

# Organisational Policy for Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Promotion of Child Protection

Protect Our Children, Girls And Women.  
Respect their Rights



UNNATI is a **ZERO** Tolerance Organisation  
against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

## **Policy for Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Promotion of Child Protection**

### **1. Rationale**

Every child deserves a happy childhood and the opportunity to lead a dignified life safe from violence, exploitation, neglect, deprivation and discrimination. India is a young nation with child population of 40% of the overall population of 1.2 billion. Protection of this 40% of the population is not only a matter of their human rights but also an investment towards building a robust nation. The Constitution of India recognizes children as equal right holder and grants highest priority for their protection and well-being. India is also signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and accordingly has a strong legal framework to protect children which include the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015; the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012; Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act 1994; the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act 2005; the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009; Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006; and Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016.

The child protection policy draws upon the safeguards provided under the Constitutions of India, various child-centric legislation, international treaties as well as other existing policies for the protection and wellbeing of children. It aims at providing a safe and conducive environment for all children through the prevention and response to child abuse, exploitation and neglect. It provides a framework for all institution, and organization (including corporate and media houses), government or private sector to understand their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding/ protecting children and promoting the welfare of children; individually and collectively.

For prevention of child sexual exploitation and abuse, this policy based on the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012 and subsequent amendment in 2019to include provisions for increased penalties for numerous offences in order to deter criminals and ensure the safety, security, and dignity of the victims. The Act is gender-neutral and prioritizes the child's best interests and welfare at all stages to ensure the child's healthy physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development.The Act defines a child as someone under the age of eighteen and considers the child's best interests and well-being to be important at all times.

It distinguishes between different types of sexual abuse, such as penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography, and considers sexual assault to be "aggravated" in certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is perpetrated by someone in a position of trust or authority over the child, such as a family member, police officer, or teacher.Individuals who traffic children for sexual purposes are also subject to the Act's abetment provisions. The Act stipulates harsh punishments that are tiered according to the severity of the offence, with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment and a fine.

### **2. Definitions under the Child Protection Policy**

- i. **A Child** is defined as any person under the age of 18 years, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- ii. **Child Protection** is a broad term to describe philosophies, standards, guidelines and procedures to protect children from both intentional and unintentional harm. In the current context, it is the duty of the organization to make sure that its staff, operations and programs do no harm to children, that

- is that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organization has about children's safety within the activities and programs in which they work, are reported to the appropriate authorities.
- iii. **Child Abuse** is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child.
  - iv. **Child Protection**, with the scope of this policy, is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that Plan undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.
  - v. **Policy** is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organization is taking its duty and responsibilities of care seriously.

### **3. Vulnerability**

All children due to their age are considered to be at risk for exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect. But vulnerability cannot be defined simply by age. Though age is one of the components, vulnerability is also measured by the child's capability for self-protection. A child's vulnerability comes from various factors that hinder a child's ability to function and grow normally. Hence, protection is more about the ability of the child to lead a healthy life within a child protection system; the ability to protect themselves or get help from people who can provide protection. The term vulnerable children refer to an age group that is considered at risk. As per UNICEF definition, vulnerable children as those who are abused, exploited and neglected. Child protection is derived out of the duty to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups of children.

### **4. Child Protection**

UNICEF considers child Protection as the prevention of or responding to the incidence of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect of children. This includes commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/ cutting and child marriage. Protection also allows children to have access to their other rights of survival, development, growth and participation. When child protection fails or is absent children have a higher risk of death, poor physical and mental health, HIV/AIDS infection, educational problems, displacement, homelessness, vagrancy and poor parenting skills later in life. Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICDS) views that child protection is about keeping children safe from risk or perceived risk to their or childhood. It is about recognizing that children are vulnerable and hence reducing their vulnerability by protecting them from harm and harmful situations. Child protection is about ensuring that children have a security net to depend on, and if they happen to fall through the holes of the system, the system has the responsibility to provide the child with the necessary care and rehabilitation to bring them back into the safety net.

