

Child Protection and Development Policy



Society for National integration through Education and
Humanizing Action (SNEHA)
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Principles

- ☉ Every child is recognized, respected and protected as a rights holder, with nonnegotiable rights to protection.
- ☉ No child is discriminated against.
- ☉ Child protection policy includes prevention measures.
- ☉ Families are supported in their role as primary caregivers.
- ☉ Societies are aware and supportive of the child's right to freedom from all forms of violence.
- ☉ Child protection policy ensures adequate care.
- ☉ Child protection policy has transnational and cross-border mechanisms in place.
- ☉ The child has support and protection.
- ☉ Training on identification of risks,
- ☉ There are safe, well-publicised, confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms in place.

1. Introduction

This Child Policy attempts to resonate with the voices of the children of the world, “We are not the sources of problems; we are the resources that are needed to solve them. We are not expenses; we are investments. We are not just young people; we are people and citizens of this world. You call us the future, but we are also the present.” (The children’s statement to the world leaders at the UN General Assembly’s Special Session on Children, 8 May 2002.)

Children are an extremely important asset of humanity. Hence it is extremely important that they are nurtured and protected effectively so that they grow up as persons who are physically fit, mentally alert and morally healthy, endowed with necessary skills and healthy attitudes. SNEHA is committed to the promotion of the rights of children as mandated in the Constitution of India, as according to the principles contained in the UN Convention on Child Rights, Juvenile Justice Act and the Preventive System for the realization of the highest standard and equal opportunity for survival, development, protection and participation to children. The following policy statement and guidelines aim to provide children and youth with a safe environment in which they can grow and become fully alive.

The SNEHA Child policy has been framed to ensure the care and protection of children at risk (a child being all individuals below the age of 18 years). The categories of young people who form the target population of SNEHA are: street children, child laborers, abandoned orphans, children in conflict with law, children with disabilities, run away children, working children, children from dysfunctional families, institutionalized children, young substance abusers, children in sex trade and children affected by HIV/AIDS, children dropping out of education, children in danger of getting trafficked, children of migrants, and all children who are found in any other situation of very serious risk.

It is an overarching document for everyone in the organization. Hence all the members of SNEHA are duty bound to function according to the principles, objectives and priorities outlined in this policy. SNEHA and its members stand committed to investing the required resources to implement

this policy effectively.

2. Vision

“A child friendly society where all children enjoy their RIGHTS” Rights means: Right to Survival, Right to Education, Right to Development, Right to Protection & Right to Participation-as enshrined by United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3. Principles of the Policy

- 3.1 The constitution of India guarantees certain rights to every person in this country including children. All children have equal rights; no class, origin, custom, tradition, cultural or religious practices shall be allowed to violate, restrict and/or prevent children from enjoying these rights.
- 3.2 Child Rights are universal; inter related, independent, indivisible and in a lien able.
- 3.3 The best interests of the child shall be of paramount consideration in all actions concerning or affecting the child.
- 3.4 The safety and security of children shall be of prime importance. The Children will be protected from harm, abuses, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and violence as they have the right to protection.
- 3.5 The physical, social, psychological, emotional, intellectual, moral, cultural and spiritual development of the child shall be addressed in totality.
- 3.6 A family setting is most conducive to the all-round development of children. Institutionalization shall be resorted to only when family setting and alternate forms of family care are not possible and it must be for the shortest duration.
- 3.7 The principles of equity, justice and non-discrimination shall guide all actions concerning children.
- 3.8 Individuality, age, gender, and recognition of the special needs and vulnerability would set the direction for any/all programmes and interventions related to children.
- 3.9 Consultation and participation of children in a manner appropriate to their age, in all matters affecting them, is an indisputable right of every child.
- 3.10 Taking positive measures for the care and protection of children is the primary responsibility of the state and these measures are to be carried out by the state adhering to the rights perspective. Collaborating with the state to implement its laws, policies and schemes for the care and protection of children will be an important responsibility of SNEHA.
- 3.11 Publishing of Information about children in whatever form will be done respecting the privacy, dignity and the best interests of the children.
- 3.12 Children have the right to access information that is important to their development and well-being. The children, especially from minority and indigenous groups, should be provided with information in a language which is suitable and simple. Children should also have access to children’s books and other forms of media appropriate for their growth and development.
- 3.13. Consistent with the mandates in the Constitution of India, international standards in the child rights convention of UN, legal directions as in Juvenile Justice Act and other relevant legal systems of the country and in keeping with the spirit of the Preventive System of SNEHA in

