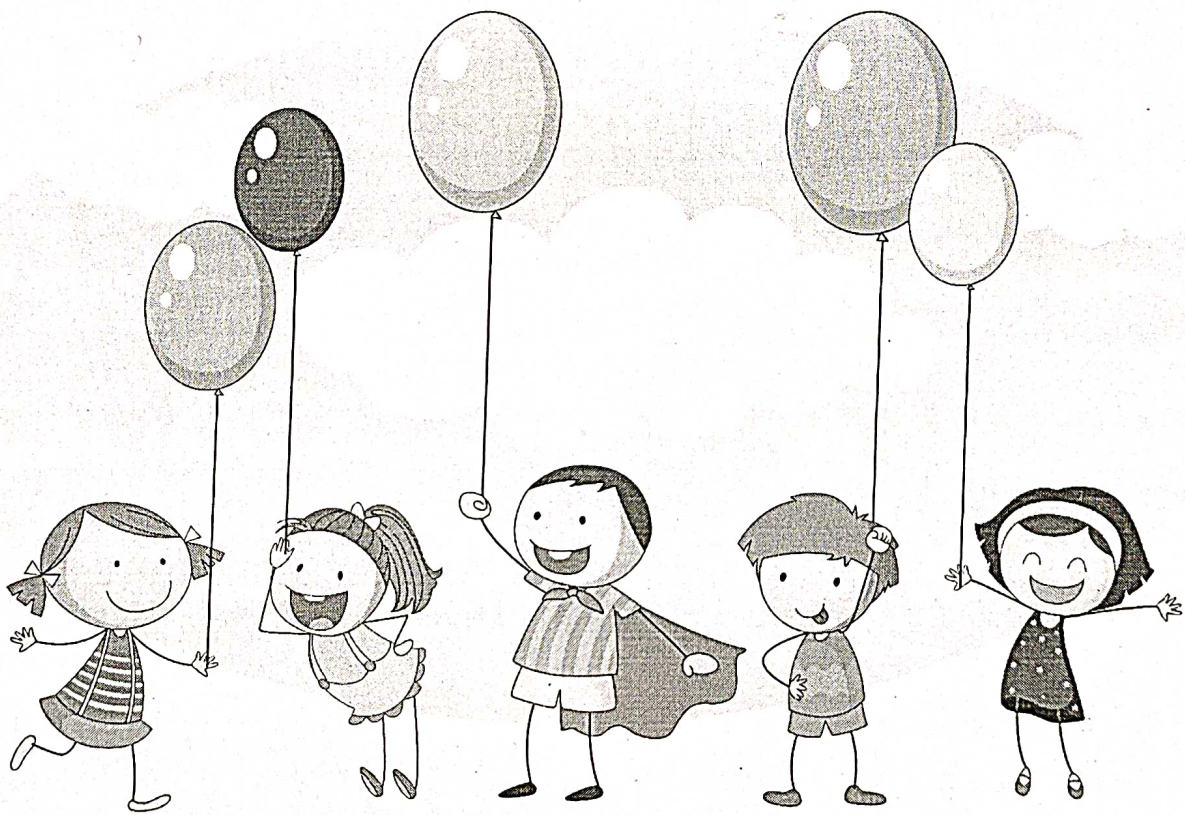


Child Protection Policy



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Child Protection Policy (CPP)

Scope of the SSEVS Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to all board members, staff, volunteers, people's organization, donors, partners, consultants, interns, research scholars, guests, visitors and others.

Objectives

- To ensure the practice of the highest levels of child protection standards in SSEVS
- To ensure a well defined and practiced reporting mechanism for child protection violations and time bound redressal system
- To ensure assessment and management of child protection risk in SSEVS spaces
- To ensure that there are basic minimum standards of child protection adhered to by all associates of SSEVS (village groups, people's organization, donors, government, referral agencies etc.)
- To create consciousness and awareness about child protection

Policy Statement

SSEVS, a child rights focused organization is committed to the protection and well being of children. SSEVS adopts a child protection policy to ensure practice of the highest standards of child protection amongst its stakeholders. The policy creates a mechanism to report child protection violation and ensure prompt redressal.