### **5. Organisational Commitment**

The purpose of this policy is to create 'child safe' environment, both inside the organization and in the programs including the coverage area, where children are respected, protected, empowered and active in their own protection, and where Staffs are skilled, confident, competent and well support in meeting their protection responsibilities. UNNATI is committed to safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children's rights to protection are fully realized. It owns full responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. Also, take positive action to prevent all forms of child abuses. Stringent measures shall be taken against any UNNATI Staff and Associate who abuses a child. The decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of 'the best interests of the child'.

The principle of social inclusion, gender equity, social justice and people's participation and child development and protection guide us in our programs on decentralised governance, social accountability and disaster risk reduction.

This Child Protection Policy provides code of conduct for all its internal and external stakeholders (namely employees, consultants, donors, partners, visitors, volunteers) and any party dealing with UNNATI for its programs to conduct oneself, respond and work in a child friendly manner ensuring the protection of children whom they interact with.

- i. UNNATI does not discriminate on the basis of caste, religion or gender
- ii. UNNATI does not discriminate on the basis of any disability, and endeavors to provide specially-abled children with special care and support, and every opportunity equal of other children
- iii. UNNATI has zero-tolerance policy on discrimination, sexual exploitation and abuse against children including girl child, child with disability, children without care and protection.
- iv. UNNATI promotes girl child education and endeavors to provide special opportunities to girls
- v. UNNATI has zero-tolerance on corporal punishment, and any form of abuse against children
- vi. UNNATI ensures that all work done in its program and activities is keeping the best interests of the child in mind
- vii. UNNATI respects the view of the children, especially when decisions are taken concerning them, and endeavors to increase children's participation in school management and program activities
- viii. UNNATI is against child labour and will not employ or tolerate any child labour for performing any of its obligations

## 6. Scope of Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection Policy applies to everyone working or associated with UNNATI.

- i. All staffs; Management Board members; interns and volunteers
- ii. All those acting on behalf of UNNATI, such as members, consultants or trainers
- iii. All those adults accompanying children to events and activities organized by UNNATI
- iv. All those who participate in UNNATI events and meetings involving children, including journalists, sponsors, donors, policy makers, etc.

This code shall apply while working on official premises of the organisation, at offsite locations (field offices) where projects are being implemented, at various campaign, social and advocacy events, or at any other place where the above person are a representative of UNNATI.

### 6.1 Awareness

Child Protection Policy needs to be understood accurately by all those that the policy applies to for its effective implementation. UNNATI will ensure that all staffs, interns, volunteers, consultants etc. are informed about the policy and act in accordance with all its provisions, and do no harm to children who may come into their contact within or outside their work. Organize regular awareness program on Child Rights and impart trainings to staffs on Child Protection. All stakeholders will undergo internal and external training programs and counseling services (if required) in order to enhance their capacities and provide them with adequate intellectual and mental resources for understanding the issues related to child protection and to deal with burnout.

### 6.2 Program Intervention

UNNATI is committed to designing and delivering programs that are safe for children. Design interventions with rights-based approach - responding to needs, sensitizing and empowering children and giving them voice. Risk assessments are therefore conducted when designing our projects and activities and safety strategies developed accordingly. Making community advocacy program on child rights and gender issues as an integral part of all interventions. Mobilizing and sensitizing women/mothers in order to make them and their spouse responsible for well-being of children and prevention of exploitation and abuse. Risk mitigation strategies will be developed, which minimize the risks to

children and will be incorporated into design, delivery and evaluation of programs, operations and activities which involve or impart upon children.

### **6.3 Program Activities and Events**

- i. Care will be taken to ensure that activities are designed such that do not cause harm to the child.
- ii. Program staff is expected to set a good example. They will not consume any addictive or intoxicating substances, nor use any inappropriate or abusive language, in front of the children.
- iii. Program staff should never ask children to do their personal tasks.
- iv. If any staff / visitor wish to give eatables to children, they should take prior permission from the school authorities or their legal guardians.
- v. No child should be called alone for any activity. Any child should be accompanied with friends and/or family. Children should not be called to isolated spaces for any activity.
- vi. Two adults should always be present to conduct any activity with children. If it is not possible for two program staff to be present at the same time, school teachers and/or other people from the community should be present. In case, girls are present for the activity, a female adult member should be present.
- vii. Children should not be made to wait, stand in the open, sit on roads etc. for long durations for any activity.
- viii. UNNATI does not encourage any program activity (e.g. picnic, advocacy events etc.) that requires travel over long distance and/or overnight stay of children.

