

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



MEERUT SEVA SAMAJ

Sardhana Road, Kankerkhara, Meerut Cantt. - 250001

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This booklet has been designed to help Meerut Seva Samaj (MSS) protect children that come into contact with during various interventions.

‘Protecting children is the responsibility of every adult who is involved with them’

MSS gratefully acknowledges the invaluable help and guidance of the working group members who contributed to this document. We extend our sincere thanks to Caritas India, New Delhi, and Ms. Ronita Chattopadhyay, Consultant, whose inspiration was instrumental in its development. We also acknowledge the assistance of Mrs. Retty George, Senior Safeguarding Officer, CRS, for her contributions to the document's revision.

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We thank Rev.Fr. Cyril Sequeira, The Director
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We thank Rev. Fr. Jomon Joseph, The Director

FOREWORD

MEERUT SEVA SAMAJ, Meerut (MSS) is a not for profit Indian development organization working with the mandate of empowering the poor and the marginalized through Conscientization process in order to establish a just and humane society. Registered at Lucknow on 1-7-1977 No. 428 of 1977 under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 and Renewal No. 604 of 2015-16. MSS is committed to enhancing people's participation in the development discourse through developmental programs focusing on rights based approach. It is involved in organizing men, women, children and adolescents living in deprived rural areas of Meerut. It is involved in educating, protecting and safeguarding the rights of children from all kinds of exploitations and abuses. Health and hygiene interventions for children living in rural areas are also implemented.

With the view of providing safety and security for all children who are connected with MSS and its programmes, this Child Protection Policy has been developed. Caritas India played an important role and facilitated in developing this Child Protection Policy involving MSS staff, children, other partners and representatives from religious congregations in April 2017 for the same. The policy is applicable to all those who are connected with MSS programmes in some way. This handbook will guide MSS and all its partners and collaborators in creating and providing a safe environment in working with children. It will ensure protection and safety in all circumstances to the children.

MSS thanks Caritas India for initiating the process of Child Protection Policy development, its consultant, MSS staff, its partners and other religious congregations who have helped in developing the policy.

Fr. Jomon Joseph
Director, MSS

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1. Overview

This Child Protection Policy was developed between 13th to 16th April 2017 with the staffs of MEERUT SEVA SAMAJ and other social work organizations who share their support. The workshop provided a platform for discussion on child rights including child protection as well as the related international and national instruments. The Policy evolved from the discussions undertaken which helped in identifying the stakeholders to be covered, the essential codes of conduct for them as well as other critical aspects. Children's representatives were also consulted in this process through a group work and discussion exercise. Children shared about the situations where they felt afraid or uncomfortable, their expectations from parents, peers, elders, relatives and teachers. They spoke on the norms that should be followed by adults and the way in which they should behave with each other.

The points shared by all the participants were consolidated. Child Protection Policies developed by other organisations were also referred. The draft was shared with the senior management staff, funding agency and the consultant involved in this process. It was finalized after collective feedback. The final document is what you now hold in your hands.

The Policy covers guidelines for processes such as staff recruitment and capacity building. It then outlines the codes of conduct in terms of norms of appropriate behaviours for stakeholders who come into contact with children through MSS. Reporting and response protocols for suspected cases of child abuse have been outlined along with key institutional mechanisms (such as the Child Protection Committee) for tracking actions. The document also includes information regarding guidelines for sharing information and visuals of children. Review of the policy is also included. Compliance with the policy is mandatory for all staff at MSS. The organisation will also aim to facilitate acceptance and compliance of other stakeholders who come into contact with children through MSS

**Meerut Seva Samaj pledges to uphold the dignity of all children,
ensure their rights particularly of protection,
so that they can get justice and holistic care.**

2. Glossary & Abbreviations

Who is a child?

Individuals up to the age of 18 years are considered as children. Though some legislation in India may offer different age groups, the National Policy for Children 2013 upholds the 18 years age group. Two key child protection related legislation – the JJ Act and POCSO – are also in conformity with this.

What is child protection?

The term is used to refer to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children – including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage. This definition, developed by UNICEF, is followed by MEERUT SEVA SAMAJ.

What is child abuse?

Abuse is a deliberate act of ill treatment that can harm a person's safety, well-being, dignity and development. It often involves individuals who have a relationship of responsibility and care for the victim including project staff, parents, guardians, teachers, community workers, health-care providers, religious leaders, friends or other children.¹

WHO defines '**child abuse**' as an act which includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development or dignity.

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse has been a normal aspect of domestic life in India for a long time. Physical assaults that would be serious criminal offenses if committed by one man against another - for instance, hitting, slapping, or striking with an object - have been legally and socially sanctioned when committed by a man against his wife and child, or by parents against their children. Today, incidents of domestic violence committed against both women and children remain at epidemic proportions. Fortunately, there is increasing recognition of the prevalence and harm caused by violence against women and children.

Signs of physical abuse-

- Unexplained burns, cuts, bruises or welts in the shape of an object
- Bite marks
- Anti-social behaviour
- Problems in school
- Fear of adults
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Self-destructive or suicidal behaviour

Depression or poor self-image

¹ Adapted from: *Better Care Network; Save the Children and UNICEF.*

Physically abused children find it difficult to relate to their peers and the adults around them. The constant threat of violence at home makes them perpetually vigilant and mistrustful, and they may be overly domineering and aggressive in their attempts to predict and control other people's behaviour. They are also vulnerable to "emotional storms", or instances of overwhelming emotional responses to everyday situations. These "storms" can take the form of profound grief, fear, or rage.

