the child including their care giver or facilitator.

According to World Health Organisation, "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."²

Following are the different forms of abuse:

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is the inflicting of physical injury upon a child. This may include burning, hitting, punching, shaking, kicking, beating or otherwise harming a child. The parent or caretaker may not have intended to hurt the child. It may, however, be the result of over-discipline or physical punishment that is inappropriate to the child's age.

Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Recurrent injuries with unexplained or hesitant explanations
- Bruises on face or near eyes, hands/palms, neck, back, genitals, stomach, thighs or between fingers
- Burns (cigarette, immersion)
- Broken bones
- Hair loss
- Hesitation on showing certain body parts or hiding a body part in long sleeve cloth
- Has become suddenly aggressive
- Fear, withdrawal, depression
- Nightmares, insomnia (i.e. loss of sleep)

² World Health Organization (1999): Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention; Geneva, http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/neglect/en/

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual behaviour with a child. It includes fondling a child's genitals, making the child fondle the adult's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism (i.e. showing one's genitals to the child) or exposure to pornographic materials and sexual exploitation.

Indicators of sexual Abuse

- Excessive curiosity about sex or developing seductive nature at an early age
- Compulsive masturbation, teaching others to masturbate
- Sexual acting out with peers, others
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia or stained, torn, bloody undergarments
- Frequent unexplained sore throats or urinary infections.
- Bed-wetting
- Complains of pain or itching in genitalia
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Excessive bathing
- Withdrawn or aggressive
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy, especially in early adolescence
- Draws pictures of sexual organs or sexual acts
- Substance abuse
- Fears and phobias
- Nightmare, insomnia
- Depression
- Stomach aches, headaches, etc.

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse is also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse, and psychological maltreatment. It includes acts or the failures to act by parents or caretakers that have caused or could cause, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional, or mental trauma. This can include extreme and/or bizarre forms of punishment, such as confinement in a closet or dark room or being tied to a chair for long periods of time or threatening or terrorizing a child. Less severe acts, but no less damaging are belittling or rejecting treatment, using derogatory terms to describe the child, habitual tendency to blame the child or make him/her a scapegoat. The emotional abuse, unlike the physical and sexual abuse, leaves no

physical scars on the body and therefore it is hard to identify. This makes the child more vulnerable as it may be quite late in providing necessary support to the affected child.

Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Hiding his or her eyes or lowering his or her gaze
- Biting lips or tongue
- Forcing a smile
- Fidgeting
- Getting annoyed easily or at slight provocation
- Defending every action
- Exaggeration
- Confusion or denial
- Feeling of lack of worth, i.e. poor self-esteem
- Regression
- Angry acts
- Withdrawal
- Insecurity
- Alcohol, drug or substance abuse
- Depression
- Suicidal tendency
- Difficulty in mingling with peers/school mates
- Sleep disorders/nightmares
- Speech disorders
- Developmental delays
- stomach ache or headache
- Making excuses or frequent lying

Neglect: It is the failure to provide for the child's basic needs. Neglect can be physical, educational, or emotional. ***Physical neglect*** can include not providing adequate food or clothing, appropriate medical care, supervision, or proper weather protection (heat or cold). It may include abandonment. ***Educational neglect*** includes failure to provide appropriate schooling or special educational needs, allowing excessive truancies. ***Psychological neglect*** includes the lack of any emotional support and love, never attending to the child, substance abuse including allowing the child to participate in drug and alcohol use.

Indicators of Neglect

- Poor hygienic condition of the child, e.g. child wearing dirty clothes, or suffering from scabies or an unpleasant odour coming from child
- Unsuitable clothing (poverty not being a factor)
- Untreated injury or illness
- Lack of immunizations
- Height and weight significantly below age level

What is child participation?

Child participation: “anyone below the age of 18 taking part in a process or playing a role in a process at his / her level, according to their evolving capacities. Children and young people thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, and interacting in a positive way with other people; it means involving the children in the decisions which affect their lives, the lives of the community and the larger society in which they live.”³

Why is it so important?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) recognises Child Participation as one of the four important rights under the Convention. The National Policy for Children, 2013 also lays emphasis on participation of children in all the decisions and activities that have a bearing on child’s overall development.

³ Save the Children UK

Guiding Principles

The Child Protection Policy of the organization is based on the following guiding principles and all the members associated with the Organisation will adhere to them during the course of their work and interaction with children:

- 1. Child's right to dignity and worth.** A conduct that is consistent with the child's sense of dignity and worth is the fundamental principle to be followed while working with children. A child's right to dignity and worth has to be respected through all the stages of intervention with the child right from the first contact with the organization to the implementation of programmes in the project area. Respect of dignity includes not being humiliated, labeled or stigmatized, individual identity and privacy being respected and being offered information and choices.