Definition of Child

"Child" includes all the persons of age from the 0 to 18 years.

However, the issue of feticide implicitly recognizes the right to life of an unborn child. Similarly, a child who is mentally challenged remains a child even after crossing the 18 years of age. The definition of child is therefore flexible and is not restricted to legally drawn age of 18 years and can take the case of child protection violation up to the age of 25 years

Definition of Child Protection

Child Protection is about protecting children from or against any perceived or real danger/ risk of death by poor physical and mental health, HIV infection, educational problem, displacement, homelessness, vagrancy and poor parenting skill later in life, and their personhood and childhood. It is about reducing their vulnerability to any kind of harm and in harmful situations. It is also about protecting children against social, psychological and emotional insecurity and distress. It 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.

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 in order to ensure that they remain within the social security and protective net.

Child protection refers preventing and responding to violence exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices. Living without parental care, in conflict with the law and in armed conflict. Children subjected to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.

Definition of child abuse

General Definition

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

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potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, going scapegoat, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Neglect and negligent treatment

Neglect is the intention or omission on the part of the care given to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and 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.

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is an especially complicated form of abuse because of its layers of guilt and shame. It's important to recognize that sexual abuse doesn't always involve body contact. Exposing a child to sexual situations or materials is sexually abusive, whether or not touching is involved. Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to:

- Kissing or holding in a sexual manner.
- Touching and fondling genital areas.
- Forcing the child to touch another person's genital areas.
- The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity.
- The exploitative use of child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices.
- The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.
- Sexually intrusive question or comments.
- Forced to self-masturbate or watch others masturbate.

Exploitation

Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.

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Social Abuse

This is not strictly a type of abuse, however social circumstances including poverty, lack of services, political environment, and public opinion can be considered harmful to the child. This is not strictly a form of abuse but it is included here to help differentiate between abuse and neglect and social circumstances, all of which can result in harm to a child.

- Homeless/stateless
- Displaced by war/natural disasters
- Forced into being a child soldier
- Political uncertainty
- Lack of economic option
- No or limited access to basic social services.
- Being denied basic rights through the law (for example, where an offender aged under 18 is tried in court as though they were an adult)
- Practice such as early marriage, male and female genital mutilation, prenatal sex selection and female infanticide.
- Attitude that promote ideas of children as the property of adults (parents and husbands) and beliefs that girls are property and inferior to boys.

Definition Child Protection Violation: Child Protection Violation in context of the policy amounts to:

- Any act or behavior that puts a child at risk of abuse
- Any act of behaviour that could potentially increase the risk of abuse
- A failure to act in a situation where a child is being abused
- Failure to follow the code of conduct or any other prescribed protocol without suitable justification

This policy calls for mandatory reporting of all child protection violations. All members within the scope of this policy should report as they witness, suspect or come to know of any form of child protection violation.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Guiding Principles

- Respect for dignity, liberty, and freedom of the child
- Recognition of the best interests of the child
- Belief that a child is entitled to express his/her opinion and can take decisions for him/herself
- Respect for the child's right to privacy and confidentiality
- Zero tolerance of any form of abuse whether direct or indirect
- Belief that child protection is the responsibility of all
- Use of a risk management approach

SSEVS Whistle Blower Policy

The Whistle Blower Policy is framed to ensure that there is an appropriate mechanism in place to ensure prompt and fair action in the case of a child protection violation. The Whistle Blower Policy applies to SSEVS and its associates.

