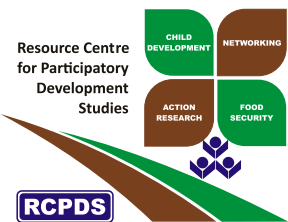


CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF RCPDS – 2016

(Reviewed and approved as of 2016 vide AGM dated 5.7.2016)



Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies

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Dear Partners and fellow players of Child Protection

RCPDS is a Child Focused Rights based organization which envisages keeping children at the central of their own communities and protective environment as Right Holders. We work in the Southern Districts of Tamilnadu in partnership with National and International partners. We as organization recognize that there is a great need to ensure that our own spaces and interaction must be safe for children and all players from within (our own team members including the management board) as well our networks. We feel that child protection is everyone's business and responsibility.

RCPDS is recognized, for its expertise and practical experience in child Rights Approach(CRA), as Resource Organisation and offer series of trainings to many Child Focused organisations in Asia and East Africa. As child Rights organization and as partners to child protection in the National mechanism of CHILDLINE 24 x 7 system, we believe that all our associates and communities we work with must have child friendly and protective ethics and practices. Hence this policy is evolved to demonstrate the strong commitment of the Management, employees and field level volunteers to child safety and establishing workable mechanisms and maintaining child friendly and safe environments. Base references were made to some of our partners Child Protection Policies such as KNH, Germany, CHILDLINE India Foundation and UNCRC.

Based on the drawings as well personal experiences gained from our Child Rights Advocacy Work in the past, we had series of discussions with children from partner communities through their associations such as, Child Clubs, Palar Panchayats and Children Movement for Climate Justice – CMCJ, Child Rights Protection Committee – CRPC, Self Help Groups and their apex bodies to evolve a framework. Outcome of the discussions were then anchored around the Child Rights Policy paper which is evolved by RCPDS and is in use since 2009. This framework then took shape as “Child Protection Policy of RCPDS” and was approved by the Governing Board of Directors meeting during May 2012 and endorsed by the General Body members.

The success of the implementation of this Child Protection Policy is backed by its simple ongoing monitoring mechanism which is inbuilt with monitoring schedules. Though challenging we are committed to execute the same hundred percent across our organisation, partners and communities to ensure safe childhood. This policy is due to be reviewed mid-term by May 2019 for further refinement.

On behalf of RCPDS management and Staff.

Dr John Devavaram
Director
RCPDS.

Madurai
July 2016

RCPDS believes

Child Protection a shared responsibility of range of stakeholders and duty bearers. We can reduce child vulnerability by

- Promoting community based support system
- Making commitment to Child Protection and having vibrant Policy as well efficient operational mechanism in place
- Strengthen inter-sectoral linkages and responsibilities
- Establish standards for care and protection
- Build capacities of all stakeholders
- Ensure child protection services at all levels
- Children can be involved in social audit on Protection issues
- Promotion of network at community level

This policy is based on the following principles

- All children are right-holders and their dignity, liberty and freedom need to be respected;
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender (including third gender), language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse;
- Best interest of the Child will be central and focus to all child protection measures
- Any suspicion and allegations of abuse (whether in writing or oral) will be taken seriously and acted swiftly and appropriately for necessary action;
- Essentially zero tolerance stand will be maintained by the organisation on any form of threat to child protection whether direct or indirect
- All staff (paid/volunteers/animators/contract staff) have a responsibility to report concerns to the Designated Person with responsibility for child protection or any authority that is associated with the Organisation structure.



Objectives of this Child Protection Policy

- ▲ To create a favorable environment for the overall development of the child with a guarantee of his/her overall protection
- ▲ To mainstream highest levels of Child Protection into RCPDS and its promoted CBOs
- ▲ To ensure appropriate operational mechanisms in place to make all children, with whom we come across as organisation, feel and be safe.
- ▲ To create appropriate awareness on Child Protection and be conscious about its implications
- ▲ To share information about child protection and good practice with children, parents and carers, staff and volunteers.
- ▲ To provide effective management for staff and volunteers through support, guidance and training



Definitions used in this Policy

- Child** – Any person who is below 18 years of age
- Child Protection** – Reducing vulnerabilities of all children to any form of violence or abuse. Recognising that every child has the Right to Protection which includes not only child who is seen as victim but also any child who is vulnerable to fall victim to any form of risk or exploitation or abuse.
- Child Abuse** – Intentional harm caused physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally or by neglect through rights violation or exercising the position as elderly or deliverer of projects/care and support or power centre by any of the person covered by this policy document.
- Child Protection violation** – Any act or behaviour that places any child below 18 years at risk of abuse or stigmatises or increases the vulnerability to risk.
- Any failure, on the part of the individual, to follow the protocol of ethics and code of conduct, that is laid in this policy paper.
- Any failure to act in a situation, where a child is being abused in any form or at the risk.