This principle reflects the fundamental human right enshrined in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

- 2. Child protection is a primary responsibility of family, supported by community, government and civil society.** It is important that respective roles are articulated clearly and understood by all parties in the effort to protect children. Reach India with its limited resources would as far as possible support families which are found to be at risk and vulnerable in protecting their children from the real or perceived dangers of abuse, exploitation and violence. It shall try to raise support from local community to which the child belongs and engage in advocacy and in partnership with Government institutions functioning in the project area, district and in the State.
- 3. Loving and caring family is the best place for the child.** Children are best cared for in their own families and have a right to family care and parenting by both parents.
- 4. Privacy and Confidentiality in the matters related to children must be respected.** Children's right to privacy and confidentiality should be protected through all the stages of intervention, except where it is required under any law or in the best interest of children. However, in doing so, the child would be taken into confidence.

5. Non-stigmatization and non-discrimination. No child will be subjected to any discrimination on the basis of age, gender, place of birth, ethnicity, religion, caste, cultural practices, language, disability, body complexion or the work, activity or behavior that the child might be engaged in. Each child irrespective of circumstances, as well as socio-economic, cultural, religious and ethnic background should be treated equally and in a dignified manner. Use of any words that denigrate a child's dignity shall be avoided. No semantics that convey any labels or stereotypes regarding children shall be used.

6. Right to be heard and to express one's views freely. While working or interacting with children, one should remember that children are capable of forming views and therefore must be provided a conducive environment and the opportunity to express their views in any way they are able to communicate, in matters affecting them.

Children's views, especially those of girls, children from disadvantaged groups and marginalised communities, are to be heard in all matters affecting them, and their views given due consideration in accordance with their age, maturity and evolving capacities

7. Prevention and reduction of vulnerabilities should be central to child protection outcomes. A major thrust of the organisation's intervention in the area of child protection would be strengthening the family capabilities to care for and protect the child and reduction in overall vulnerability to incidents of abuse, exploitation and violence.

8. Child centered planning and implementation. Planning and implementation of child protection policies and service delivery by the organization and persons associated with it should be child centered.

9. Principle of best interest. In all interventions concerning children, the best interest shall be the paramount consideration. The principle seeks to ensure physical, emotional, intellectual, social and moral development of a child so as to ensure their safety and well being and enable them to attain their full potential.

Behaviour Protocol

Expected Behaviour (Dos)

- Be aware of situations that may present risks to children or make them vulnerable to further harms and undertake preventive measures.
- Plan and organise their work and workplace so as to minimise risks.
- As far as possible be visible while working with or interacting with children.
- No poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour should go unchallenged.
- Involve children - discuss with the children their rights under the Policy, what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and what they should do if they have any grievance.
- Be a positive role model.
- Be loving / caring / responsible.
- Show equal treatment between girls and boys.
- Be sensitive to acts of abuse, and aware of children's concerns and complaints and act on the concerns or complaints immediately.
- Respect children's dignity in home, at workplace and in public spaces.
- Listen carefully to children.
- Act fairly on matters that involve children and adults together.

Unacceptable behaviour (Don'ts)

NEVER

- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others' sight.
- Take children to their home, especially when they will be alone with you.
- Touch, hug, or caress a child in a manner which is not child-friendly, inappropriate to age and against cultural sensitivity.
- Sleep alone with a child.
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves, such as use the toilet, bathe or change clothes.
- Develop physical or sexual relationships with children.
- Make any physical gestures in a manner that appear to be inappropriate or have a sexual context or connotation.
- Develop any relationship with any child that is or could be assumed to be exploitative or abusive.
- Discriminate against children on any basis such as, for example, gender, community, colour, language, disabilities, or physical features.

- Discriminate against, show different treatment or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Condone or participate in behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Leave a group of children unsupervised, especially when the group consists of boys and girls or older and younger children to prevent peer bullying or abuse.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Perpetrate psychological and emotional abuse.
- Expose children to pornography.
- Expose children to hazardous work.
- Stigmatise children.
- Infringe children's rights.
- Employ children under the age of 18 years.
- Participate in child marriage functions.
- Hide cases of sexual abuse that the child may be a victim of.
- Give gifts directly to children.
- Promise something to a child that is beyond organisation's planned or estimated resources or capacity.
- Hit or otherwise physically abuse children.

