

Child Protection Policy



Indian Society for Rural Development (ISRD)
Swarnamayee Nagar, Brahmapur-760001, Ganjam, Odisha

Introduction

The Indian Society for Rural Development (ISRD) has been working for the lot of children since the year 1996. The Child Rights Protection Policy of ISRD is derived from principles enshrined in the Constitution of India and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). ISRD intervention is multi-pronged. It works at three levels,

- micro level: child rights protection awareness generation through regular outreach
- the middle level: influencing and orienting allied systems and civil society for the creation of child friendly services;
- the macro level: advocacy and perspective building with policy makers for the creation of child friendly policy and program.

ISRD leads massive advocate campaigns for child protection. It recognizes that children are more vulnerable than adults to the circumstances under which they live and are hence, more affected by the actions or inactions by government and society. So, the ISRD realizes that it is imperative for all stakeholders to practice the highest standards of child protection.

ISRD intervention with children include identification of vulnerable children, interaction, face to face counseling, restoration of children to their homes, referral to other organizations for shelter, education, vocational training, accessing health care services etc. ISRD success is dependent on the honesty, integrity and commitment of its entire staff, stakeholders and the management. Therefore, to minimize child protection risk and ensure that children are protected at all times, ISRD introduces a child protection policy with clearly articulated code of conduct, basic minimum standards, reporting mechanism and operational guidelines

Vision

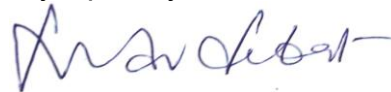
Ushering in a child-friendly society and nation where each and every child will be enjoying the rights and comforts of childhood guaranteed by the constitution. .

Mission

ISRD will reach out to every child in need of care and protection through the principles of effective intervention, advocacy, collaboration & information & communication to make child protection everybody's priority.



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Scope of the ISRD Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to

- **ISRD Central Secretariat & All Field Offices:** To include all staff, & volunteers.
- **ISRD partner organizations:** To include CHILDLINE Directors, coordinators, paraprofessionals, team members, volunteers
- **Stakeholders:** To include different stakeholders

Guiding Principles

- # Respect for dignity, liberty, and freedom of the child
- # Recognition of the best interests of the child
- # Belief that a child is entitled to express his/her opinion and can take decisions
For him/herself
- # Respect for the child's right to privacy and confidentiality
- # Zero tolerance of any form of abuse whether direct or indirect
- # Belief that child protection is the responsibility of all

Objectives

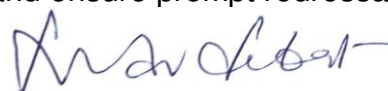
- To ensure the practice of the highest levels of child protection standards in ISRD & ISRD partner organizations & members of ISRD networking
- To spread the Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act & the Integrated Child Protection Scheme by orientation, sensitization & capacity building of different stakeholders.
- To inspire and mobilize NGO & citizen action to create a culture of prevention of child abuse and violence
- To ensure reporting for child protection violations and time bound redressal system
- To ensure assessment and management of child protection risk in ISRD spaces
- Empower, inform and facilitate the participation of young people in preventing abuse and violence against them
- To create consciousness and awareness among parents and adults about child protection

Policy Statement

ISRD a child rights organization is committed to the protection and well being of children. ISRD adopts a child protection policy to ensure practice of the highest standards of child protection amongst its stakeholders. The policy creates a mechanism to report child protection violation and ensure prompt redressal.



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Definition of Child

“*Child*” includes all the persons of age from the 0 to 18 years.

Definition of Child Protection

Child Protection means protecting children from or against any perceived or real danger/ risk to their life, their personhood and childhood. It is about reducing their vulnerability to any kind of harm and in harmful situations. It is also about protecting children against social, psychological and emotional insecurity and distress. It must ensure that no child falls out of the social security and safety net and those who do, receive necessary care and protection to be brought back into the safety net.

Child Protection refers to protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. It is integrally linked to every other right of the child. Every child has a right to protection. This not only includes children who are in difficult circumstances and those who have suffered violence, abuse and exploitation but also those who are not in any of these adverse situations and yet need to be protected in order to ensure that they remain within the social security and protective net.

