

## Child Protection Policy

### Introduction

It is the Policy of the PGS to ensure that "child" as defined as by UNCRC (United Nation Child Rights Convention) up to 18 years of age are Protected and kept safe while they are in the care of staff and members of the PGS.

### The purpose of this Policy is:

- To ensure the safety and welfare of all children with whom we come in contact with both as members and recipients of our Operation.
- To support our members and staff in their work related to Child Rights and Child Protection.
- To provide all members and staff with the training, skills and knowledge to enable them to protect themselves and the Children, young people with whom they work.

### Child Protection within the PGS

The PGS respects and promotes the principles of equality, diversity and works with all young people in a culturally sensitive way within the context of the Indian Constitution and law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Article 2- The Convention applies to everyone, whatever their race, religion, abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from).

PGS is committed to the *protection, safety and welfare* of all children those with whom we come in contact during the provision of our operations.

### Definitions of Abuse

The Children First Guidelines define abuse in four categories as follows:

- Neglect
- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual

The definitions for each of these categories are as follows:

#### Neglect:

An omission where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to affection from adults and medical care.

#### Emotional:

When a child's need for affection approval, consistency and security are not met. Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care giver and a child.

#### Physical:

Any form of non-accidental injury which results from a willful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

#### Sexual:

When a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

### Other Forms of Abuse

- There are other forms of behavior that may not be defined as abuse but could cause concern to PGS members working with young people. The abuse spectrum has been expanded in recent years to cover
- Not just the aforementioned categories but also recognizing other examples of abuse that include: Bullying, Peer Abuse, Cyber Bullying, E-Bullying and different forms of internet abuse.
- While they may not be generally included in the aforementioned categories of abuse, it should be noted that in their extreme forms, they would be regarded as abuse.

### **Child abuse**

- When a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children can be abused in many settings, in a family, institution or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.

### **Welfare**

- The difference between welfare and abuse is often a professional judgment made by the assessing social worker based on a number of factors, for example the level of severity or frequency of some concerns, it is useful to look at the types of concerns that have been categorized as welfare concerns.
- Many of these concerns do not look at the mistreatment of a child, but factors in the child's or the family's lives that impact of the child's wellbeing safety, security and/or development."

### **Bullying**

Increased levels of bullying amongst all age groups and in particular young people are a concern for organizations working with young people. The PGS has become increasingly aware of the issue of bullying and the detrimental impact it may have on those involved, i.e. victims, perpetrators, families, bystanders and the PGS in general. It is vital, therefore that all elements of the PGS are equipped to deal with any instances of bullying and in doing so shall seek to counteract and prevent such unacceptable behavior occurring or reoccurring

#### **What is Bullying?**

Bullying behavior can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. The term "target" is used to describe the person or persons that are bullied.

Bullying contains seven key features:

1. An intention to be hurtful
2. The intention is carried out
3. The behaviors harms the target
4. The bullies overwhelms the target with his or her power
5. There is often no justification for the action
6. The behavior repeats itself again and again
7. The bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the target

### **Peer Abuse**

Peer Abuse can be defined as the physical, mental, emotional or sexual. Mistreatment of a person by somebody else of the same peer and/or age group. Abusive behavior perpetrated by young people must be taken seriously. Early referral and intervention is essential in all such instances.

### **E Bullying/Cyber Bullying**

Action that results in deliberate tormenting, threatening and harassing.

### **Statement of Principles**

- PGS and its associated individuals take on the critical task of ending global slavery. First and foremost, it is essential to recognize the deep vulnerability of former and current child and adults slaves, in addition to the general vulnerability of children.
- PGS should never physically, sexually or emotionally abuse any child or client in any manner. Moreover, associated individuals must act positively in a manner which protects and promotes the rights of children. These rights according to PGS include the right to a healthy and safe environment. Children should be valued, listened to, respected and understood within the context of their own culture, religion and ethnicity. PGS should work to empower

children by encouraging their participation in decisions which affect them. PGS staff and associated individuals must comply with these behavioral guidelines in both their professional and personal interactions with children, whether at work or outside.