In the following section, the behavior protocols of visitors, volunteers, interns and donors have been specified:

Appropriate behaviour of visitors, volunteers, interns and donors

- Prior permission from concerned authority to be taken, regarding purpose of visit before interacting with children.
- Physical contact with children should be avoided as far as possible and must be appropriate to the age and circumstances which must be initiated by the child rather than by the adult.
- Interaction with children, only in the presence of relevant staff who will facilitate and monitor the process.
- Consent of children and concerned authority to be taken before taking images.
- Must not give any gift or take any child out on any kind of excursion, except when it is required as a part of the programme. If it is done in a

group then prior intimation in terms of permission either in the form of a letter or an electronic mail will be required.

- Must not give gifts directly to any child.
- Will not be allowed to record case histories or take personal history of any child without prior permission of the relevant staff and consent of the child.
- In case of case studies name of child has to be changed as well as no personal information to identify location of child to be given.
- Never sensationalize or manipulate text and images and emphasis to be given on dignity of child.
- Use of offensive or slang language is prohibited especially when children are around.
- Must wear clothes that are appropriate keeping in mind the local and cultural context in which the children live.
- Will only be allowed to interact with children during their convenient time.
- Must not give out details of any information gathered during placement/ period of work/visit to any one without the prior knowledge of REACH India.
- Before publishing any report or document on the organization the draft has to be approved by the organisation.

Operational Guidelines

REACH India recognizes the dignity and worth of every child as it also reaffirms its faith in the honesty and integrity of its personnel and those associated with the organization either paid or on voluntary basis to work towards protection of children in their sphere of work or intervention and not to engage in acts that violate child's protection rights. With this objective, the following code of conduct has been articulated which reflects the organization's mandate and resolve in working towards building child-safe spaces within the organization and its intervention areas. The following operational guideline has been developed through a series of field visits, assessments of Reach India practices and consultations held with its personnel, project partners and people including children who they code of conduct has been articulated for all personnel who are associated with the organization as mentioned under the head 'Scope of the Policy'. The guideline is also based on the study of similar guidelines of organizations working in the area of child protection.

The content of the operational guideline is divided into the following parts:-

1. Human Resource Management
2. Participation of Children
3. Communication and Media Protocols About Children
4. Reporting and Response Mechanism

1. Human Resource Management

Recruitment, Orientation and Performance Appraisal

In addition to the standard recruitment procedure followed by REACH India, the organisation shall integrate the following into its recruitment process-

- (i) The advertisement for recruitment shall mention that "The organisation has a Child Protection Policy and the applicant should be willing to follow it.";
- (ii) During the interview process, the candidate should be asked questions that would assess her attitude and sensibilities towards issues of child protection;

- (iii) There should be resolution of issues like employment gap, frequent changes of employment or reasons for leaving employment (if sudden).
- (iv) The candidate should be asked to mention the names of at least three references in the biodata; There should be a minimum of two reference checks for each candidate. Specific query regarding conduct of the candidate vis-a-vis children should be made.
- (v) All new recruits should be provided with a copy of the Child Protection Policy of the Organisation.
- (vi) After recruitment, all personnel will be required to sign an undertaking that she would follow the provisions of the Policy and agrees to abide by all the norms contained in the policy.
- (vii) On joining each employee should be oriented to child protection and Child Protection Policy within a week of recruitment.
- (viii) The performance appraisal for the personnel should also include staff's overall sensitivity towards children.

NOTE: The term personnel also includes interns and volunteers.

Association with External Agencies, Donors and Sponsors

The organization shall not associate itself with any agency or donor or any sponsor who is found to be engaged in such activities or associated with products that are in violation of protection rights of children.

2. Participation of Children in the Implementation and Review of Child Protection Policy

REACH India shall involve children into the decision making process vis-à-vis any issue related to protection rights. The following standards will be followed to ensure child participation:

- (i) Children's participation should be informed and voluntary and age-appropriate - i.e. they should know what they are being asked to do and they should not be forced to do anything they don't want to.
- (ii) Children should be made aware that they can stop participating in an activity / discussion at any point.

- (iii) Children should be made aware that there is someone they can talk to if they feel uncomfortable about anything.
- (iv) Boys and girls may feel differently / react differently to discussions about child protection; this needs to be taken into account and may require gender and age-segregated discussion groups.
- (v) During the facilitation of a group session with children, the facilitator should tell children to mutually agree that discussions which include personal experiences should not be shared or disclosed outside the group.
- (vi) The sessions on sensitive issues like child abuse, child marriage, child trafficking etc. should be facilitated in such a way that children don't get hurt or become upset or go away with half knowledge. In order to ensure participation of children, the interactions should be so conducted as to give children plenty of opportunity to ask questions and raise or share their issues of concern.
- (vii) Children should be given the opportunity to share their feedback after every programme and these feedbacks should be documented and be considered while planning for and designing the programme framework or delivery.
- (viii) Children should be told that the organisation has a Child Protection Policy and they should be oriented about the policy and its various provisions in a way that it is easily understood and in the language that the children understand.
- (ix) The copies of the Child Protection Policy should be made available in print form in languages understood by child.
- (x) The children should also be involved in the review of the provisions of the policy by the organisation.

