

Child Protection Policy

7.1 Statement of Commitment

VEDIC SOCIETY is committed to the welfare and rights of children. We are committed to comply with all relevant local legislation on child rights and welfare including labour laws that apply to children. We are also committed to educating its staff and volunteers about the importance of child protection, measures to ensure the rights of the child and what actions to take in the case of abuse of the rights of a child.

7.2 Definitions

Child

For the purposes of this policy, a “child” is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Child Abuse

According to the **World Health Organization**, “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.’

Different forms of child abuse are:

- **Physical abuse:** any actions or punishments that affect the physical well-being of the child, like beatings with a stick or other materials, poisoning, shaking, or forcing the child to work in an unsafe way or environment.
- **Psychological abuse:** any actions (gestures, words and behaviour) that deliberately affect a child’s mental/emotional well-being, for example by making them afraid, anxious, annoyed or discouraged.
- **Negligence:** any actions that deliberately neglect to provide the four essential rights of children (right to live, right to learn, right to participate and the right to speak).

- **Sexual abuse:** any actions with sexual intent towards children such as touching children's genitals, forcing a child to watch or take part in pornography or coercing the child to have sex.

7.3 The Core Principles and Values

- **The legal basis:** This Policy is firmly based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Taken holistically, it provides a comprehensive framework for the protection, provision and participation of all children without discrimination to ensure their survival and development to the maximum extent possible.

- **The moral basis:** We believe that our organization has an absolute duty to protect this vulnerable group from abuse, mistreatment, and exploitation from within organization intended for their benefit. This duty is imperative and non-negotiable. Without adequate standards and mechanisms of protection in place, an organization may not only fail in its primary duty of care, but may also be negligently or recklessly fostering an environment of abuse.

- **An end to silence:** Silence breeds abuse and exploitation of children. Without proper policies and explicit procedures in place, NGOs are extremely vulnerable to false allegations of child abuse. VEDIC SOCIETY therefore believes in creating an environment where issues of child protection are discussed openly and are understood between children and adults; promoting open lines of communication both internally and externally within and between all stakeholders to improve awareness and implementation of child protection policies and practices; creating a framework to deal openly, consistently and fairly with allegations concerning both direct and indirect abuse.

- **Children's participation:** Creating a space where children feel able and willing to speak out about abuse, free from abusers, empowers them to become actors in their own protection without further discrimination or shame. Children have the right to communication – to enable them to receive information, to ask questions, to make choices, and to make decisions. VEDIC SOCIETY believes that helping children to find a voice is an essential step to helping them to claim their individual rights. Children will only benefit from this policy if they are aware of their rights and are given the proper environment in which to exercise them.

- **Taking it further:** Child protection is not just about reading and signing a piece of paper: the policy sets out guidelines and standards that must be put into practice. These include, amongst other measures: recruitment procedures, review of management

structures, creation of a space for children to speak out, staff training, and development of transparent protocols. Above all, it must be remembered that it is the children, not the standards, that are sacrosanct; and although abuse must never be tolerated, the standards are no more than a tool in the service of promoting the welfare of children.

• **Challenging complacency:** Resistance to addressing child protection issues may come from lack of understanding of the nature of child abuse, lack of commitment to the organization/programme, and a sense that child abuse happens elsewhere. It should be asked: “If safety and well being of children are not at the centre of the organization’s programme/activities, then why not?” VEDIC SOCIETY will challenge complacency as a matter of course.

7.4 Behaviour Protocols

Any member, employee, officer, staff member, intern, volunteer, researcher, consultant, or adviser who has either direct or indirect contact with children will be fully informed of VEDIC SOCIETY’s Policy. This will guide on appropriate behaviour of adults towards children and of children towards children.

7.5 Communications about Children

All publications and the website that include images and text related to children will not contain the following:

- Manipulated or sensationalized text and/or images;
- Discriminatory and degrading language;
- Images in which children are inappropriately clothed; and
- Information that could be used to identify the location of the child and cause them to be put at risk.

Photos of children that will be included on the website or any of our publications must be taken with the child’s verbal permission. In addition, all information relating to children is limited to those members of staff who need to know and will be treated as confidential.

7.6 Reporting Incidents

All witnessed, suspected or alleged violations of this Policy will be immediately reported to the Secretary of this organization, who will record and act on these in a confidential manner in accordance with the standardized process developed by VEDIC SOCIETY and the best interests of the child. The organization will take appropriate action to protect

the child/children in question from further harm and others in the organization during and following an incident or allegation. The relevant contact details for child protection services, local social services department, police, emergency medical help and help lines will also be readily available and easily accessible.

7.7 Ramifications of Misconduct

We will immediately suspend any member, employee, adviser, consultant, trustee, intern or volunteer who is alleged to have violated this Child Policy, pending the outcome of an investigation. VEDIC SOCIETY reserves the right to take any disciplinary action against any of the above who have been proven guilty in an investigation, which may include reporting the incident to the police.