Ways of Physical Abuse-

- Beating, whipping, punching, slapping or hitting
- Burning with cigarettes
- Scalding hot objects
- Severe physical punishment (this is indicative and not exhaustive)

Physically abused children may also have problems with-

- ✦ academic achievement
- ✦ physical development and coordination
- ✦ developing friendships and relationships
- ✦ aggression and anger management
- ✦ depression, anxiety and low self-esteem

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse describes any incident wherein an adult engages a minor in a sexual act, or exposes the minor to inappropriate sexual behaviour or material. A person may sexually abuse a child using threats and physical force, but sexual abuse often involves subtle forms of manipulation, in which the child is coerced into believing that the activity is an expression of love, or that the child bought the abuse upon themselves. Sexual abuse involves contact and non-contact offences. It also includes any incident in which a child is coerced into sexual activity by another child.

Signs of sexual abuse-

Seductiveness

Avoidance of things related to sexuality or rejection of own genitals or bodies

Nightmares and bedwetting

Drastic changes in appetite

Over compliance or excessive aggression

Fear of a particular person

Withdrawal, secretiveness or depression

Suicidal behaviour

Eating disorders

Self-injury

In case, no external sign of physical abuse noticed, medical examination can be conducted for confirmation of the act

Sexual abuse acts-

- Fondling, touching, or kissing a child's private parts
- Forced observation of sexual acts
- Showing pornographic material
- Forcing the child to undress
- Spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom
- Using a child in the production of pornography

Sexually abused children exhibit a range of behaviours, including:

- ✦ Withdrawn, unhappy and suicidal behaviour
- ✦ Self-harm
- ✦ Aggressive and violent behaviour
- ✦ Bedwetting, sleep problems, nightmares
- ✦ Eating problems e.g. anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa
- ✦ Mood swings
- ✦ Detachment
- ✦ Pains for no medical reason
- ✦ Sexual behaviour, language, or knowledge too advanced for their age

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse refers to the psychological and social aspects of child abuse; it is the most common form of child abuse. Many parents are emotionally abusive without being violent or sexually abusive. However, emotional abuse invariably accompanies physical and sexual abuse. Some parents who are emotionally abusive parents practice forms of child-rearing that are orientated towards fulfilling their own needs and goals, rather than those of their children. Their parenting style may be characterized by overt aggression towards their children, including shouting and intimidation, or they may manipulate their children using more subtle means, such as emotional blackmail. Emotional abuse does not only occur in the home. Children can be emotionally abused by teachers and other adults in a position of power over the child. Children can also be emotionally abused by other children in the form of "bullying".

Signs of emotional abuse-

- Apathy
- Depression
- Hostility
- Lack of concentration
- Eating disorders

Ways of emotional abuse-

- Lack of affection
- Lack of praise or positive reinforcement
- Negative comparisons to others
- Belittling; telling the child that he or she is “of no good”, “worthless”.
- Using derogatory terms to describe the child
- Habitual scape-goating or blaming
- Using extreme or bizarre forms of punishment such as confinement to a closet or dark room, tying to a chair for long periods of time

Emotionally abused children exhibit a range of specific behaviours. They often-

- ✦ feel unhappy, frightened and distressed
- ✦ behave aggressively and anti-socially, or they may act too mature for their age
- ✦ experience difficulties with academic achievement and school attendance
- ✦ find it difficult to make friends
- ✦ show signs of physical neglect and malnourishment
- ✦ experience incontinence and mysterious pains

Neglect:

Child neglect is the failure of a parent or other person with responsibility for the child to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision to the degree that the child's health, safety or well-being may be threatened with harm. Neglect is also a lack of attention from the people surrounding a child, and the non-provision of the relevant and adequate necessities for the child's survival, which would be lacking in attention, love, and nurture.

Empathy:

Identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings and motives.

Child Labor

Child Labor is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to a child's physical or mental development. It is work that:

- ✦ is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children
- ✦ interferes with their schooling by:
 - 1) depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
 - 2) obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
 - 3) requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Child Trafficking

Trafficking in persons is a form of exploitation. Trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transportation, or receipt of persons by means of deception, coercion, threat, or force for the purpose of exploitation such as for labour, prostitution, or sexual exploitation.

The following are types of prohibited exploitative conduct that are common to human trafficking schemes, in accordance with the elements defined above: forced prostitution and child pornography; forced marriages; illicit organ trade; narcotics smuggling; forced begging or labour.

Other Prohibited Behaviours with Children

When interacting with child project participants, all staff are prohibited from:

1. Spending excessive or unnecessary time alone with a child
2. Encouraging a child to interact in a manner that is unrelated to official duties, including:
 - ✦ Encouraging a child to meet outside of work-related activities
 - ✦ Befriending or sending private messages to a child via email, WhatsApp, Facebook or any other social media platform

Other Terms-

Staff at MSS includes contractual staff, those on general assignment and trainees.

Contractual Staff: Contractual staffs are one with whom an agreement is made by MSS for a specified time period. This is typically for one year of employment. However, the contract may be made for a lesser or longer duration as well.

