

Child Protection Policy

Functional Area: Child protection

Approved by: - SMS Board

Date of Approval: - March 2020

Date of next review Nov 2023

Language -English

Applicable to: - SMS offices and networking partners offices

Procedures: - child protection – Say Yes! To Keeping children safe; reporting and responding to child Protection Issues plan; SMS’s child Protection police implementation standards

Strategy: - Keeping Children safe –SMS’s Strategy for protecting children

Say Yes! To Keeping children safe

Summary / purpose

As an Indian child-centered Community development organization whose work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), SMS is committed to promoting the rights of children including their right to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. SMS takes active measures to ensure children’s rights to protection are fully realized.

SMS acknowledges its expectation that its employees and others who work with SMS have children’s best interests at the heart of their involvement with SMS.

This Child Protection policy is SMS’s statement of intent that demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear to all in the organization and who come into contact with us what is required in relation to the protection of children, and that child abuse in any form is unacceptable to SMS.

A. SMS’s vision for child protection

Vision

We aim to create ‘Child safe’ environments, both internally and externally; where children are respected protected, empowered an active in their own protection and where staff are skilled, confident, competent and well supported in meting their protection .

Statement

SMS is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children’s right to protection are fully realized. We take seriously our responsibility to promote child safe practices and protect children from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation in any form. In addition, we will take

positive action to prevent child abusers from becoming involved with SMS in any way and take stringent measures against any SMS Staff and /or Associate who abuses a child. Our decisions and actions in response to child protection concerns will be guided by the principle of ‘the best interests of the child’

B. Definitions Under the Child Protection Policy

1. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years
2. Child abuse is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill- treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development in to adulthood.

3. Child protection, within the scope of this policy is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that SMS undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

C. Scope of the child Child Protection Policy

The Child Protection Policy applies to everyone working for or associated with SMS. It encompasses the whole of SMS and includes without limitation.

1. Staff at all levels: - in office, in field or elsewhere.
2. SMS Associates: - these include board members, Volunteers, Community volunteers, consultants. Also, the staff and/or representatives of partner organization and local governments who have been brought into contact with children or are party to SMS child sensitive data while working for or with SMS.
3. SMS Visitors: - (e.g. donors, journalists, media, researchers, celebrities etc) who may come into contact with children through SMS are also bound by this policy.

D. Responsibilities Under the Child Protection Policy

SMS Staff, Associates and Visitor must

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/ behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.
2. Report any child abuse and protection concerns they have in accordance with applicable local office procedures. This is a mandatory for staff. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action

3. Respond to a child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local office procedure.
4. Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
5. Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concern and rights.
6. Always ask permission from children (or, in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before taking images (e.g. photographs, videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Ensure that any images taken of children are respectful (for example: children should have adequate clothing that covers up the sexual organ. Images of children sexually suggestive poses or that in any way impact negatively on their dignity or privacy are not acceptable). Stories and images of children should be based on this child's best interest.
7. Be aware that where concerns exist about the conduct of Staff or Associates in relation to child protection and/or where there has been a breach of the child protection policy, this will be investigated under this policy either by consideration of referral to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under local laws within India and /or by SMS in accordance with disciplinary procedures. This may result in disciplinary sanctions and/or dismissal for staff.

Be aware that SMS will sever all relations with any SMS Associate or Visitor who is proven to have committed child abuse.

8. Be aware that, if a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse is raised, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the reporter. However, any employee who makes false and malicious accusations will face disciplinary action.

Be aware that SMS will however take appropriate legal or other action against SMS associates and visitors who make false and malicious accusations of child abuse.

SMS staff must not:

9. Disclose information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public unless that disclosure is in accordance with standard SMS policies and procedures

SMS Associates and Visitors must not:

10. Disclose information that identifies sponsored families or children or make it available to the general public without explicit consent from SMS.

Directors, Program Managers and Program coordinator must

11. Ensure that each office has in place local procedures that are consistent with the global Child Protection Policy and with the document reporting and responding to Child Protection Issues in SMS to respond to incidents of child abuse. Local procedures should be developed with

assistance of advisers in accordance with the local law. Any deviation there from must have prior format approval from the CF.

Ensure that local procedures are made available in local languages.

E. Personal Conduct Outside Work

We are committed to ensuring that our Staff and representatives apply high standards of behavior towards children within both their professional and their private lives.

SMS does not intend to dictate the belief and value systems by which SMS employees conduct their personal lives. SMS's position is dependent, however, on maintaining good relations and upholding its reputation as a child focused community development organization with numerous organizations. Unlawful or other conduct by SMS employees which jeopardizes SMS's reputation or Position whether during or after business hours will not be permitted. Such conduct is not limited to; any unlawful activity related to sexual abuse; any other unlawful activity; sexual harassment physically/verbally abusive behavior and public disorderly conduct.

Staff and Associates are required to bear in mind the principles of the child protection policy and heighten their awareness of how their behavior may be perceived both at work and outside work.

This Policy is approved in Governing Body Meeting by all the members.