- PGS will ensure participation of children in implementation of this policy and will also ensure that “best interest of child” is maintain and protected.

#### **We work towards this by:**

- Promoting the general Welfare, health and full development of young people and protecting them from harm. (Article 24 Children have their right to good quality health care, to clean Water, nutritious food, and a clean environment, so that they will stay healthy. Rich Countries should help poorer countries achieve this)
- Using “Children First” as a base reference point; referring all suspicions of Child Abuse to the designated person within the organization;
- Recognizing that young people have rights as individuals and treating them with dignity and respect.
- *Adopting and consistently applying a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting staff and volunteers for PGS*
- *Training staff and volunteers so as to minimize opportunities for young people to suffer harm;*
- *Ensuring that the designated person, in consultation with the PGS will refer any suspicions of Child Abuse or an offence raised to them to the relevant Department ensuring that where concerns are raised that do not meet reasonable grounds for reporting, the PGS in consultation with Child Protection Officer will make recommendations as to any action that should be taken in order to protect the safety and welfare of young people.*

#### **Scope of the child protection policy**

This policy applies to

1. **Staff at all levels - In office**, in field or elsewhere.
2. **PGS associates these include board members, volunteers, community volunteers also staff and/ or representatives of partner organization and local government.**
3. **PGS visitors-** Such as donors, journalist, media, and intern, researchers etc. who may come into contact with children through PGS, are also bound by this policy.

#### **Recruitments and Training**

- Will publish a disclaimer in all the job advertisements mentioning the applicability of child protection policy. The willing applicants will have access to the Child Protection Policy and other policies on organization website.
- Candidate must fill job application (Annexure-1) form which includes within it a declaration to the effect that there is no reason why they would be deemed unsuitable to have access to young people.
- Applicants must supply the names of two referees, not relatives who will testify as to their character, (one from previous organization and one from school and college where he/she attended the schooling). In case applicant is a fresher then they will have to submit one reference from school or elected representative.
- References will be contacted to check the suitability for the role and any other issues which may affect their ability to perform the tasks required.
- PGS will ensure during the interview of volunteer/staff that at least one member of the selection committee should have an expertise about Child protection concerns Justice and Juvenile Act (JJ act) according to Indian Penal Code (IPC) and United Nation Convention on Child Rights (UNCRC).
- The successful candidates will have to sign the CPP (Annexure-2) and other policies at the time of joining.

### **Training & Communicating Our Policy**

- The PGS will keep parents and guardians informed of all aspects of the Child Protection Policy through the ongoing activities that their child is involved in.
- A copy of our Child Protection Policy is available on our website or on request.
- The PGS Child Protection Policy Statement should be displayed in all premises where our activities take place.
- When communicating about our Child Protection Policy we will use alternative methods of communication where the audience has Communication difficulties.
- Will discuss and orient the staff on CPP during our quarterly review meeting.

### **Management structure for implementation of CPP**

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the implementation and overview of the PGS child protection policy.

However a staff member (those who have understanding, worked on the issue of Child rights in the past) is appointed responsible as Child Protection Officer for the PGS who will ensure day to day implementation & monitoring of the policy.

### **The role of the Child Protection Officer is as follows:**

- Child Protection Officer in consultation with the Director ensures the safety and welfare of young people in the organization and that of the members and staff who work with them;
- Ensures that Child Protection Awareness training is made available to all member;
- Ensures that our policy is reviewed regularly and updated in line with changing legislation and guidelines
- Ensures correct procedures are followed in the event of an allegation being made.
- Being an immediate contact point for members in relation to Child Protection concerns. This includes overseeing an out of office hours contact service;
- Ensuring that accurate records of all Child Protection Awareness Training carried out and of any Child Protection concerns that are raised are maintained;
- Liaising with the Statutory Authorities regarding Child Protection issues;
- Making referrals to the Statutory Authorities on behalf of the PGS where reasonable grounds for concern exist.

