



VAAN MUHIL TRUST

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

All forms of abuse of children violate their right to survival, development, protection & participation. Powerlessness makes children an easy victim for the abusers. This makes the abusers easier to operate. In order to protect / safeguard the children, the Protection Policy helps to generate awareness within the organization, children and the community to create safe environment to the children to ensure their protection rights. The policy also empowers children to take part in their own protection and make the staff being morally, socially responsible for the protection of children. It also provides guidelines to prevent child abuse and allow every child the right to feel safe.

The policy is based upon UNCRC Principles in relation to the protection of children

- Non-discrimination
- Bests interests of the child
- The child's right to life, survival & development
- Respect for the views of the child

Basic Principles to be followed

- ❖ Believe & Trust the child
- ❖ Priority to the child
- ❖ Protect and care the child (Immediate)

Basic Understanding on Child Abuses and Forms

Child abuse consists of any act or failure to act that endangers a child's physical, sexual, neglect or emotional health and development. A person caring for a child is abusive if he or she fails to nurture the child, physically injures the child, or relates sexually to the child.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is characterized by the infliction of intentional, non-accidental physical injury as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking or otherwise harming a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse includes acts of omissions by the caregivers could cause serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders to a child.

Sexual Abuse

Child Sexual Abuse is the physical or mental violation of a child with sexual intent which includes both touching and non-touching behaviour usually by an older person or adult or bigger children.

Neglect

Neglect is defined as the persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger or the deliberate denial to provide the child with clean water, food, shelter or sanitation

Child Protection

Protect children from all forms of denials and violations with special reference to age, gender, caste, location, ethnicity and disability.

Vaan Muhil – Child Protection Policy

The purpose of the policy is to promote the safety environment of the children and that the staff are not placed in compromising position. Adults have the responsibility to ensure child protection. The policy will help the staff about they way they should behave towards children and also act in a positive way to create a safe environment for children in their care and approach.

All Vaan Muhil staff and others are accented to fulfill the following mandatory responsibilities in work with children;

- Listen to Children’s views and concerns
- At all times treat children with respect and recognize them as individuals in their own right.
- Respect a child’s right to personal privacy
- Encourage children to discuss attitudes / behavior they do not like.
- Recognize that caution is required even in sensitive moments, such as when dealing with abuser / perpetrator.
- Do safe travel arrangements with necessary care for the safety and protection of children. Also take the necessary permissions, preferably in writing from the children and the parents.
- There must be transparency about the mobility of children with the staff

How we will ensure our commitments above are met

- Vaan Muhil Staff will sign and abide by the policy
- All staff and volunteers will have access to a copy of the child protection policy
- Recruitment procedures will include checks on suitability for working with young people
- Induction will include briefing on child protection issues
- Every workplace will display contact details for reporting possible child abuse and every member of Child Protection Committee with their contact details for reporting.

Staff and others should never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
- Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Wish / Appreciate children in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Develop physical / sexual relationship with children.
- Give excessive gifts to children or their families.
- Develop relationship with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- Behave physically in manners which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- Have a child / children with whom they are working stay overnight at their home unsupervised.
- spend excessive time alone with children away from others
- Take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with the staff member
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they care do for themselves.
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment or favour particular children the exclusion of others

Procedure for the Complaint

- ✧ A complaint may be lodged to the Child Protection Committee / Executive Director in writing by the victim child.

- ✧ Under special circumstances an individual, who may be a friend, child activist, parents of the victim child, may make a written complaint on behalf of the child.
- ✧ The child protection committee will make an internal inquiry in order to determine the fact.
- ✧ When there are suspicions or doubts remaining regarding the nature of the concern, the child protection committee will decide whether to report the incident externally. If the committee members decide not to report the incident externally, he/ she must document these reasons and report this decision to the Executive Director.
- ✧ The parents of the child should also be informed of the concern and the action proposed. They should be consulted where possible as to the process to be followed.