General Assignment: This type of assignment is for specific activities - both short term and long term with knowledge on certain field. These may be extended from time to time depending on the requirements.

Trainee: In case of fresh appointment for the post of Programme Coordinator or above, any individual selected through interview process of MSS is usually inducted as Trainee, initially, for a period of 6 (Six) months. During the Traineeship, they may be placed in any Unit of MSS. After the Trainee period is over, their overall performance is assessed through existing appraisal system. If it is found satisfactory, then he/she may be given contract with proper designation for a period of 1 (One) year or more.

Donors: Any individual or agency contributing to the Organization's resources in cash or in kind for a specific period of time. Prior to their contribution, there is a planning stage where both the donor and recipient play an active role. The recipient is accountable to the donor and they work in partnership.

Interns: As a part of the academic curriculum, students coming from different institutes for a specific period of time with the objective of practical learning through completion of the specific assignment given to them by the organisation.

Volunteers (unpaid): A person who performs a service out of his or her own free will, without payment.

Visitors: An individual or group who visits the organisation for a short span of time with the purpose to understand the organization’s work.

Resource Persons: A person with expertise in a certain area who may be called upon as necessary to perform a specific task, provide information, etc.

Media: It is the collective communication outlets or tools that are used to store and deliver information or data. It is either associated with communication media, or the specialized mass media communication businesses such as: print media and the press, photography, advertising, cinema, broadcasting (radio and television) and publishing.

(Existing Child Protection Policies of other organisations have been referred for this section.)

List of Abbreviations-

CPP	:	Child Protection Policy
CPC	:	Child Protection Committee
FIR	:	First Information Report
JJ Act	:	The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015
MSS	:	MEERUT SEVA SAMAJ
NGO	:	Non- Government Organization
POCSO	:	The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012
UNCRC	:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WHO	:	World Health Organization

3. Policy Framework

The Child Protection Policy, hereafter referred to as CPP, will encompass all units, children and staff, board members of MSS, and “affiliates”, which includes interns and volunteers, partners, suppliers and service providers visitors, donors, resource persons and media coming in direct or indirect contact with children. The affiliates include any intern or volunteer working in service to Meerut Seva Samaj over a period of time, whether paid or unpaid, university interns, and others with a similar type of relationship to Meerut Seva Samaj. This Child Protection Policy is applicable and binding regardless of geographical location, contractual status, administrative independence of a subsidiary entity, or local context. This policy applies to Meerut Seva Samaj staff and affiliates’ activities and behaviors at work, outside work, and while on leave. This policy aligns with the Safeguarding policy of MSS.

A Child Protection Policy provides a framework of principles, standards and guidelines on which to base individual and organizational practice in relation to areas such as recruitment, induction, training and management systems.

3.1 Recruitment

All employees/ staff (permanent, temporary, under contract), trustees, interns and volunteers (paid or unpaid, full time or part time, temporary or long-term) having direct or indirect contact with children have to undergo a recruitment process.

1. Staff: contractual staff, general assignment, trainee and community volunteers (where paid)

- a) All candidates have to present evidence of their qualifications. This includes providing the original certificates and other necessary documentation.
- b) Two reference checks will be undertaken over telephone or in writing.
- c) Where there are employment gaps or frequent changes of employment, questions pertaining to the same will be asked.
- d) Questions related to child protection will be asked at the time of recruitment. The purpose will be to understand the candidate’s attitudes towards child rights including child protection. It will also help gauge his or her orientation in terms of working with children, any pre-existing biases/prejudices etc. Any person who reveals a disrespectful attitude towards children will not be considered for employment.
- e) If selected, the recruit will sign a statement of commitment to the organisation’s CPP [“I will abide by the Organisation’s Child Protection Policy”. This statement is to be mentioned in the contract letter of all recruits.]

2. Interns and volunteers (unpaid)

- a) Interns have to provide a letter of reference from their institution.
- b) Volunteers have to submit a statement of intent.
- c) Both interns and volunteers have to provide information regarding the objective of their association with the organisation, duration, nature of proposed engagement (i.e. what they want to do) and expected outcomes. They need to submit names of two people who can act as their reference. The organisation can undertake reference checks as needed.
- d) They will begin their work only after securing permission to do so from the concerned authority in the organisation.
- e) They have to sign a statement of commitment to the organisation's CPP.
- f) They will undergo an orientation on the organization and its work.
- g) They will submit a report and, if possible, make a presentation to be made at the end of internship.

3.2 Induction and Capacity Building Staffs

There has to be opportunities within the organisation to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding of the staff to safeguard children. Accordingly, the following measures will be undertaken.

- a) A full day orientation on Child Protection issues for all new recruits [staff: contractual staff, general assignment, trainee and community volunteers (paid)] to be given within 1 month of joining with a copy of the policy for reference. *(Refer to Annexure 1)*
- b) Half day orientation of interns and volunteers (unpaid) on child protection issues within 7 days of joining *(Refer to Annexure 1)*
- c) Orientation of all existing staff on Child Protection policies and procedures within 3 months after the CPP comes into force.
- d) Half day refresher training for personnel every 1 year to remind them of procedures and update on new developments.
- e) Include information on CPP to the extent possible within any child related training programme.
- f) Staff will undertake orientation of children that they work with on all relevant aspects of CPP. Such an orientation will be undertaken within 2 to 5 days of their arrival at MSS office and refresher courses every 3 months.
- g) Orientation of donors and visitors on behaviour and communication protocols before interaction with children.
- h) Staff will be provided with support and inputs so that they can undertake these orientations.
- i) One pager on behaviour protocols to be displayed on notice boards of all units. *(Refer to Annexure 2)*