### **Behavioral do's & don'ts under child protection policy**

#### **PGS staff associates and visitors must-**

- Never touch the child inappropriately, don't discuss sexual provocative issues, don't show and see sexual or horrifying videos/visuals/content.
- Never remain alone with the child. Always try to be at a place where you can be seen.
- Never abuse (shouting, scolding, beating, physical torture or punishment, insulting, discrimination, threatening) and/ or exploit a child or act/ behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.
- Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
- Always ask permission or written consent (Annexure-3) from children (or in the case of young children their parent or guardian) before taking image (e.g. Photographs, videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Ensure that any images being taken of children are respectful. Stories and images of children should be based on the child's best interest.
- PGS associated and visitor must not disclose information that identifies children and their families to make available to the general public without explicit consent form.
- Do not indulge child in labor like assisting, cooking, hosting etc.

- Ensure children don't have access to mining sites (mining staff member).
- Don't share information related to children / survivors with the media without getting due permission from director or CPO. Director or CPO will decide based on the best interest of child.
- **Safe Management of Activities**
  - For the safe management of all activities it should be ensured that: emergency numbers are displayed in the venue being used;
  - A properly stocked first aid kit must be available at all times, both while in fixed premises and on outings and trips;
  - An update contact list should be kept for all young members, leaders and parents.
- **Confidentiality Statement**
  - All information disclosed in relation to Child Protection issues should be treated in a confidential manner. Information should be shared on a "need to know" basis in the best interests of the young person.
  - It is important to know that parents and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared unless doing so could put the children at further risk.
  - All records in relation to Child Protection concerns are kept in a safe and confidential manner. On written request files will be provided to the Statutory Authorities.

#### **General guidelines to organize away from home Trips for children**

- Adequate and safe transport arrangements will be made.
- Parent/guardian consent will be obtained for each participant, prior to the trip.
- Parents/guardians will be fully informed of the program or time table for the event and will receive a copy of the program.
- Parents will be given full contact details of the centre/hotel/accommodation and also of the staff/ member in charge of the event.
- Gender segregated accommodation will be provided and dormitories will not be shared with non-group members. Those aged 18 years and over should not sleep in the same rooms as those under 18.
- A pre visit is recommended.
- Expectations and Roles of Leaders and children should be clear in advance of the trip.
- The PGS have a system in place for recording any accidents or incidents.

#### **Standard Reporting Procedures**

##### **Reasonable Grounds for Concern**

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- 1) A specific indication from a child that he or she has been abused
- 2) An account by a person who saw the child being abused
- 3) Evidence, such as an injury or behavior that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to have been caused in another way.
- 4) An injury or behavior that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, and other indications of abuse and/or dysfunctional behavior.
- 5) Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- 6) Admission or indication by someone of an alleged abuse. Suspicion that is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

### **Responsibility to Report Child Abuse**

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that young people with whom they are in contact may be experiencing abuse or have been abused in the past. This is an important responsibility for volunteers and staff when working with young people.

The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse are summarized as follows:

- The safety and wellbeing of the young person must take priority;
- Reports should be made without delay to the Child Protection Officer who will make a report to the statutory authorities where there are reasonable grounds for concern

The PGS has put in place a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse.

### **The reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse is outlined in the following steps:**

- Contact no. of Child Protection Officer will be displayed/shared at prominent places i.e. Village Education Centre, Legal Aid Centre, Savings Box and during the meetings. Children, their parents and community members will be motivated to report incidences of abuse by PGS team members, to the child protection officer.

#### **How to make a complaint**

- Anyone can report an abuse directly to the CPO
- Alternatively you can make this complaint to the relevant senior officer or senior staff member in the PGS or even directly to the director
- Information you need to provide Complaints can be made orally or in writing. By providing the following information you can help to speed up the investigation of your complaint.
  - The name and address of the young person affected and the activity which they engaged in.
  - If the complaint is being made by a parent/guardian or other adult, the name and address of the parent/guardian or other adult;
  - Exactly what you are dissatisfied with;
  - The name of any volunteers/staff members who you have dealt with in relation to the matter.
  - If your complaint is complicated, you may find it best to put it in writing so that no important detail is overlooked. Remember to enclose copies of all.
- The volunteer/staff member who has received a disclosure of child abuse or who has concerns about abuse should bring it to the attention of the Child Protection Officer immediately. They should document their concerns and ensure confidentiality is maintained.