collaboration with the State and other non-state sectors shall create a safe environment for the child.

4. Objectives of the Policy

SNEHA shall commit to:

- 4.1 Ensure survival, Education, health, well-being, nutrition, clean water and sanitation to prevent malnutrition, disease, disability and death due to avoidable causes.
- 4.2 Ensure the necessary standards of human, financial and infrastructural resources, so as to enable Children to develop to their full potential.
- 4.3 Shall collaborate for the establishment of a safety net of strong preventive, promotive and punitive laws, institutions, procedures and enforcement machinery to ensure accountability in governance which leads to the protection of children.
- 4.4 Create an environment where in the aspirations of children are a part of all decisions on matters which concern them.
- 4.5 Consult, network and collaborate locally, nationally and internationally with state and non-state actors for the care and protection and promotion of the rights of the children.
- 4.6 Make every effort to improve knowledge, attitude and practice among children and personnel regarding child rights and its violations. They should know how to access protection and help in situations that threaten or violate child rights.
- 4.7 It also creates an environment of prevention. Successful child care and protection begin with prevention. Prevention positively is offering a healthy environment that would support the integrated development and protection of the young. It is creating a culture of rights so that violation of child rights become rare and difficult. Prevention defensively is protecting the young from falling into the situations of risk, harmful influences, situation so abuse, exploitation etc.

5. Priority Areas for Policy Implementation

5.1 Survival

- 5.1 The right of survival is an inalienable right of every child and it is important to accord the highest priority to promote the health and well being of children. Hence SNEHA will:
- 5.2 Make effort to eliminate crimes such as abortion, female feticide and infanticide. Every child has a right to be born and be alive.
- 5.3 Provision of education to all children especially girl children. Concentration will be focused on children in rural areas.
- 5.5 Provide timely, quality and essential medical care and treatment for children.
- 5.6 Make effort to prevent child marriage and ensure right age at marriage.
- 5.7 Provide for child-friendly and safe physical spaces by ensuring easily accessible physical facilities, clean physical environment, adequate infrastructure facilities, living spaces, play grounds, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities etc.
- 5.8 Make available sufficient nutritious diet and adequate clothing.
Provide immunization to the child for protection from vaccine preventable diseases.