3.3 Management System

There will be an emphasis on ensuring conducive management systems and practices to promote implementation of the CPP. This will include:

- a) Ensuring that the CPP is easily available to all staff – as a booklet or in handout form – particularly to recruits on the day of their joining.
- b) Ensuring that recruits read the Policy and sign on the statement of commitment to it.
- c) Ensuring that CPP is shared with all existing staff and their signatures on the statement of commitment are also taken.
- d) Providing an orientation on CPP for all staff as well as continued capacity building as outlined in previous section.
- e) Establishing clear and open lines of communication through regular meetings on matters related to child protection and CPP.
- f) Raising concerns on sensitive matters in relation to children and staff in appropriate platforms and providing other opportunities for such discussions.
- g) Concerns are listened in order to respond in a positive manner.
- h) Reports and personal information on children are kept confidential and disclosed to only those who need to know.
- i) Child protection issues are included in regular staff evaluations/appraisals.
- j) Responsibility of management to ensure implementation of CPP by seeking updates from the Child Protection Committee within the organisation, through regular interactions with staff and children and surprise checks of reporting documents.
- k) Responsibility of management to ensure that policy is reviewed within a year and changes are incorporated as necessary; subsequent reviews will be undertaken every three years.

4. Behaviour Protocols

Prohibited behaviours towards children

Meerut Seva Samaj staff and affiliates are prohibited from hiring children under the age of 15—regardless of any perceived benefit to the child or family—and prohibited from funding programs in which child labour, as defined above, is occurring. Hazardous work is prohibited for all children, including children aged 15-17 years. This includes construction and manufacturing work.

Meerut Seva Samaj places a special focus on anti-trafficking of women and children, given their specific vulnerability and given the cruelty and perversity to which trafficked women and children are particularly subjected and prohibits trafficking. Meerut Seva Samaj also prohibits staff from knowingly obtaining work-related goods or services that have been provided or produced by trafficked or forced labour. Involving in any form of abuse or exploitation especially of children are prohibited for the MSS staff and affiliates.

Involving in any form of abuse is prohibited for the MSS staff and affiliates. Also, it is prohibited to spend excessive alone time with the children and to interact with them outside the work-related activities either in-person or through virtual media.

Behaviour Protocols

The behaviour protocols will ensure that all who comes in contact with children through MSS understand and abide by behaviours which will help create a safe environment where children's physical and mental integrity as well as their space / privacy are respected.

4.1 Appropriate behaviour of staff

A. Do's:

1. Gather information regarding the physical, mental and emotional status of the children from the parents/caregivers and use it to shape interventions with them.
2. Attempt to understand children in terms of their contexts and circumstances.
3. Wear culturally appropriate clothing when interacting with children.
4. Be empathetic rather than sympathetic towards children.
5. Deal with every child with love and respect and maintain friendly behaviour.
6. Appreciate the abilities and talents of every child.
7. Encourage participation of all children in the activities.
8. Provide opportunity for children who appear weaker or are shy and reserved to grow and develop.

9. Encourage children to share their opinions and concerns.
10. Pay immediate attention to any problems shared by a child.
11. As far as possible, ensure that activities with children are conducted in the presence of two staffs/adults.
12. Ensure that necessary arrangements are made whenever children are taken from one location to another for any activity. Ensure that they reach their homes safely.
13. In case of case studies, name of the children cannot be published where they have faced abusive or traumatic situations. In other instances, such information can be given after consultation with the Director or line manager of MSS.
14. Be clear about purpose and inform and guide children whenever they have to interact with media personnel.

B. Don't's:

1. Compare, humiliate or insult any child on the basis of religion, caste, gender, appearance, ability etc.
2. Talk to children using abusive or slang language.
3. Make any comments that belittle a child or make him/her lose confidence in self.
4. Neglect or ignore the opinions of children.
5. Behave in an inappropriate manner with children who make them feel insecure or uncomfortable.
6. Show any obscene pictures, images, videos etc. to the children.
7. Hit a child or give corporal punishment.
8. Undertake physical contact with children with sexual intent or develop any inappropriate relationship with them.
9. Attend any programme related to children after consuming alcohol or drugs.
10. Be careless towards any activity related to children.
11. Conduct any programme in order to gain personal profit.
12. Engage children in personal work.
13. Give personal information of any child to media that will harm them, particularly where such disclosure can stigmatize them (i.e. children who have faced abuse, living with HIV & AIDS etc)

4.2 Appropriate behaviour of visitors

A. Do's:

1. Provide information about self, objective of the visit, duration and other specifics to the organisation prior to the visit.
2. Undertake the visit as per the mutually agreed plan with the organisation and with written permission.
3. Wear clothes that are locally and culturally appropriate.
4. Read the Child Protection Policy of the organization and indicate compliance by signing it.

5. Interact with the children in the presence of relevant staff.
6. Engage with children respectfully keeping in mind local contexts.
7. Communicate with children in simple and comprehensive language. Where necessary, arrange/ask for an interpreter.
8. Treat all children equally, particularly when making any contribution in cash or kind. (If there are any other specific considerations, discuss this with the staff prior to the interaction with children.)
9. Take photographs only after permission from the child, relevant staff and parents/guardians.
10. Maintain norms of confidentiality, particularly for children with traumatic or abusive pasts, living with HIV & AIDS or in other particularly vulnerable situations where disclosure may adversely impact them.