Response Mechanism in case of a child protection violation: Outlined below is a reporting and response framework for any alleged, witnessed, or suspected child protection violation

SSEVS:

Report the matter directly in writing to the Child Protection Cell of the organization who will address the issue with the Management Team of the organization

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OR

Report the matter to the team leader/head of the department. The head of department must inform the matter to the Grievance Cell who will address the matter with the Management Team of the organization

There should be **mandatory** reporting of child protection violations within the organization - anybody coming across child protection violation must report it

The Management Team of the organization will investigate the matter and take appropriate action in accordance with the guidelines for disciplinary action as outlined in the HR policy of SSEVS.

While the matter is under investigation the individual who is suspected of having committed a child protection violation must be removed from direct contact with children

The issue would be addressed and brought to closure within a month of having been reported.

Any alarming or inappropriate behavior of a staff member and any action taken against the person must be noted in his/ her personal record.

If the abuse falls under IPC or any other relevant law, First Information Report must be filed with the local police

Implementation of the Policy:

The overall implementation of the policy would be the responsibility of the Secretary of SSEVS

The Grievance Cell and Management Team mentioned in the Whistle Blower Policy are constituted as per the HR policy of SSEVS

The **Agreement** between SSEVS and staff, consultants, interns, research scholars, partners and others would necessarily include acceptance of SSEVS Child Protection Policy, Code of conduct and Operational Guidelines.

All agreements/ contracts/ Terms of reference between SSEVS and its partners would include

acceptance of relevant clauses of SSEVS child protection policy, Code of conduct, Whistle Blower Policy and Operational guidelines.

Increase awareness of Child Protection Issue

Strengthen recruitment and screening process

Ensure appropriate use of communication system

Ensure risk to the children are managed in disaster situation

Review of the Policy:

The Policy would be reviewed **every three years** by SSEVS.

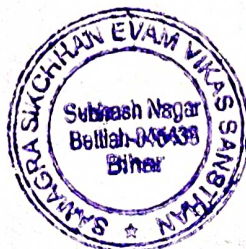
Operational Guidelines

This child protection policy articulates SSEVS's aspiration and commitment to practicing the highest level of child protection in its operations. SSEVS with other stakeholders take a proactive stance in laying out a set of operational guidelines that would be incorporated into all process and functions of the network. These guidelines have been developed through a consultative process within SSEVS and expert input from other organizations and individuals who have already developed and implement child protection policies.

Human Resource Management

1.1 Recruitment

- The recruitment advertisement should consist a clause regarding the Child Protection Policy and should state the applicant should have to abide by the child protection policy and the applicant who have indulge in child protection violation will not be selected.
- There should be basic assessment of candidate on sensibilities regarding child protection -e.g. show an article, ask for analysis and use a check list for interview
- There should be thorough reference check to be carried out from past employers or the academic institute attended by the candidate
- If there is a gap in the tenure of the service of the applicant then it should be thoroughly verified whether he/she was not indulge in antisocial activities or not has been charge and punished or penalized under the IPC for the same.



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- All new recruits would sign an undertaking accepting the child protection policy and the code of conduct
- Induction Program within the organization would include orientation on Child Protection
- All new recruits would be provided with a copy of the SSEVS Child Protection Policy.
- On recruitment, personal files with photograph of the staff recruited should be maintained.

1.2 Staff Development and Capacity Building

- Orientation on child protection must be given critical focus in all staff development and capacity building programs
- The organization must make attempts to stay abreast the latest trends and issues on child protection and share this knowledge with its personnel across all levels and departments
- Protection of staff needs to be discussed at length as staff members also face threats and various risks in the course of their work.

1.3 Human Resource Practices for SSEVS

- SSEVS would not associate itself with organizations that engage in activities that involve tobacco, alcohol, and child labour.
- In the case of organizations that want to associate with SSEVS or that SSEVS desires to associate with, a detailed diligence exercise in addition to financial diligence needs to be undertaken to ensure that the organization's philosophy, mission, processes and practices are safe for children. The associate organization would need to:
 - have a child protection policy
 - not employ child labour
 - be intolerant to any form of child exploitation and abuse
 - not patronize any service that may be exploitative to children

