

“CHILD PROTECTION POLICY”

**Salaam Baalak Trust
DDA Community Centre, 2nd Floor
Chandiwali Gali, Paharganj, New Delhi
110055, India
Tel.91-011-23589305, 23584164
www.salaambaalaktrust.com**

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SECTION A: THE ORGANIZATION

Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT) is a Non-profit, Non Government Organization established in the year 1988 after the success of the film Salaam Bombay, a film by Mira Nair (Hollywood) which depicted the spirit of survival of street children in India. SBT works with street and working children in central Delhi. Annually it reaches-out to about 5000 children in providing shelter, food, medical aid, repatriation, sports, entertainment, etc. The Trust has 5 full care residential programmes and 5 contact points for girls and boys. SBT also is an implementing agency of Child line 1098; help line for children in distress supported by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment Government of India.

Mission of Salaam Baalak Trust: To provide a sensitive and caring environment for street & working children and other children on the margins of society.

It seeks to dissolve the barriers that rob children of the opportunity to realize their rights.

SECTION-B: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

A.1 Definitions

According to the convention on the rights of the child (CRC), a child is a person who is 18 years and below unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. In the context of Salaam Baalak Trust, a child may be living on streets and public places, shelter home, contact point or any other disadvantaged circumstances with or without family are applicable.

Child protection is a term that describes policies, standards, and practices that seek to protect children from harm- physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual or any other negligence. Harm can be caused by outreach workers, Child Line team members, child supervisors, teachers, volunteers, and other care workers who are directly working with children; staff who may not be involved directly with childcare but working in the organization; and visitors, outsiders who come in contact with children .

In this policy, child protection applies to the responsibility of Salaam Baalak Trust, its shelters, contact points, Child Line, and all the persons associated with the organization. The policy will ensure that system is at place to protect children benefited from the organization against any abuse and exploitation.

Though the main purpose of the policy is to protect children from all forms of harm and create an enabling environment, is also a tool to enhance the commitment of the organization to provide a child friendly environment through sensitizing persons associated and enforcing the policy. It is expected that the policy will also work as a tool to protect staff and the organisation from risks associated with being in contact with children.

A.2 Purpose

Children living on streets, other disadvantaged circumstances, or living with or without families face increased risk of abuse and exploitation not only from peers, individuals, immediate stake holders, family members and community , but equally so from development workers and care givers whose role is to bring relief to children.

As an organization working and supporting more than 400 children on daily basis; staff, team members and volunteers come in contact with children through their work. And due to the global increase in reports of child abuse by development workers, it is important that Salaam Baalak Trust puts in place mechanisms to protect children, staff members and organization itself.

The organization, since it's inception in 1988 has been rapidly increasing its strength by reaching more number of children while providing quality care. In this process the number of staff and volunteers have also grown significantly. Due to its rich work culture and commitment towards overall development of the children it is important to make every one associated with the organization accountable to promote child safety. It is both a moral and a legal responsibility for Salaam Baalak Trust. The policy thus seeks to create an organisation wide culture of awareness by promoting and upholding principles of transparency and accountability on matters of child protection.

Therefore, this policy is meant for all staff members, team members and volunteers who work with or for the children. The above people are expected to show commitment to the policy and follow the guidelines and procedures of the child protection policy in their involvement with Salaam Baalak Trust.

A.3 Principles

Salaam Baalak Trust realizes that children constitute a special group of persons. Street children with whom SBT works are a most vulnerable group needing not only care and protection but an enabling environment for their over all development. Most of the children run away from their homes due to poverty, drugs addiction, step mother or father, lack of educational opportunities etc. Children, specially those living on streets, may be at greater risk of becoming involved in activities like transactional or consensual sex, child labour, and illicit activities such as drug trafficking. Children living at shelter homes for girls and boys may be at risk during evening and night, while traveling with staff for various purposes, care giving at hospital etc. Staff, volunteers, or other concerned persons may take advantage and abuse or exploit children. The policy calls for action to protect children against any kind of abuse.

SBT's programme with street children aims to unleash a positive change in their lives including reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS by providing, information and education, life skills, STD/STI treatment, and VCT.

The right to development is a core principle that constitutes the foundation for the Trust's child protection policy. Using child protection as a core principle, the organisation strives to ensure that measures and systems are in place, at centres (shelters and contact points), child line, and central office to protect children from all forms of abuse and maltreatment by staff members and anyone affiliated with Salaam Baalak Trust.

A.4 Policy objectives

The broad objective of the policy is to set minimum standards and procedures on child protection that seek to ensure that the shelter homes, contact points, child line, and central office maintain a safe environment for children.

Specifically the policy seeks to protect children from abuse and exploitation by encouraging good practice among staff members and preventing behaviour that may be abusive to children.