B. Don't's:

1. Use offensive or slang language in front of the children.
2. Make children uncomfortable with words or gestures or behaviours.
3. Take information from the child regarding his/her personal history without prior permission of the relevant staff.
4. Force children to answer questions that they appear unwilling or unable to. (Such queries can be addressed to the staff/guardians).
5. Take or give anything to children without prior permission of the organization.
6. Take photographs or do any audiovisual recording which shows children in a disrespectful or undignified manner.
7. Make any physical contact with a child which can make him/her feel uncomfortable. Maintain a safe distance during the interaction.
8. Share phone number, email, social media contacts (Facebook etc) without prior permission of the organisation.
9. Encourage children to maintain personal contact with them without the knowledge of the organization.
10. Appear before the children in an intoxicated/drugged state.

4.3 Appropriate behaviour of Interns and Volunteers

A. Do's:

1. Read the Child Protection Policy of the organization and indicate compliance by signing on the same.
2. Submit a written permission letter from the educational institution/organization regarding the purpose of visit before interacting with children.
3. Share action plan with MSS prior to the field visit.

4. Wear clothes that are appropriate, keeping in my mind the local context and culture in which the children live.
5. Interact with children in the presence of staff.
6. Adopt a friendly and respectful attitude while interacting with the children.
7. Ensure the safety of children during any activity that is undertaken.
8. Convey any concern stemming from children's behaviours, local conditions etc immediately to the relevant staff.
9. Seek personal information or take photograph of the child only with prior permission of the relevant staff, parent/guardian and the child.
10. Share any gifts with children only after securing permission from the relevant staff.
11. If any research/documentation is to be undertaken, then the objectives, methodology including tools, possible use of the findings and means of dissemination for the same have to be discussed with MSS prior to any field activity for the same. Norms of confidentiality and informed consent should be followed.

B. Dont's:

1. Make any child feel uncomfortable through words, gesture or behaviour or initiate any inappropriate relationship.
2. Discriminate among the children based on family background, gender, caste, class, religion, ability etc.
3. Humiliate or stigmatize children in any form.
4. Engage in close physical contact with the children during the course of any activity.
5. Display any illicit pictures, videos, films or use indecent words while interacting with the children.
6. Hit the child or use corporal punishment in any form.
7. Lure the child to open up when he/she refuses to share any information.
8. Take the child to a separate location without permission of the relevant staff.
9. Give phone, laptop, camera or other electronic items to the children. If this is necessary for some activity, then this should be done in the presence of the relevant staff.
10. Consume alcohol or drugs while being with the children.
11. Involve children in personal work.
12. Share any information gathered during placement/ period of work to any one without the prior knowledge of MSS.
13. Encourage children to maintain contact via phone and social media subsequently without permission of relevant staff.

4.4 Appropriate behaviour of Donors

A. Do's:

1. Inform the organization in advance regarding the purpose and plan of action for the visit.
2. If the visit includes interactions with children, then this should be planned keeping in mind their convenience and availability (i.e. not disrupt their studies etc).
3. Read the Child Protection Policy and indicate compliance by signing the same.
4. Wear clothes that are locally and culturally appropriate.
5. Interact with children in the presence of relevant staff. Individual interactions will be allowed only in exceptional cases and through prior discussion.
6. Engage with children in a respectful and friendly manner.
7. Respect the uniqueness of each child.
8. Be impartial while making any contribution for the children in cash or kind. If the contribution involves selection of specific number of recipients, then this should be discussed prior to the visit and the means of doing so mutually agreed upon.
9. Use simple and age-appropriate language with children. If required, arrange/ask for an interpreter.
10. Take permission from the child, relevant staff, parent/guardian (as applicable) before seeking any personal information of the child and also taking his/her photographs.
11. Maintain confidentiality and informed consent for all documentation and research efforts involving children.
12. Inform the organization prior to dissemination and publication of any visuals, case studies or other documents involving children.

B. Don't's:

1. Make any comments that are disrespectful or hurtful for children.
2. Use vulgar or abusive language before children.
3. Initiate physical contact with children which can be misinterpreted or make the child feel uncomfortable.
4. Be partial or show favouritism among the children.
5. Give phone, laptop, camera and other electronic equipment to children during the visit. If this is essential for some activity, then it can be done after prior discussion and permission of the relevant staff.
6. Take and use any photographs that demean or disrespect children.
7. Encourage children to contact them through phone or social media without the prior permission of the relevant staff.
8. Appear intoxicated or drugged during interaction with children.

4.5 Appropriate behaviour of Resource Persons

A. Do's:

1. Read the Child Protection Policy of the organization and indicate acceptance by signing it. This should be done before taking up any activities related to children.
2. Share the session plans and aids (handouts, audiovisuals including documentaries etc) with the organization prior beforehand.
3. Highlight if any content can be considered sensitive or controversial and use the same only after discussion and clearance from the organisation. This can be related to religious matters, discussing any local traditions or customs that have harmful implications, information related to biological aspects etc.
4. Wear clothes that are locally appropriate.
5. Be friendly and approachable.
6. Encourage all children to participate. Value their inputs and opinions while also clarifying and correcting as necessary.
7. Use simple and accessible language during interaction keeping in mind the local culture. If required, arrange/ask for an interpreter.
8. Provide constructive feedback to the children.
9. Ensure the safety of the children during the activity.
10. Share any concerns regarding the children, the training venue or any other aspect immediately with the relevant staff.