GUIDELINES FOR THE INQUIRY PROCESS WITH THE CHILD

Child Protection Committee

Child Protection Committee has been constituted for our organization to look into the matters concerning child abuse. The Committee consists of following persons:

1. Mr. S. Arul Joseph - Chairperson
2. Ms. K. Karpaga Sundari - Member
3. Ms. K. Chandra Kala - Member
4. Ms. R. Mariammal - Member
5. Ms. S. Shanthi - Member
6. Ms. R. Indurani - Member
7. Ms. R. Johnsi Rani - Member

The affected child can approach any member of the committee with his/her written/oral complaint. Once the complaint is received by the Committee:

- The person who is charged by the complainant will be informed that a complaint has been filed against him/her (s/he will be made aware of the details of the allegation and also the name of the complainant as it would be necessary for proper inquiry) and no unfair acts of retaliation or unethical action will be tolerated.
- The complainant has the opportunity to ask for conciliation proceedings by having communication with the accused in the presence of the Committee. But in such conciliation the complainant cannot demand monetary compensation.
- The Committee will question both the complainant and the charged separately. If required, the person who has been named as a witness will need to provide the necessary information to assist in resolving the matter satisfactorily.

- The Committee shall call upon all witnesses mentioned by both the parties.
- The Committee can ask for specific documents from a person if it feels that they are important for the purpose of investigation.
- The complainant and the accused shall be informed of the outcome of the investigation. The investigation shall be completed within one month of the receipt of the complaint. If the investigation reveals that the complainant has been abused as claimed, the charged (staff) will be subjected to disciplinary action accordingly.

A. The report of the investigation shall be submitted to the Executive Director, the charged and the complainant within 10 days of completion of the investigation.

B. The Executive Director will act on the recommendations of the Committee within 10 days of the receipt of the report.

C. Any party aggrieved by the report can prefer an appeal in the appropriate Court within 60 days of the recommendation been given to the Executive Director.

Disciplinary Action:

Where any abuse is found by the Committee, appropriate disciplinary action shall be taken against the charged (staff). Disciplinary action may include transfer, withholding promotion, suspension or even dismissal. This action shall be in addition to any legal recourse sought by the complainant.

If it is found out through evidence by the Committee that the complainant has maliciously given false complaint against the charged, disciplinary action shall be taken against the complainant as well.

Regardless of the outcome of the complaint made in good faith, the child lodging the complaint and any person providing information or any witness, will be protected from any form of retaliation.

While dealing with complaints of abuse, the Committee shall ensure that the complainant or the witness are not victimized or discriminated against by the charged (staff).

Any unwarranted pressures, retaliatory or any other type of unethical behavior by the charged against the complainant while the investigation is in progress should be reported by the complainant to the Child Protection Committee as soon as possible. Disciplinary action will be taken by the Committee against any such complaints which are found genuine.

Immediate Action

- ✦ The member of the Complaint committee, to whom the complaint has been made, should immediately provide initial support and consultation to the victim child.

- ✦ On receipt of the written complaint, the Complaint committee shall initially try to resolve the dispute through informal discussions.
- ✦ The victim child may be referred to a lawyer, doctor and/or a counselor, if necessary.

Dialogue with the child

- Trained and skilled professionals should inquire the situation, but rather to set in motion the process of getting help for the child.
- The purpose of inquiry is to initially gather information to determine how to move forward with the inquiry.

Support to the child is important. In order to do this;

- 👂 Believe the child
- 👂 Project a calm, understanding and supportive attitude to the child
- 👂 Reassure the child that it is okay to tell what happened
- 👂 Tell the child what to expect. If the child does not know, say so, but let the child know she / he can be supported by the staff
- 👂 Do not promise confidentiality. Explain he / she may need to talk to someone else to get help
- 👂 Avoid having the child repeat his / her explanation to different staff
- 👂 Reassure the child that it is not her / his fault
- 👂 Avoid unnecessary physical contact with the child
- 👂 Understand the importance of early reporting

This policy shall be disseminated to all staff of the organization as well as new recruits who will have to acknowledge that they have read and understood the policy and that they shall abide by the policy.