Management Structure and System

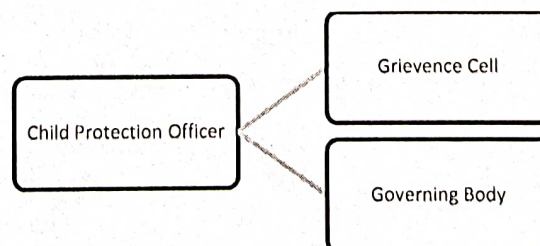
Child Protection Cell will be responsible to address the child protection issues within the organization and if any case of child protection violation came across, they will take all the necessary step for the redressal of the grievance. The Child Protection cell consists of the following persons.

- Staff (One Male and One Female as Nominated by the other staff of the organization)
- Child Protection Officer (Designated from within the Organization)
- Secretary
- 3 Members from the Governing Body at least one should be female.

Roles & Responsibility of the Child Protection Cell:

- To direct the Child Protection Officer to lodge a FIR in the local Police Station in the case of severe physical abuse or any form of Child Sexual Abuse.
- The Child Protection Cell will screen the abuser and if necessary will counsel the child but with the consent of the child.
- To terminate the abuser from the Job.
- Monitor and Guide Child Protection Officer.
- Review of the Child Protection Policy.

Reporting Procedure



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Child Protection Officer (CPO)

A child protection officer will be appointed within the organization who has experienced of working for the child welfare and child protection and should have a child friendly approach. The Child Protection Officer will be a member of the Child Protection Cell. He or she will be responsible for reporting of the child protection violation to the Child Protection Cell.

Responsibility of Child Protection Officer:

- The child protection officer will be first point of contact to report the child abuse.
- To report to the Child Protection Cell
- CPO will arrange for immediate medical treatment if there is Physical abuse or Sexual abuse and at the same time will inform the secretary about the abuse.
- He/she will arrange for counseling of the child.
- He/she will be responsible to see that the abuser may not influence the child or threat the child.
- He/she will responsible for orientation of new staff/volunteers on CPP.
- He/she will be responsible for the implementation of CPP.

Protection norms for SSEVS spaces accessible to children

These would include the SSEVShead office and field offices

- All SSEVS spaces should be accessible to children
- The SSEVS Collaborative Centers should be accessible to children on a 24-hour basis and a team member should always be there.
- The space should be well lit and well ventilated
- It is desirable that the child is not left alone with a team member.
- Escorts for children during any interaction that involve travel (local or otherwise) must always be of the same sex
- Privacy should be ensured while the child is changing and a space of 10 x 10 with toilet facilities to be allotted for children.
- All SSEVS spaces should be equipped with a first aid kit
- During direct intervention all steps as included in the SSEVS *intervention protocols* should be adhered to
- The SSEVS Child Protection Policy must be displayed in a prominent space in all SSEVS spaces
- The SSEVS Child Protection Policy may be translated in to local languages
- The SSEVS Child Protection Policy must have a short interactive child friendly version to enable children understand their protection rights in SSEVS.

Code of conduct

SSEVS is dedicated to protecting the rights of children. It recognizes the need for honesty and integrity and respect for the child to reflect both in decisions of the organization as well as in the conduct of its personnel. Hence, SSEVS articulates a code of conduct for its personnel at SSEVS and its developed people's organization and partners.

Personnel should

Respect the privacy and dignity of each and every child

Be visible while working with children at the work place

Ensure that a culture of openness exists and facilitates children to interact and express their issues and concerns with staff in SSEVS

Respect and encourage children's voices and views.

Make efforts to ensure children's participation in decisions that affect their lives

Inform children about steps of interventions being taken in his/ her context.

Uphold privacy of the child by not disclosing identity of child to anyone who may put the child at risk

Uphold the privacy of the child by not disclosing the identity of the child to the media.