B. Dont's:

1. Be partial towards any child during the programme/activity
2. Use vulgar language in the presence of any child.
3. Verbally abuse or hit any child.
4. Make comments that are disrespectful and may hurt sentiments of any child.
5. Compare children on the basis of caste, class, colour, religion and gender or any other parameter in a way that belittles them.
6. Conduct any activity that will adversely affect the health of a child (i.e. making them sit under the sun etc.)
7. Initiate any physical contact which can make the children uncomfortable or may be misinterpreted. Maintain adequate distance from the children. (Where any activity necessitates contact, discuss this beforehand with the relevant staff.)
8. Encourage children to contact through phone or social media without prior permission of the relevant staff.
9. Conduct activities while under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicating substances.

4.6 Appropriate behaviour of Media Personnel

A. Do's:

1. Read the Child Protection Policy of the organization and indicate acceptance by signing it.
2. Provide information about self, work and current assignment to the organization.
3. Interact with the children only after informing the relevant staff.
4. During any visit, engage with children only in the presence of any staff from the organization and/or parent/guardian and at a time that is convenient for them.
5. Ask questions to the children in an accessible manner giving them time to understand and respond.
6. Follow norms of confidentiality, more so in cases where children have faced abuse, are living with HIV & AIDS or other particularly vulnerable situations where disclosure may lead to further stigmatization.

B. Don'ts:

1. Be disrespectful of the child's individuality and dignity.
2. Take photographs or other audio visuals that show children in a demeaning manner.
3. Lure or threaten the children to share any information.
4. Probe incessantly, particularly if the child feels uncomfortable or is unable to answer. (Further information can be sought from the organization or the family.)
5. Meet the children after consuming alcohol or any other substance that causes intoxication.

Children's Views: What Children Want?

Do's

Adults should trust children.
 They should behave with children in a friendly manner.
 They should deal with children without any partiality.
 Elders should deal with children with respect.
 Parents should consider the opinions of children.
 Parents should be role models for their children and behave with them in an appropriate manner.

Don'ts

Elders should not shout at children unnecessarily.
 They should not scold on petty issues.
 Parents should not be cruel to children.
 There should be no discrimination based on caste, colour, gender or religion.

These inputs were shared by a group of children during a session of the Child Protection Policy Drafting Workshop. Children can be encouraged to frame rules for themselves as well in the operational areas of the organization.

5. Reporting and Response Protocols for Child Protection Violations

A. Reporting of Child Protection Violations:

1. All Meerut Seva Samaj staff, board members, and affiliates are obligated to report any concerns or suspicions of any forms of harassment, abuse and exploitation described above involving Meerut Seva Samaj staff, board members, affiliates, partners, program participants, suppliers, service providers or aid workers associated with another Meerut Seva Samaj. The concern may be a result of witnessing the incident, being told of it, or being the object of it.
2. All such required reporters should report all concerns through any of the following channels:
 - Channel 1 Walk-in to talk to the Director, MSS at MSS office, Meerut
 - Channel 2 Call & talk to the Director, MSS, telephone number - +91 1213557590
 - Channel 3 Telephone number of Human Resource Officer contact 8360693113
 - Channel 4 Email to: safeguardmss@gmail.com
3. The reports of alleged safeguarding violations should include as much information as is readily available, such as:
 - Date, time and location of the incident
 - Nature of what happened
 - Any immediate help or actions required
4. Intentional false or malicious reporting may result in disciplinary action.
5. Meerut Seva Samaj is committed to ensuring that program participants—and members of communities in which they live—are aware of what staff behavior is acceptable and how they can raise their concerns or questions in a confidential and secure manner. Meerut Seva Samaj will ensure communication is systematic throughout project planning; and community-based feedback, complaints and response mechanisms are available.
6. Meerut Seva Samaj acknowledges and respects the courage and trust associated with reporting allegations of misconduct. To the extent possible, Meerut Seva Samaj seeks to maintain the confidentiality of allegations, survivor/victim, reporter, witnesses and subjects of complaint, understanding confidentiality can be critical to safety/security, reputation and well-being.
7. Information about any suspected act of child abuse must be reported to the concerned coordinator (line manager) and Director through phone call or message as soon as possible.

8. The written information should be given in the reporting format (*Refer to Annexure 3*) within 24 hours of the incident. Copies of this should be provided to the line manager, director and Child Protection Committee (CPC, comprising 1 female staff, 1 male staff, 1 lawyer or representative from a non-government organization with experience of working with children).
9. Parents/guardians of the affected child/children should be informed immediately.
10. If the child is physically injured, then first-aid should be provided at the earliest.
11. In case of serious injuries that are visible or deeper injuries suspected, the child should be taken to the hospital immediately. Parents/guardians should accompany the child or be asked to join at the hospital as feasible and practical.
12. The CPC will guide concerned staff in making other provisions for the affected child as needed i.e. counselling etc.
13. Complaints regarding suspected instances of child abuse can be made by any MSS staff or other stakeholder such as donor, visitors, interns, volunteers etc.
14. Complaints can be about MSS staff or other stakeholder such as donor, visitors, interns, volunteers, media personnel etc.
15. A child seeking to report any incident can approach the Director or MSS Coordinator. If the child so wishes, any staff he/she is comfortable can be involved during the reporting and following processes.
16. The name of the complainant will not be disclosed in subsequent processes.