5.2 Sustainable Development

- 5.2.1 There is no substitute of any sort for quality and age-appropriate education for the physical, emotional and cognitive development of children and young people so as to empower them to live their lives and to take necessary protection for themselves. Hence the SNEHA shall:
- 5.2.2 Provide and promote equality, child friendly, gender sensitive and locally relevant school education. Provide opportunities for sports, leisure, recreation and creativity.
- 5.2.3 Provide early childhood education, prevent children dropping out of education, promote better enrolment, ensure quality primary and upper-primary education for all as non-negotiable, and promote secondary education.
- 5.2.4 Enable children to develop holistically, draw out their aspirations and focus on their aptitudes by reviewing the curriculum with a special focus on mental health from a life skills perspective.
- 5.2.5 Make available skill training education to older children to prepare them for life so that they may be able to find employment, and impart independent living skills so that they continue to live their lives on their own leading up to establishing families of their own.
- 5.2.6 Address issues of children affected by HIV/AIDS and other sicknesses that carry stigma, to eliminate discrimination of children and make efforts to ensure proper care for them such as nutrition, education, health care, treatment and protection.
- 5.2.7 Provide support to children to safeguard their property and to receive their rightful inheritances which maybe under threat because of the situations of disadvantage that they are in.
- 5.2.8 Educate children about their rights and teach them to access help when their rights are violated. Restore children who are unaccompanied and who are in institutions, to their own families, culture, religion and language, as these offer better atmosphere for their integrated development
- 5.2.9 Provide care, support and services to the children in a spirit of accompaniment, supportive supervision and in a friendly family-like atmosphere.
- 5.2.10 In caring for children give them sufficient freedom, be reasonable towards them, provide emotional support, discipline them with loving kindness, and avoid corporal punishments and public humiliation.
- 5.2.11 Educate and take care of children in a culture friendly and religious tolerance way. Respect the culture and religion of each child. Help the child to grow up as a believer in God as according to his other religion. It is also important to inculcate in children an attitude of respect towards different cultures and religions.
- 5.2.12 Treat the children with a counseling attitude, and facilitate individual counseling for personal growth and group counseling towards group building.

5.3 Protection

- 5.3.1 A positive and protective environment for children can boost their development, progress, health and education leading the children to become competent, committed and compassion atemen and women for others. It is ensured by formulating policies, laws and regulations and services.

- 5.3.2 Child protection is a networked effort with the allied systems of the state, NGOs, donors, society at large, family, civil society groups, responsible citizens etc. It is transforming the society to become a caring community that protects and takes care of its children.
- 5.3.3 Child protection is creating a child safety net in the society to protect children from vulnerabilities underlying many forms of harm and abuses like sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking, hazardous labour, violence, living and working on the street, impact of armed conflict, deployment in armed forces, child marriage, unnecessary institutionalization etc. Child protection is saying ‘Yes’ to prevent, to respond and to resolve the abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children.

5.4 Child Abuse

What is Child Abuse?

- 5.4.1 Abuse is a deliberate act of ill treatment that can harm a child’s safety, wellbeing, dignity and development. It can include all forms of physical, sexual, psychological and emotional ill treatment.
- 5.4.2 Physical abuse: Physical abuse involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering (eg: hitting, shaking, burning, mutilation, torture etc).
- 5.4.3 Emotional or psychological abuse includes humiliating and disregarding treatment such as: calling nick names that hurt, constant criticism, belittling, persistent probing, solitary confinement and isolation.
- 5.4.4 Child sexual abuse includes all forms of sexual violence including incest, early and forced marriage, rape, involvement in pornography and sexual slavery. It also includes indecent touching or exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child and showing children pornographic materials.

5.4 Neglect

Neglect is deliberately or through carelessness or negligence, failing to provide for or secure for a child their rights. Neglect is sometimes the passive form of the above in that it relates to failure to carry out some key aspects of care and protection of children at the appropriate time which results in significant impairment of the child’s health or development including failure to grow emotionally and socially. Evidence is usually needed of persistent or severe neglect. Repeated failures or a failure that is in itself so serious that it severely endangers the child is neglect. Eg: Deliberate failure to provide medical care is carelessly exposing a child to harm/death.

5.4.1 Exploitation

Exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else’s advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, moral or social emotional development. It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, abuses, victimization, oppression or ill treatment. Any assignment given to children should take care of the age, capacity and the best interest of the child.

There are two main forms of child exploitation that are recognized: Sexual exploitation and Economic exploitation.

Sexual exploitation is the abuse of a position of vulnerability of the child, differential power or trust for sexual purposes. This includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of the child, as well as for personal sexual gratification. Eg: Child prostitution, trafficking of the child for sexual abuse and exploitation, child pornography, sexual slavery, sexual assault, harassment etc.

Economic exploitation of a child is the use of the child in work or in other activities for the benefit of others/profit. This includes, but is not limited to child labour. Economic exploitation implies the idea of a certain gain or profit through the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Eg: Child domestic work, child soldiers, child bondage, use of children in criminal activities including the sale and distribution of narcotics, involvement of children in hazardous work etc.