Children's rights to safety and participation

This policy framework expect all staff members including contract staff, technical assistants, consultants hired part timers, animators and community facilitators encourage children to express their views, and make suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. Outgoing efforts should be made to actively encourage all children who use **RCPDS** services to 'have a say' about those things that are important to them. We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices.



Code of Conduct and Behaviourial standards

Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies endorses the following code of conduct to provide guidance to our employees and volunteers responsible for activities involving children under the age of 18 years. The code serves to protect children and reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur. Management, employees and volunteers all agree to abide by code of conduct.

- Respect privacy and dignity of all children
- Inform children about steps of intervention taken or projects proposed with regard to their involvement
- Protect child by not disclosing the identity outside the team and duty bearers
- Do not disclose identity of the child to the media, unless it is warranted and absolute necessity.
- Record all decisions on movement and participation of children in various project interventions with appropriate approval from local Child Protection committees.
- Be visible and do not take or interact with any child in privacy.
- Treat all children equally without showing any form discrimination or neglect
- Use professionalism and limits in all the actions while using language, cultural norms, body mannerism, presentation and timely response.
- Resolve conflicts in official forums, established procedures specifically by RCPDS as resolving mechanism
- Use positive language, praise and encouragement for children

DONT'S

- Do not visit a child at home when no other member of the child's family is present
- Do not engage in any form of physical contact including overly affectionate touching, suggestive behaviour, rough physical play or inappropriate tickling
- Do not take children home or any other place unless it is warranted; if so make sure you are with other co-worker of the child's same sex and preferably one of the community members.
- Do not use physical punishment to discipline a child. Report any potential disciplinary issues to higher officers or parents committee or CRPCs
- Do not engage children in domestic or personal work for the staff or any one else.

Mechanisms established for implementation of Child Protection Policy

The overall implementation of the Child Protection Policy is the responsibility of the Project Director / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) under the guidance of Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will constitute a "Grievance Sub-committee" to ensure implementation of this policy as well observation of the procedures. Recruitment of employees and consultants

RCPDS applies the best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of employees and other services. We interview and conduct referee checks on all employees and other services. RCPDS administrative section will maintain confidential individual staff file which will contain application, referee comments/ remarks, copy of residential address or ID proof, photograph and signed undertaking by the staff concerned on code of conduct as well RCPDS child protection policy. Periodical review reports will be filed in the same file by updating status through out the service period. Our statement of commitment to child safety and our requirements are included in all advertisements



Complaint mechanism

Our complaint mechanism is of two-fold. There will be a complaint box, apart from direct (written or unwritten) complaint facility with the administration section, set up within the office premises/compound – away from the power centres/rooms/spaces (to enable everyone to freely access).

Secondly enable newly promoted Child Protection Institutional frameworks at the community level (Child Rights Protection Committee – CRPC) to receive

or register complaints and link them to **RCPDS** through 24 hours Childline Protection National Protection system for which RCPDS is a Nodal organisation in the District. These complaints will be registered and complaint boxes will be opened at regular intervals (logs recorded) to ensure effective functioning of the system



Norms for Child Protection within the office premises

- Children are allowed to use our office premises for all events, partnership activities, recreation, activities related to realising rights, exposures, transition and residential events.
- In such cases privacy will be ensured for children based on their sex and needs. Records of registration of such children entry will be maintained.
- Person of the same sex need to be accompanied (wherever possible – wherever not possible it is advised to call one of the community member of the same sex to accompany the child) for cases of late drop ups or other such events
- Code of Conduct and key element of Child Protection Policy should be displayed visibly on the walls for every child and adults to see, observe and better understand their rights.

Support for employees and volunteers

RCPDS seeks to attract and retain the best employees and other service providers. We extend support and supervision so employees feel valued, respected and fairly treated. Further RCPDS will keep space sufficient for appropriate level of transparency, capacity building, counselling, guidance and training to all staff members.

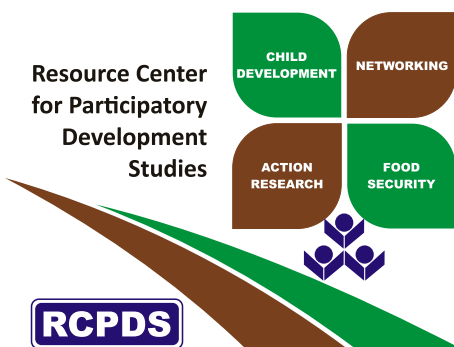
Staff Endorsement to the Policy

Staff and volunteers of this organization – **RCPDS** – accept the code of conduct, Child Protection Policy and recognize its implication to our ethics, conduct and behavior to child safe environments and agree to commit ourselves. We also endorse our responsibilities to develop appropriate awareness across our partners and other stakeholders on the issues that will cause harm to children and deprive them of their Protection Rights.



RCPDS POLICY GUIDELINES – 2016

Updated from earlier version of 2013



Please send your comments to
Project Director

RCPDS

Madurai

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These policy papers due for review during 2015

Designed by:

Documentation Division **SPEECH**