B. Response to Reported Child Protection Violations:

1. Under no circumstances, should any of Meerut Seva Samaj staff assess or investigate an allegation or a reported allegation on their own, outside of standard reporting protocols.
2. Meerut Seva Samaj and its staff are prohibited from retaliating—in the form of an adverse employment action or harassment—against any individual reporting an allegation in good faith or participating in an investigation. Any form of retaliation may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
3. The organization will reach out to the affected child at the earliest preferably within 1-2 hours.
4. The CPC will undertake an investigation by talking to the affected child, the person alleged to have committed the abuse, any witnesses etc. These interviews will be held separately.
5. The CPC will identify if there are any serious consequences or risks for the affected child and inform the Director immediately so that necessary steps can be taken.
6. The Director and CPC will guide the concerned staff in contacting the police.
7. The CPC will submit its report to the Director within the time limit set by the organization.

8. The dealing of the case should be completed within 30 days from time of occurrence. This may be extended to 60 days where necessary.
9. The Director will take action within 15 days of submission of the CPC report which will outline recommendations.
10. Depending upon the nature and seriousness of the incident, MSS will take necessary action. This may include issuing a letter of warning and/or changing location of work (for first time offence where level of physical and psychological harm experienced by the child is low), cutting salary, suspension and even termination (for repeated offences and/or severe physical, sexual or psychological harm experienced by child; negligence causing disability or even death etc). Legal action may also be initiated.
11. If the alleged abuser is an outsider who is found guilty, the CPC and Director will decide on the course of action to be taken. This may include issuing a formal letter of complaint to the individual and his/her organization, severing ties, disallowing further contact with children and legal action if so warranted.
12. If a complaint is found to be false, then the CPC will attempt to understand the circumstances in which it was made and inform the Director. If it is found to be an honest mistake, then the complainant will be issued a warning. If some other motivation is revealed, then the director may take action based on his discretion.

6. Communication Protocol

These are guidelines to ensure confidentiality and proper use of information regarding children. It also covers photographs and audiovisual recordings of children.

1. Personal information of children will not be kept in files/folders that are easily accessible to all.
2. Personal information of children will not be shared with outsiders including media without the permission of the line manager and the Director.
3. Name and other identifying characteristics of children, who have faced trauma or abuse, are living with HIV & AIDS or in any other particularly vulnerable situation will not be mentioned in the case studies or any other form of documentation.
4. Information, photographs and audiovisual recordings of children will be taken after securing consent of the concerned child, relevant staff and parent/guardian.
5. Photographs or audiovisual recordings will not depict children in demeaning positions or be disrespectful of their dignity.
6. Photographs and audiovisual recordings of children with disabilities will be taken with special sensitivity.

7. Review of Policy Implementation

The review of the Child Protection Policy will be undertaken for the first time within a

year of its implementation. Subsequently, reviews will be conducted once in every three years. The review will include understanding awareness regarding the Policy among the staff, capacity building of staff on related issues, functioning of the CPC as well as tracking cases and their resolution.

Annexure 1: List of Issues for Orientation

A list of issues which can be covered in the orientation of staff, interns and volunteers is provided below.

- Child rights including Child Protection
- Types of abuse and other related concepts
- International and national instruments (key conventions, policies, legislations and programmes)
- Socio-economic background of the children and other contextual considerations affecting children with whom MSS works
- Child development
- Working with children (interviewing, listening, involving them, promoting participation)
- Behavioural protocols
- Maintaining confidentiality and other ethical norms in working with children
- Communication protocol
- Understanding other local support agencies and mechanisms for child protection and development (government and nongovernment)

Annexure 2: Child Protection Policy Commitment Form

To,
The Director,
MEERUT SEVA SAMAJ (MSS),
Sardhana Road,
Kanker Khera, Meerut 250001
U.P, India.

Subject: Child Protection Policy Commitment Letter

I/We _____ (Name), _____
(Designation), a staff of MSS/NGO/religious congregation/institute/other, a resident of _____
_____ (Address) have carefully read MEERUT SEVA SAMAJ’s Child Protection Policy (CPP) and hereby declare that I will accept all the components of this policy and would abide by its code of conduct. I am also fully aware that if I fail to abide by this policy, the concerned organization can take necessary steps. In case of serious violations, this may include termination from job (for staffs) and legal action.