Educate children about their rights, issues of abuse, neglect and exploitation

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Ensure that there are same sex chaperons/escorts for children
Recorded movement of children while sending them to schools, hospitals or referral service centers or even in repatriation/ restoration

Personnel should not

- touch, hug, or caress a child
- spend time with children alone
- stay in a room alone with a child for an extended period
- allow interaction with a child in a closed environment without supervision of the person in-charge
- sleep alone with any child
- take children to the residence of the team members/coordinators/directors for the night
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves
- engage children in personal work or employ children at work or at home.
- use language or expressions that is found inappropriate to a child
- use corporal punishment or tolerate corporal punishment by the staff
- make any physical gestures in a manner that appears to be inappropriate or sexually provocative
- develop any relationship with children which could be assumed as exploitative or abusive
- discriminate against children on the basis of sex, region, culture, class, creed, colour, language, disabilities, or physical feature leading to differential treatment
- stigmatize or humiliate a child
- act in any manner that put children at risk
- give gifts directly to children
- patronize any services that employ children
- take any photograph that would violate the child's dignity, or privacy in anyway

Participation of children in SSEVS programs

- Children should not participate in events unless it is relevant to them
- Even if relevant, the program should not be detrimental to the health of the child
- Consent of the child/ informed choice is mandatory while participating in programs
- If children are being taken for residential programs written consent must be taken from their families or the institution that they reside in
- The purpose of the participation must be clearly articulated to the child
- Children should play a key role in planning any event that they will participate in
- Tokenistic participation of children should be avoided
- Children must be adequately provided with drinking-water, refreshments, snacks and meals during programs
- Arrangements for first-aid and quick access to medical facilities should be provided for while planning programs with children
- Optimum safety /protection should be provided for Children attending program e.g. security in cases of open spaces, fire safety norms etc.
- Ensure basic facilities are provided to children attending programs outdoor.
- Ensure provision of safe accommodation arrangements with separate toilets for boys and girls.
- Same sex chaperones/escorts must be provided for children going outdoors.
- 1 caretaker for every 10 children to be provided during programs.
- Children cannot be left alone without escorts or chaperones at any time during the program.
- There should be a Grievance Committee comprising the organizers and the children to address any issues of conflict during the program
- If children have to travel reservations must be made well ahead of time to ensure a safe and smooth journey to and from the program
- Feedback must be taken from the children at the end of the program.

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- At the end of the program each child attending the program must either be handed over to a responsible parent or family member, or the institution to which the child belongs

Representation of children in the media/communication material/publications

It is to ensure to best interest of the child to safeguard the dignity, identity, and privacy of the children.

Media:

- SSEVS must protect the dignity, identity, and privacy of the children if it comes in contact with the media.
- SSEVS needs to ensure to the best of its ability that while highlighting child protection issues, that the media does not disclose the identity and details such as names, address, photograph of the child, parents, locality and school
- SSEVS should ensure informed consent from the child and his or her family before disclosing any story to the media.
- SSEVS should ensure informed consent from the child and his or her family before disclosing his/ her contact details (address/ phone number/ mobile etc) to the media.
- In any case if discussed in the media, ensure proper scrutiny and monitoring of the content is done. In case of inappropriate reporting, the team/organization take action against the same.
- While disclosing children's stories to the media SSEVS should ensure that the media covers the story in a responsible and sensitive manner
- Testimonies by children or representation of children in the media to discuss the problem/abuse should be prohibited completely.

Communication Material

- While photographing children or using children's images in the production of communication material, SSEVS should explain to the best of its ability, the context and use of the child's image/ images.
- In case of representation of SSEVS cases in publication ensure names are changed and photographs do not reveal identity.
- Representation of children in IEC material which is detrimental to a child's right & dignity should not be permitted
- The child must give an informed consent before allowing his/her/their images to be used by SSEVS
- The consent of the child and/or his/her/their family must be taken in writing.

ABBREVIATION

CWC: Child Welfare Committee

CPP: Child Protection Policy

MWCD: Ministry of Women and Child Development

GOI: Government of India

UNCRC: United Nations Convention for Rights of child



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