### **6.4 Staff and Personnel**

- i. Will be observed during the induction or engagement process for their attitude and behavior towards children and a feedback will be accordingly provided to the CEO before final appointment on the respective post.
- ii. Will establish an atmosphere conducive for the development of children through their word, deed and demeanor. This includes listening to children and showing respect to them and their opinions.
- iii. Treat all children equally, no matter their origin, appearance and convictions.
- iv. Will respect the local cultural and religious context and behave in appropriate manner with children in communities.
- v. Will not promise and/or give children and their families/ caretakers verbally/nonverbally any monetary or nonmonetary favours without the knowledge and permission of UNNATI management.
- vi. Will not employ children as domestic workers in their homes/ business.
- vii. Children will not stay overnight in the home of UNNATI personnel, project premises or elsewhere.
- viii. Will be responsible for the interaction between an adult and a child even when it is perceived that a child is acting in a challenging (not listening to the facilitator, creating disturbance in the class or session etc.) manner.
- ix. Will not touch private parts of the body, or the touch, which will make the child uncomfortable.
- x. Will take permission from children, their parents/ guardians and schools and/ from the participants of a workshop and training session before taking and using any photos and videos involving these beneficiaries.
- xi. Will avoid situations which isolate children and where behaviour cannot be observed such as in cars, offices and homes.
- xii. Will immediately report any concern they have or incident they have witnessed or heard of, in accordance with the policy. This is mandatory for all staff, and failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
- xiii. Will not shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or engage in emotional abuse.
- xiv. Will not serve children alcohol, medications or other psychoactive substances.
- xv. Will not hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse Children.
- xvi. Will not expose children to inappropriate images, films and websites including pornography and extreme violence.

xvii. All persons including staff, partners, vendors and suppliers fall within the scope of UNNATI's policy on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) which includes prevention of Sexual Harassment at workplace and Child Protection Policy. By signing any of the agreement and appointment letter issued by UNNATI, the person confirms its understanding and commitment to the above-mentioned policies of UNNATI. All contracts, agreements and appointments shall mention that "UNNATI's policy on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) includes prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace and Child Protection shall be strictly followed. Violation of these two policies fall under zero tolerance area of the organisation and strict action will be initiated on anyone violating the policies. During the course of the work, It is obligatory on the part of all staff and associates to report any incidents / suspicions on violation of the two policies to UNNATI and support in taking actions taken on the same." The above declaration must be included in all contracts, agreements and appointments.

#### **6.5 Personal Conduct Outside Work**

- i. UNNATI is committed to ensuring that its staff and representatives apply high standards of behavior within both their professional and personal lives.
- ii. It is necessary to see that employees shall adhere to UNNATI's position of upholding the rights of the child. In this context, any unlawful activity or misconduct by UNNATI's employees, related to any form of child abuse - physical, sexual or emotional - attracts high punishment which is defined in the PSEA policy.
- iii. UNNATI'S staff and associates are required to bear in mind the principles of the Child Rights Policy, and orient their awareness and behavior to promote child rights both at work and outside.

#### **7. Child Protection Committee (CPC)**

In UNNATI, the Child Protection Committee and Committee on Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace jointly form a Committee for Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) at Workplace. The committee will comprise of staffs from all official locations. It also encompasses an external representative from an external NGO. In case of report on violation of child protection or any form of child sexual abuse the Complaint Committee formed under PSEA will initiate action. The process of initiating action is clearly defined in the PSEA policy. The committee shall meet in every six month or early depending on the need and urgency to create a safe and respectable work environment for Children and Women working in UNNATI. Every year a set aside budget to Rs.1,00,000 is available to the Chairperson of the PSEA Committee to carry out the activities.





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