5.4.2 Violence

There are a number of definitions of violence that are used depending on the focus and approach taken to it. Article 19 of UNCRC states that all forms of physical or mental violence, including sexual abuse are acts of violence.

WHO report on violence and health (2002) states, “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child by an individual or group that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harms to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity”.

WHO has identified 3 types of Violence.

5.4.2.1 **Self-Directed violence:** suicide, self-mutilation.

5.4.2.2 **Interpersonal violence:** all forms of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, neglect and exploitation including domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence.

5.4.2.3 **Collective violence:** Violence committed by the state or by the society at large. It includes violence by the armed forces, law enforcement and security forces, use of death penalty, cruel inhuman and degrading treatment, torture, forced displacement, unlawful imprisonment etc. Other forms of collective violence are violence resulting from armed conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, child infanticide, honor killings, corporal or physical punishment (and the threat of it). This includes hitting the child with hand, pinching, pulling their hair, forcing the child to stay in uncomfortable or undignified positions, to do physical exercises, burning and scarring the child and humiliating and degrading punishment such as psychological punishment, verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation and ignoring the child.

SNEHA and Its Commitment to Child Protection.

SNEHA is committed to the protection of children from any perceived or real danger/ risk to their life, their personhood and childhood with a focus on reducing vulnerability. Hence the SNEHA shall:

Plan programme to reduce the risks faced by vulnerable children and collaborate with stake holders at all levels to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and inhuman or degrading treatment.

Create awareness against harmful customary practices such as child marriage, corporal punishment, ragging, human sacrifices, honor killings and witch hunting.

Advocate before the state for special protection measures, schemes and rehabilitation measures to address the special needs of children at risk.

Make efforts to enroll school dropouts back to school and prevent children from dropping out of school so that they may not fall into the dangerous situations of child labour and other forms of exploitation.

Believes that abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children are not acceptable in any form. If it is known that a child is being abused or exploited, keeping silence and being indifferent is wrong.

Build the capacity of personnel who have the responsibility to take care of children with adequate information, education and training and thus help them to acquire right attitude and practical skills.

Create awareness among children about their rights, about how to respond to risk situations and thus help them to protect themselves.

Participation

Child Participation refers to the process of sharing decisions which affect child's life and the life of the community in which the child lives. SNEHA shall ensure that children are made aware of their rights and are provided with opportunities to develop skills, form aspirations and express their views in accordance with their age and maturity so as to enable them to be actively involved in their own development and in all matters concerning and affecting them. In accordance with this the SNEHA shall:

- ☉ Respect the views of children and discuss and understand matters concerning them.
- ☉ Provide training to build the capacity of personnel in the organization on the concept and processes of child participation.
- ☉ Empower children by providing them information about their rights.
- ☉ Intentionally design all programmes so as to move from child welfare approach to rights-based approach and engage children (age appropriately) in programme planning,

implementation and evaluation. Establish mechanisms for participation and involvement of children on matters related to them.

- ☉ Provide opportunities for children to be members of children's clubs, groups and movements.
- ☉ Provide opportunities to children to grow up as persons with sense of the Divine and to practice their religion/conviction.
- ☉ Create participatory and child friendly neighborhood.
- ☉ Provide life skills training for children to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills for adequate participation in decisions that affect their lives, active participation of children at where they are, have awareness about their rights, know where to go, who to talk to and know about how to avoid correspond to risks.

6. Child Protection and SNEHA's Organizational Protocols.

Child protection is related to organizational protocols, policies and procedures aiming to ensure that every child under the care of the organization is safe while they are under their care:

All the personnel will give respect and dignity to all children under their care. Consider each child as a unique individual with specific characteristics and needs and adopt an individualized plan/approach for each child.