#### **Relevant documentation/correspondence with the complaint**

- If you have special needs that may affect your ability to make a complaint, please let us know at the earliest opportunity. We will make every effort to assist you. Our standards for dealing with complaints;
- If the complaint relates to the safety and welfare of a children, it will be examined in accordance with good practice in relation to the safety and welfare of children;
- We will treat your complaint properly, fairly and impartially and in the best interests of the children
- We promise that making a complaint will have no implications for your dealings with the PGS
- A volunteer/staff member other than those originally involved will examine your complaint;

- We will examine and review your complaint and send a reply to you within 20 working days of the receipt of your complaint. Where it is not possible to meet this target, we will inform you and continue to do so until the matter is resolved;
- If the complaint is upheld, we will apologise for any mistreatment of the young person, explain what happened and put it right wherever possible;
- We will change the way we do things to avoid making the same mistake in future.

### **Can you appeal?**

- If you are unhappy about the outcome of the review you can appeal the matter to the Executive Committee of the PGS within a month of the review. The decision of the Executive Committee is final.

### **Action to be taken when an allegation is made against a member or staff member (Procedures)**

Where an allegation pertaining to a child protection concern is made against a member of the PGS there are two procedures that the PGS will put in place:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child
2. The procedure for dealing with the volunteer

If an allegation is made against staff of the PGS the following steps will be taken:

- The allegation will be assessed by the Child Protection Officer to establish if there are reasonable grounds for concern and whether a formal report will be made to the statutory authorities, at this point. The Child Protection Officer will consult with the director and executive Committee for advice on the issue.
- The safety of the child is the first priority of the PGS and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child is safe. The measures taken will be proportionate to the level of risk. (Article 3- all organizations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child)
- The PGS will ensure that no other children are at risk during this period and will inform other relevant agencies or parents/cares as appropriate.
- The measures which can be taken to ensure the safety of children can include the following:
  - Suspension of duties of the person accused, reassignment of duties where the accused will not have contact with children, working under increased supervision during the period of the investigation or other measures as deemed appropriate. Any such measure will be taken by the relevant officer/leader of the PGS under advice from the Child Protection Officer however the Board of Directors reserve the right to place the person on Administrative Leave from all PGS activities pending a satisfactory outcome.

The responsibility for Child Protection lies with the Child Protection Officer, should an officer/leader fail to follow the advice of the Child Protection Officer, they are then deemed to assume that responsibility.

- The accused will be intimated in writing that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is, by the director through the CPO. The concerned or accused has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained.
- The PGS will ensure that the principle of 'natural justice' will apply whereby a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise
- The person against whom the allegation is made will need support during this period and the PGS will provide advice on how to access the relevant support services like legal support. Peer support will be offered to both the children involved and the person against whom the allegation has been made. The same person will not support both parties. Support for the person against whom the allegation has been made will be external to the organization.

**Action against an accused (Procedures)**

- The Board of Directors will be responsible for implementing any procedural actions required in relation to the employee under advice from the Child Protection Officer.
- If there is an allegation or suspicion in relation to the members of the Board of directors of PGS, then remaining members of board will deal with all procedural aspects.
- The action could be
  - Warning or memo
  - Suspension
  - Fine
  - Termination
  - Legal Action

**job application (Annexure-1)**





**Written Consent (Annexure-3)**

**Travel Consent (Annexure-4)**

I, ..... Father/Mother/Guardian of ..... (Name of Child) hereby give my consent to PGS staff Mr./Mrs./Ms. .... To accompany my child for ..... (Title of event) to be held at ..... on ..... (date).

I am aware of the purpose for which my child is traveling and have no problems in leaving him/her for the same.

Signature

Signature (witness)

Date

Date

Place

Place

.....

I, ..... Father/Mother/Guardian of ..... (Name of Child) hereby confirm the safe receiving of my son/daughter on ..... date by the PGS staff.

Signature

Signature (witness)

Date

Date

Place

Place