Signature

Date: _____
Place: _____

Signature of the Director

Date: _____
Place: _____

Annexure 3: Reporting Format

1. Name of location _____

2. *(About the child)*

Name of the Affected Child _____

Sex: _____

Age: _____

Name of the Guardian _____

Address _____

Contact Number: _____

3. The incident has been disclosed by
child/staff/others: _____

4. The incident was observed /suspected?

5. Incident Details:

a. Date, time and place of incident:

b. Date when the incident came to the knowledge of the staff:

c. Name of alleged abuser: _____

6. Details of the person (alleged abuser): *(please put tick mark)*

a. Staff: contractual staff, general assignment, trainee and community volunteers
(paid)

b. Intern/ Volunteer (unpaid) c. Supplier/ Contractor d. Donor e. Visitor

f. Parents

7. Type of Abuse:

8. Personal Observation of the reporting staff (visible injuries, child’s emotional state
etc.):

9. Immediate action taken by the reporting staff:

10. Were there any other people or children involved in the incident:

11. Remarks (if any):

12. Role of the Parents:

Action taken by team leader:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

[Confidential document. To be reported to the coordinator]

Oath of Confidentiality

In accordance with the applicable **rules of Meerut Seva Samaj**, I, the undersigned, shall exercise the utmost discretion with regard to all matters related to my contact with the Investigation. In particular

I shall keep confidential all information to which I have access and/or known to me that may be relevant to the Investigator's work and which I may be required to provide as evidence, including by way of formal statement.

I shall not use such information for private gain, or to favour or prejudice any third party.

I shall refrain from commenting on any aspect of my interactions with the Investigator to any party outside, either in a professional or private context.

I am aware that I can contact the Investigator directly for information concerning the Investigation's mandate and my rights and obligations.

I understand that this Oath of Confidentiality will be held by the Investigator and will remain effective during my tenure as a Meerut Seva Samaj personnel; even after the completion of my contract, I will endeavor to abide by this Oath. I also understand that disclosing confidential information to persons and entities who are not authorized to receive it may amount to misconduct.

Name (print):

Signature:

Date:



Meerut Seva. Samaj

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय - Leading from Darkness to Light

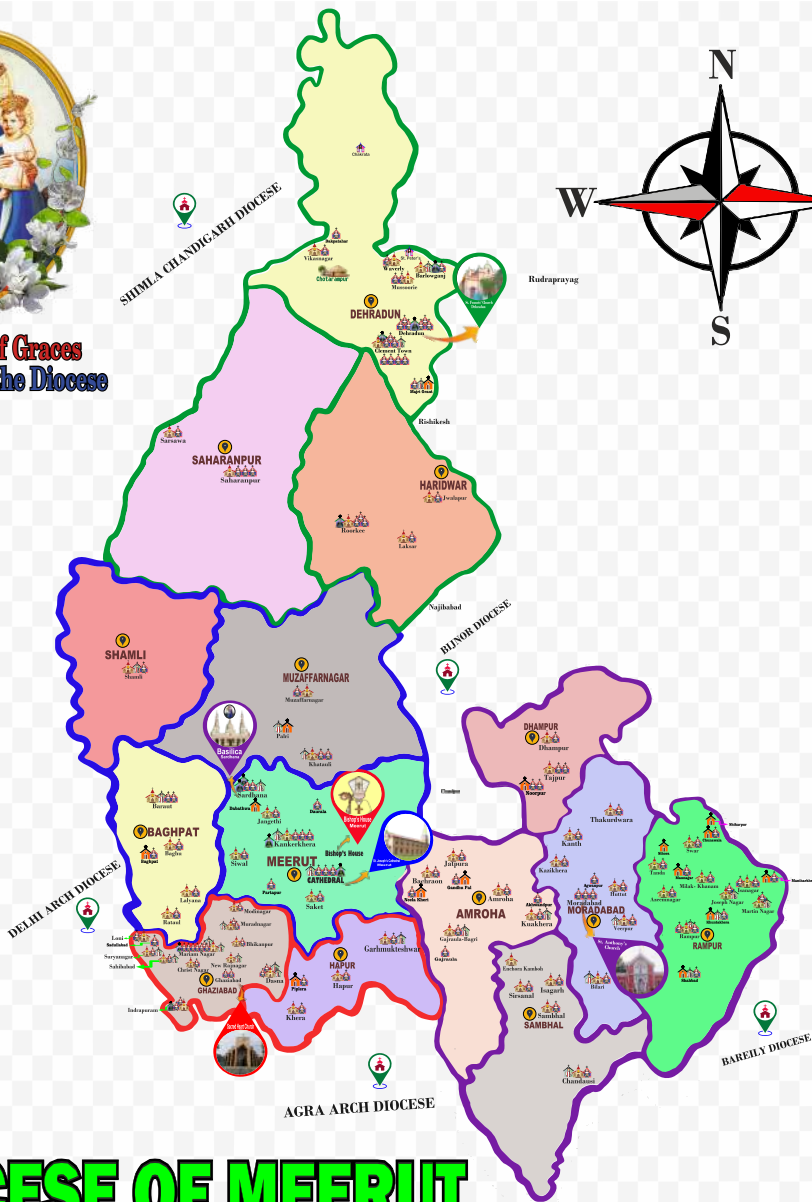
**Why
wait
till a
Child
is
hurt
?**



**Be sensitive
Be Human**

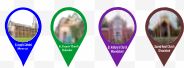


Our Lady of Graces
Patroness of the Diocese



DIOCESE OF MEERUT

ZONAL CHURCHES



- Dehradun Zone
- Meerut Zone
- Ghaziabad Zone
- Moradabad Zone

- Bishop's House
- Basilica, Sardhana
- Cathedral, Meerut
- Parishes

- Ashram
- Religious Fathers
- Religious Brothers
- Religious Convents

- Substation of the parish
- Chapel
- Districts HQ.
- Adjacent Dioceses

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 Instagram :- meerutsevasamaj3
 Youtube.com/meerutsevasamaj