SECTION C: POLICY GUIDELINES

C.1 Staff Recruitment Procedure

- 1.1 Current and potential employees with direct or regular contact with children shall undergo a screening procedure to check for any child abuse related criminal record.
- 1.2 The job interview should include specific questions at the first stage on child protection issues to probe the applicant's attitude, experience and approach to working with children relevant to the post applied for.
- 1.3 Two employment references should be taken up for applicants before appointment to post. These include (where possible) an employer who can comment on the applicant's work with children.
- 1.4 During induction of a new employee, the relevant coordinator and executive council member should observe the "child friendly personality" of the staff and give feedback to executive committee/management before final appointment.
- 1.5 During induction period, feed back would be taken from children about the staff and opinion of children would be counted.
- 1.6 During recruitment and induction that the candidate should be clearly told that a child protection policy exists and he/she shall be required to be abiding by it.
- 1.7 Along with the appointment letter a copy of the child protection policy and the employee manual shall be given to the new employee. (Child protection policy may be included in the employee manual). The employee shall be asked to sign a statement that he/she has read the policy and shall abide by it.

C.2 Training and orientation

- 2.1 All existing staff shall be given full training on this policy as part of ongoing training programmes at Salaam Baalak Trust.
- 2.2 Specialised orientation for child protection shall be provided for staff working directly with the children.

C.3 Reporting and case management

- 3.1 The first point of contact for all child protection (ill treatment or abuse) matter is the coordinator of shelter home /contact point/child line. In case the co-ordinator is not seen to be taking any action in the matter, then the report should be made to the executive committee
- 3.2 When the coordinator is being implicated, the matter would be reported to executive council.
- 3.3 The coordinator will work together with the executive council and management on all child protection cases.
- 3.4 The matters are to be treated in strict confidence in the interest of the accused, the reporter, and the system.
- 3.5 Reports that are made maliciously or not in good faith shall warrant strict disciplinary action by the executive council/management.
- 3.6 Based on the evidence and careful deliberation of the case, the executive council/management will decide whether to have the matter dropped, further handled internally or referred to the police depending on level of assessed gravity and complexity.
- 3.7 The process leading to decision making should be well documented and all facts or written allegations and responses kept on file.
- 3.8 When a case is immediately dropped, the reasons for doing so shall be communicated to the person who reported the matter.
- 3.9 Thorough investigations will be carried out before such decisions or actions are taken.

3.10 In all case whether reported to the co-ordinator or the executive committee shall be immediately brought to the attention of the executive committee and the trustees at the next Saturday meeting.

3.11 As soon as a case of misconduct is brought to the attention of the executive committee they shall consider the case and if the matter warrants further investigation then the accused staff member shall be suspended pending investigation and final decision.

C.4 Ramifications of Misconduct

4.1 Following completion of investigation, executive council/management will decide on appropriate action to take based on available evidence.

4.2 This will follow the SBT's disciplinary procedure as has been followed in past.

C.5 Statement of Commitment

Staff, interns, volunteers, consultants (as and when required) to sign statements of commitment attached to this policy document.

The level of detail in statements of commitment and expectations may vary depending on the contractual status of person, the nature of assignment and the level of contact with children in line of work.

C.6 Communication about Children

In its communication and fundraising strategy, SBT may use images and recordings of children and field texts. The SBT has a responsibility towards the children that are portrayed and should ensure that children are treated with dignity as human beings with rights, by avoiding the following:

- Inaccurate representation of children through words and images
- Communication that shames, degrades or victimizes children
- Taking pictures or statements from children without informed consent
- Depicting children in sexually provocative poses

SECTION D: ANNEXTURES

D1: Statement of Commitment/Code of Conduct

This code of conduct constitutes a set of standards for appropriate behaviour for guiding people who work with Salaam Baalak Trust, whether on a part time or permanent basis. It also gives guidance to avoid situations that increase chances of risk misbehaviour when in the company of children.

The code is applicable to anyone acting as a representative of the organisation, whose work requires him/her to be in contact with children.

Don'ts

- Spend time alone with a child either at the adult's home overnight or any secluded place
- Carry out personal activities on a child like bathing and dressing
- Engage in inappropriate touch or physical contact with a child
- Make sexually provocative gestures towards a child
- Have a sexual relationship with a child
- Physically assault or abuse a child
- Make use of language that causes mental or emotional harm to a child
- Exploit children in any way or form
- Practice racial, cultural, gender based, religious, political or any other form of discrimination towards children.

Does

- Avoid compromising situations that increase vulnerability
- Meet children in public places as much as possible

- Avoid actions and language and behaviour of any kind that can be subject to misinterpretation by a third party
- Get informed written consent from the child, parent or person with primary responsibility over the child before taking photographs or statement from a child
- Be aware that age difference creates a power imbalance between adults and children and so avoid situations that might result in you taking advantage of children.

Declaration

I (Name).....
have read and understood the guidelines, standards, and code of conduct as stated in the Salaam Baalak Trust's child protection policy. I agree with principles contained therein and undertake to uphold the policy principles while working with/for the Salaam Baalak Trust.

Title/Position:**Centre:**

Signature:**Date:**