

ORGANISATION FOR EARLY LITERACY PROMOTION

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OELP'S POLICY FOR CHILD PROTECTION¹

SUMMARY / PURPOSE

OELP is an organisation committed to improving the overall status of children by strengthening foundations of reading and writing. OELP is committed to the rights of children to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. OELP will work towards promoting awareness about the rights of the child and the duties of every citizen to protect children from harm and abuse.

OELP is committed to and expects its employees and others who work with OELP to have children's best interests at the heart of their involvement with OELP.

This Child Protection Policy is OELP's statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear that child abuse in any form is unacceptable to OELP.

A. OELP'S VISION FOR CHILD PROTECTION

VISION

We aim to create 'child safe' environments, where children are respected, protected, empowered within the home, school, society, and nation. We will build an organisation where the staff are sensitive towards the need of a child, committed to fighting against any form of child abuse, and are aware, and supportive in meeting their child protection responsibilities.

STATEMENT

OELP is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children's rights to protection are fully realised. We take our responsibility seriously to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. We will work towards exposing child abusers and ensuring punitive action. In all our programmes and actions our guiding principle will be "ensuring the safety and interest of the child."

B. DEFINITIONS UNDER THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

1. **A child** is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.
2. **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

¹The OELP Child Protection Policy has been based on the Plan – India – Child Protection Policy 2009

any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

3. Child Protection, within the scope of this policy, is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that OELP undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

C. SCOPE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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

- 1. Staff at all levels** – the field staff, monitoring staff, administrative staff as well as the other office bearers.
- 2. OELP Associates** – those participating directly or indirectly with the OELP programmes, such as members of the village communities, panchayat and SMC members, The school teachers and administrators, The local and other government functionaries, members of other organizations, students and parents.
- 3. Visitors** – Visitors from other NGOs, trainees, representatives of funding organizations, researchers, film makers and writers, etc.

D. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Oelp's staff, associates and visitors must:

- Never insult, harm, beat, abuse, exploit a child
- Immediately take action to protect a child when faced with instances when the child is being harmed physically, mentally or psychologically. Any instance of child abuse in any form must be reported immediately.
- Respond to a child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with the procedures laid out.
- Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
- Help build a child-friendly environment, where children are respected and can express themselves freely.
- Ensure that all reports, writings, photographs, narrations, documentations and film about children are respectful and in their best interest.
- Work against any forms of discrimination based on caste or class, and must report all such instances immediately and ensure appropriate action.
- All cases of breach of the Child Protection Policy by the staff will be investigated by OELP directly or by referral to the concerned statutory authority and followed up with investigation and disciplinary procedures. This may also result in sanctions or dismissal.
- In situations where a concern about suspected child abuse is raised, and proven to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, any employee who makes false and malicious accusations will face disciplinary action.
- Legal and appropriate action will be taken against all who make false and/or malicious accusations against OELP.

E. PERSONAL CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK

OELP is committed to ensuring that our Staff and representatives apply high standards of behaviour towards children within both their professional and their private lives.

We will strive towards building the reputation of our organization as a friend and a confidant of children, one that lives up to their trust and stands up for their rights. While not laying down a dictate of value systems and beliefs it will be our endeavor to incorporate these values within the work ethos of our organization.

Unlawful or other conduct by OELP employees, which jeopardizes OELP's reputation or position, whether during or after work hours, will not be permitted. Such conduct includes, any unlawful activity related to sexual abuse; any other unlawful activity; sexual harassment; physically/verbally abusive behaviour; and public disorderly conduct.

Staff and Associates are required to bear in mind the principles of the Child Protection Policy and heighten their awareness of how their behaviour may be perceived both at work and outside work.