Definition of child abuse

Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of an interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents.



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Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide an appropriate supportive environment, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his personal potentials and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. There may also be acts towards the child that cause or have a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. These acts must be reasonably within the control of the parent or person in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Neglect and negligent treatment

Neglect is the failure to provide for the development of the child in all spheres: health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions, in the context of resources reasonably available to the family or caretakers and causes or has a high probability of causing harm to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. This includes the failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as is feasible.

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to:

- The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity.
- The exploitative use of child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices.
- The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.



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Exploitation

Commercial or other exploitation of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.

Definition Child Protection Violation: Child Protection Violation in context of the policy amounts to:

- Any act or behavior that puts a child at risk of abuse
- Any act of behaviour that could potentially increase the risk of abuse
- A failure to act in a situation where a child is being abused
- Failure to follow the code of conduct or any other prescribed protocol without suitable justification

This policy calls for mandatory reporting of all child protection violations. All members within the scope of this policy should report as they witness, suspect or come to know of any form of child protection violation.

Code of conduct

ISRDR is dedicated to protecting the rights of children. It recognizes the need for honesty and integrity and respect for the child to reflect both in decisions of the organization as well as in the conduct of its personnel. Hence, ISRDR articulates a code of conduct for its personnel at central office and at field office..

Personnel should

- Respect the privacy and dignity of each and every child
- Be visible while working with children at the work place
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists and facilitates children to interact and express their issues and concerns with staff.
- Respect and encourage children's voices and views.
- Make efforts to ensure children's participation in decisions that effect their lives
- Inform children about steps of interventions being taken in his/ her context.
- Uphold privacy of the child by not disclosing identity of child to anyone who may put the child at risk



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- Uphold the privacy of the child by not disclosing the identity of the child to the media.
- Educate children about their rights, issues of abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Ensure that there are same sex chaperons/escorts for children
- Recorded movement of children while sending them to schools, hospitals or referral service centres or even in repatriation/ restoration

Personnel should not

- Not touch, hug, or caress a child
- Spend time with children alone
- Stay in a room alone with a child for an extended period
- Allow interaction with a child in a closed environment without supervision of the person in-charge
- Sleep alone with any child
- Take children to the residence of the team members/coordinators/directors for the night
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves
- Engage children in personal work or employ children at work or at home.
- Use language or expressions that is found inappropriate to a child
- Use corporal punishment or tolerate corporal punishment by the staff
- Make any physical gestures in a manner that appears to be inappropriate or sexually provocative
- Develop any relationship with children which could be assumed as exploitative or abusive
- Discriminate against children on the basis of colour, language, disabilities, or physical feature leading to differential treatment
- Stigmatize or humiliate a child
- Act in any manner that put children at risk
- Give gifts directly to children
- Patronize any services that employs children
- Take any photograph that would violate the child's dignity, or privacy in anyway

Response Mechanism in case of a child protection violation: Outlined below is a reporting and response framework for any alleged, witnessed, or suspected child protection violation



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- Report the matter to the head of the department. The head of department must inform the matter to the Grievance Cell who will address the matter with the Management Team of the organization
- There should be **mandatory** reporting of child protection violations within the organization - any body coming across child protection violation must report it
- The Management Team of the organization will investigate the matter and take appropriate action.
- While the matter is under investigation the individual who is suspected of having committed a child protection violation must be removed from direct contact with children
- The issue would be addressed and brought to closure within a month of having been reported.
- Any alarming or inappropriate behaviour of a staff member and any action taken against the person must be noted in his/ her personal record.
- If the abuse falls under IPC or any other relevant law, First Information Report must be filed with the local police

ISRD Project Partners

- Report the matter to the Director, ISRD
- If the matter involves the Director, then report the matter to the Chairman of ISRD directly
- Grievance Cell of the organization will address the issue with the Management Team of ISRD
- There should be **mandatory** reporting of child protection violation within the organization - any body coming across child protection violation should report it
- The Management Team at ISRD would address the issue and recommend a suitable course of action to the Director or the Governing Body of the Organization (if the matter involves the Director only)
- The course of action would have to be mutually agreed upon by ISRD and the partner organization
- While the matter is under investigation the individual who is suspected of having committed a child protection violation must be removed from direct contact with children
- The issue would be addressed and brought to closure within one month of having been reported



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- Any alarming or inappropriate behavior of a staff member and action taken against the staff member should be noted in his/ her personal record.
- If the abuse falls under IPC or any other relevant law, First Information Report must be filed with the local police by the CHILDLINE partner organization.