All the personnel must sign a statement stating that they are aware of the contents of the child policy and would respect and abide by it and understand that actions should be taken in cases where their behavior is not in accordance with the policy.

Prior Permission is needed from authorized persons for volunteers and external persons for photographing, video graphing, and recording children/children's events and for use of these materials for purposes outside the objectives of SNEHA.

All personnel need to be aware of the risks involved in being alone with children where one cannot be noticed by other adults. Such circumstances must be avoided.

Children must not be disciplined through any forms of violence against the child. Children must not be expelled from the care of the organization arbitrarily by an individual but it must be the result of a consultative process among appropriate persons that keeps in mind the spirit of the child policy.

All personnel need to be aware that they may work with children who because of the circumstances and abuse they have experienced in life may use a relationship to obtain special attention. An adult is always expected to behave appropriately and be responsible for the interaction between an adult and a child even when it appears that a child is acting in a provocative or seductive manner. The adult should avoid being placed in a compromising or vulnerable situation.

Inappropriate behavior towards children, failure to behave according to the SNEHA's childcare and protection policy can lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment/ volunteering/ internship/board/ committee membership etc.

All personnel must be concerned about perception and appearance in their dress, language, action, and relationship with children. It is important to maintain an appropriate standard of behavior in the presence of children. (E.g. They should not use any unbecoming language, tobacco products and liquor in the presence of children who are under the care of the organization.

Children who are victims or who are suffering from grave problems need to be cared for by professionals and by responsible person's who have the skills to give proper care.

7. Recruitment

All personnel will be carefully and properly screened, selected and appointed following the HR policy. Preference will be given to persons who have records of positive contribution for child promotion.

Persons selected will have to be child-friendly with qualifications pertaining to child care and promotion such as degree/trainings in sociology/psychology/law and/or long term credible working experience with children.

In the best interest of children, the organization must not appoint anyone with a prior conviction for child abuse, pedophilia or related offences.

8. Training, Capacity Building

Training, capacity building programme and relevant activities will be conducted by the organization to help all personnel to understand the content of the child policy, child rights, legal systems in the country pertaining to child rights and the pedagogy of presence.

The organization will be committed to the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of childcare and protection procedures and behavior protocols.

Once a year the staff and volunteers will undergo a self-appraisal, peer appraisal and organizational assessment to evaluate and to monitor their services for the care and protection of children.

9. Documentation and Research

Guided by the JJ Act and other relevant policies, efforts need to be made to establish proper data collection mechanisms and systems that would document effectively information about the children served, about the activities and programmes and about the organization itself.

Reports generated from the documentation would help to identify existing gaps and plan the future operations on behalf of the young at risk.

Child focused research and comprehensive trainings of personnel will also be supported to meet the

emerging needs and to improve the effectiveness services to the young at risk.

The progress of the child needs to be documented ensuring that all aspects of his/her growth is taken care of till he/she is positively rehabilitated.

10. Advocacy

Children at Risk often are not able to get their voices heard at the right places. SNEHA aims to find ways to create spaces for their voices before the State and other significant bodies.

It is important to influence political governance and decision making so that issues and concerns of young at risk get represented in national policies and programmes.

Efforts should be made to collaborate with State allied systems, mechanisms and programmes and participate at consultations to help promote the special needs of disadvantaged children.

Join hands with the State and Non-State bodies for the care and protection of children by participating and accepting roles and responsibilities in bodies/committees and structures set up by them for the welfare of children.

11. Responses to Complaints of Offences against Children

The organization encourages open discussion on the topic and the possibility of child abuse, neglect and violence within the organization meetings.

Where an allegation has been made that any personnel have abused a child, the organization will take appropriate action to deal with the allegation. With this end in view, the Child Protection Committee (CPC) is formed within the organization – consist of 5 persons (Chairperson nominated by the Executive Director (may be any of the Directors), one staff representative nominated by the Executive Director, one staff representative elected by staff, representative of children (above 15 years of age) elected by the Federation of Children Parliaments of SNEHA and the designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) of the organization.