In addition to the above, the personnel of the organization shall follow these basic minimum standards as given below while organizing any activity or programme with children

- (i) Children should play a key role in planning any event that they will participate in.

- (ii) Ensure basic facilities like drinking-water and refreshments or meals are provided within the resources available with the organisation to children attending programmes.
- (iii) While planning for outdoor activities or trips, arrangements for first-aid and quick access to medical facilities should be made.
- (iv) Optimum safety/protection measures should be taken for children attending a program e.g. security in cases of open spaces, fire safety facilities and other such measures to prevent any harm to children.
- (v) The protection measures shall also include provisions for safe transport in vehicles or by modes that are legal, certified safe and licensed and meant for the transport of people. There must be adequate number of organisation's employees accompanying the children to provide care and protection. Care shall be taken to include female employees if the group of children comprises girls as well.
- (vi) Children should not be left alone and unaccompanied at any time during and after the programme gets over. It is the responsibility of the accompanying staff to ensure that the child reaches back safely to her home or to the institution she belongs to.

3. Communication and Media Protocols About Children

In all its Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and communications with media, REACH India reaffirms that every child is a unique individual with rights, who should be treated with dignity and worth and the same shall be reflected in all the communication materials designed and developed by the organisation. The following constitutes guidelines on communications about children:

- Children shall be accurately represented either verbally or in images in ways that do not amount to manipulation or sensationalism.
- Children are not to be depicted in images or poses that might be regarded as sexually provocative.
- Informed consent from a child or parent or person with parental responsibility will be obtained before any photographs, recordings, statements or other information identifying the child (personal data)

is recorded, disclosed or otherwise used. This applies to general recordings made for mandatory periodical reportings from the field.

- In cases where images of children or statements given by them are going to be used on communication materials developed by the organisation to be used as IEC materials, training modules or in promotional kits, the purpose for which images or information on children is to be obtained must be clearly explained and understood, and the informed consent, recorded on approved consent form, must come from the child or person able to give valid consent before such images are taken or statements are recorded, except where such consent is not desirable or possible.
- In case of representation of any case that is related to a child who is a survivor of abuse or any form of exploitation, in the publication or communication material of the organisation or any report that is intended to be widely shared, it must be ensured that names are changed and photographs do not reveal identity.
- While releasing any press note to media or giving information to the media or any website, whether electronic or print, identity of the child, if she is a victim of abuse, shall not be disclosed. No information regarding child's name or residence or her association to places or persons that may sufficiently establish her identity to public at large, should be given to others except where such sharing or disclosure is required as a compliance to the provisions of any law, for instance, to police or any statutory body or Court of law.
- Before talking to any media representative regarding any case involving a child or a group of children, the concerned personnel shall take prior permission of such personnel authorised by REACH India to give such permissions.
- The personnel associated with REACH India must not post, upload or share comments or images or photographs or photographs with comments that outrages the dignity of a particular child or is offensive in nature due to its derogatory or discriminatory content.
- The personnel shall follow the duties of confidentiality and non-disclosure of sensitive data or information about a child or a group of children as prohibited under the laws of the country like Juvenile

Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 (amended in 2006)⁴..

NOTE: REACH India shall not be held responsible for any unauthorised and offensive or derogatory comments or share or uploading of images on social sites like *facebook, twitter, whatsapp* etc. or on websites open to public viewing by any personnel or volunteer or intern or any person associated with the organisation. The responsibility shall lie upon the person doing such act.