Implementation of the Policy:

- The overall implementation of the policy would be the responsibility of the Governing Body of ISRD.
- The issues concerning intervention would fall in the purview of Director.
- All agreements/ contracts/ Terms of reference between ISRD and its associates would include acceptance of relevant clauses of ISRD child protection policy, Code of conduct, and Operational guidelines.

Review of the Policy:

The Policy would be reviewed every Three years by Indian Society for Rural Development (ISRD)

Operational Guidelines

This child protection policy articulates ISRD's aspiration and commitment to practicing the highest level of child protection in its operations. ISRD and the ISRD partner organizations take a proactive stance in laying out a set of operational guidelines that would be incorporated into all process and functions of the network. These guidelines have been developed through a consultative process between ISRD, the partner organizations of the ISRD network and expert input from other organizations and individuals who have already developed and implement child protection policies.



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Human Resource Management

Recruitment

- There should be basic assessment of candidate on sensibilities regarding child protection -e.g. show an article, ask for analysis and use a check list for interview
- There should be thorough reference check to be carried out from past employers or the academic institute attended by the candidate
- All new recruits would sign an undertaking accepting the child protection policy and the code of conduct
- Induction Program within the organization would include orientation on Child Protection
- All new recruits would be provided with a copy of the ISRD Child Protection Policy
- On recruitment, personal files with photograph of the staff recruited should be maintained.

Staff Development and Capacity Building

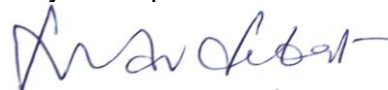
- Orientation on child protection must be given critical focus in all staff development and capacity building programs
- The organisation must make attempts to stay abreast the latest trends and issues on child protection and share this knowledge with its personnel across all levels and departments
- Protection of staff needs to be discussed at length as staff members also face threats and various risks in the course of their work.

Human Resource Practices for Partners/Networking Members of ISRD

- ISRD/Partners would not associate itself with organisations that engage in activities that involve tobacco, alcohol, and child labour.
- In the case of organisations that want to associate with ISRD or organisations that ISRD desires to associate with, needs to be undertaken to ensure that the organization's philosophy, mission, processes and practices are safe for children. The partner organization would need to:
 - have a child protection policy
 - not employ child labour
 - be intolerant to any form of child exploitation and abuse
 - not patronize any service that may be exploitative to children



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Participation of children in ISRD programs

- The program should not be detrimental to the health of the child
- Consent of the child is mandatory while participating in programs
- If children are being taken for residential programs written consent must be taken from their families or the institution that they reside in
- The purpose of the participation must be clearly articulated to the child
- Children should play a key role in planning any event that they will participate in
- Children must be adequately provided with drinking-water, refreshments, snacks and meals during programs
- Arrangements for first-aid and quick access to medical facilities should be provided for while planning programs with children
- Optimum safety /protection should be provided for Children attending programme e.g security in cases of open spaces, fire safety norms etc.
- Ensure basic facilities are provided to children attending programmes outdoor.
- Ensure provision of safe accommodation arrangements with separate toilets for boys and girls.
- Same sex escorts must be provided for children going outdoors.
- 1 caretaker for every 10 children to be provided during programmes.
- Children cannot be left alone with out escorts at any time during the program.
- There should be a Grievance Committee comprising the organizers and the children to address any issues of conflict during the program
- If children have to travel reservations must be made well ahead of time to ensure a safe and smooth journey to and from the program
- Feedback must be taken from the children at the end of the program.
- At the end of the program each child attending the program must either be handed over to a responsible parent or family member, or the institution to which the child belongs



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