Where there is a complaint, the complaint may be made to the Child Protection Officer first; or, if he is the subject of the complaint, then the Executive Director is to be informed. As the case may be the CPO or the Executive Director may pass the complaint to the CPC for an investigation and action as if and when required. A child or any adult within the organization may directly make complaints of any child abuse in writing to the CPC, addressing it to the Chairperson. The CPC may submit the report to the Executive Director with the necessary recommendation, including the referral of the findings of a serious nature (for instance, a sexual abuse of a child found to be true after proper investigation) to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) constituted under JJ Act by the Govt. If a foreigner (for instance, a foreigner volunteering in the organization) is involved, the relevant embassy will also have to be informed.

The complaints will be kept confidential, with only those directly involved having the appropriate information.

All details will be entered on the complaints form and filed confidentially.

Any investigation will be kept confidential.

Both child and alleged perpetrator will be treated with respect from the start of the process to the end. Extreme care will be taken to protect the child as he/she is more vulnerable.

A child accusation of abuse will not be dismissed without appropriate investigation, no matter who the alleged perpetrator is.

Records will be made of all facts related to the investigation and allegation and these will be carefully and confidentially filed by the committee.

The organization will designate someone to deal with the media and the police if necessary. Consideration will be made beforehand by the committee about how the police and media will be informed.

If the organization has reasonable proof to believe that a child from the neighborhood society and not specifically a child under the care of the organization is being abused, the staff must report it to the competent authority in the organization within 48 hours and the authority will make arrangement to report it to the competent legal authority in the locality.

Communication about Children

The Organization will not display or publish photos of children in vulnerable or pitiable situation.

Communications about children should use pictures that are decent and respectful. If photographs of children need to be published the organization will take special care to protect children's privacy if needed, in the best interest of the child.

Disclosure of information about the past or present abuse of children and any of the persons involved should be limited only to the persons who are entitled to know.

The language that is used in the communication about children should be respectful.

If the reports regarding children are found to be indecent and disrespectful, appropriate efforts would be undertaken to correct this adverse communication.

12. Declaration of Commitment to the Child Policy (To be signed by all personnel)

I declare that:

I have read and understood the child care and protection policy of the organization.

I will work with in the procedures laid out in the child policy.

I have not been convicted of any offence involving physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children, no rare there any such cases pending against me.

I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of children while working with the organization I will co-operate with the appropriate authorities during the investigation.

Signature:

Name:

Designation:

Date:

13. Evaluation and Review of Policy

The problems and difficulties being faced by children today may change over time. Current challenges may be overcome and new issues would emerge that require new approaches not covered by this policy. These necessitates that the policy be an evolving document that is periodically reviewed both in approach and implementation methods.

14. Who are all Governed by this Policy

All the personnel of SNEHA which includes members of the Management, committee/board members, staff, volunteers and interns and the member organizations and their personnel shall agree to abide by this policy.

15. ANNEXURES

Complaint Form

Request for Investigation into Suspected Child Abuse.

Name of child: _____ Age: _____ [M][F]

Address:

Name of parents:

Address & Contact Number:

Nature and extent of suspected abuse:

Previous injuries, event, and symptoms of note:

Identity and address of alleged offender (if known):

Place:

Date:

Name and signature:

**Staff under taking to adhere to
Child Policy of SNEHA Society**

Ihave carefully read and clearly understood the Child Policy of SNEHA Society. I hereby declare that I agree to adhere to and abide by the standards of behavior described in this Child Policy at all times. In case of any violation of the said Policy in my direct and indirect interactions with the children, the Organization may terminate my service as an Employee, and the Organization shall take suitable disciplinary and legal action against me as stipulated in SNEHA’s Staff Service Manual and as per the applicable laws and rules of the country.

Place:

Signature:

Address with contact details:

Signature of the Immediate Reporting Officer:

Seal of the Organization:

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