4. Reporting and Response Mechanism

REACH India shall positively and immediately respond to any witnessed, suspected or alleged concern of violation of child protection rights or violation of Child Protection Policy, which takes place within the limit of the scope of this Policy. The organisation will also orient children about how to report any violation of Child Protection Policy. The following is the basis minimum protocol regarding reporting of cases of such violations and response mechanism that would follow such violations or alleged violations:

- Reporting of child protection violations within the organization is mandatory- any body coming across child protection violation must report it.
- Any personnel, volunteer, intern, visitor or person associated with the organisation having knowledge that a child's safety is likely to be in danger or that there is a suspected case of child abuse or violation of Child Protection Policy within the, he or she shall report the same to the programme head or the designated Child Protection Officer of the organisation without delay preferably in the reporting format for

⁴ **Prohibition of publication of name, etc., of juvenile involved in any proceeding under the Act.-**

(1) No report in any newspaper, magazine, news-sheet or visual media of any inquiry regarding a juvenile in conflict with law or a child in need of care and protection under this Act shall disclose the name, address or school or any other particulars calculated to lead to the identification of the juvenile or child nor shall any picture of any such juvenile or child be published:

Provided that for reasons to be recorded in writing, the authority holding the inquiry may permit such disclosure, if in its opinion such disclosure is in the interest of the juvenile or the child.

(2) Any person who contravenes the provisions of sub-section (1), shall be liable to a penalty which may extend to twenty-five thousand rupees.

this purpose (*Annexure I*). The report shall bear the signature of the person sending it.

- The report thus sent shall be kept in a safe and secure place and utmost confidentiality shall be maintained about the person reporting the case and identity of the child.

Response Protocol after Reporting

- i. After the report is received, the designated Child Protection Officer of the organisation shall, in consultation with the managing head, constitute a committee to conduct an inquiry into the allegations.
- ii. The Committee shall give the opportunity to the person against whom the allegation has been reported to defend and explain his/her actions. The inquiry process should be fair and objective.
- iii. The Committee shall also interact with the child or group of children concerned and independent persons to verify or corroborate the alleged incidents of misdemeanour. It may do so either directly or through a credible field representative.
- iv. In case of gross misconduct or gross violation of the Child Protection Policy, the concerned employee, intern, volunteer, representative of the partner agency or donor shall be asked to dissociate himself or herself from the activities pending the inquiry process.
- v. If members comprising the Committee differ on opinion, the same will be discussed with the managing head of the organisation, who will consult with the members of the Committee before giving his opinion, which will be final and binding.
- vi. The Committee will keep a record of all the proceedings, formats and reports generated during the inquiry process for reference and will keep in strictest of confidentiality.
- vii. If it comes to light after the inquiry that anyone associated with the organisation in whatsoever capacity as described in the 'Scope' part of this Policy, has committed an act that is criminal in nature or grossly violates children's rights or grossly contravenes the provisions of this Policy, the organisation will take the following disciplinary actions, appropriate to the circumstances:

- a. Paid personnel/employees- disciplinary action (as per the HR Policy/Manual of the organisation) including admonition/memo, dismissal
 - b. Volunteers, Board members and Interns – Termination of the relationship with the organisation
 - c. Partners - Withdrawal of funding / support
- viii. If the nature of the reported incident is such that it comes under the definition of an offence under the Indian Penal Code or any other Special or Local Law, the Committee will recommend reporting of the incident to the police.
- ix. If any employee of the organisation is alleged to be involved into any kind of sexual harassment of a girl child at the workplace⁵, the case would be dealt with by the Internal Complaints Committee constituted under the provisions of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013.
- x. No action will be taken unless the Committee's recommendations are approved by the managing head of the organisation.

cc

Annexure I

⁵ Workplace, for the purpose of the policy shall include any place visited by the employee during the course of his employment including transportation provided by or hired on behalf of the organization and venues where trainings and group sessions with girl children are facilitated.

Reporting Format

1. Details of Person Reporting the Suspected/Alleged incident:

- i. Name:
- ii. Designation:
- iii. Workplace:
- iv. Contact details:

2. Details of the child:

- i. Name:
- ii. Gender:
- iii. Age:
- iv. Contact details:

3. Details of the incident and the person concerned:

- i. Whether the incident is suspected/observed/likely to happen (Tick the relevant one)
- ii. Date, time and place of the incident:
 - a) Date-
 - b) Time- AM/PM
 - c) Place-
- iii. Name of the alleged/suspected perpetrator or from whom there is likelihood of violation:
- iv. Type of association with REACH India (Employee, Paid/Unpaid volunteer, Intern, Representative of the donor agency, Representative of the partner agency, Visitor, Vendor, Media representative, Community member associated with the programme/volunteering for the programme or event etc.):
- v. Nature of the allegation:
- vi. Personal observations (visible injuries, child's emotional state, accomplices etc.)

[NOTE: The Person filling the reporting format should record all facts as far as possible]

- vii. Name(s) and contact detail(s) of person(s) or child who might have witnessed or have the knowledge of the alleged incident:

viii. In case, there are other person(s) or children also involved in the incident, details of them:

ix. Action undertaken by the team-leader/responsible person:

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x. Remarks, if any:

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