

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

REACH has a comprehensive Child Protection Policy. We do not tolerate any child abuse or exploitation.

Code of conduct for ensuring protection of children:

- Mandatory consent from parents/guardians in the case of children.
- Visuals of children not to be used without explicit consent.
- Respect for privacy and confidentiality of children.

If you have any questions or wish to raise any concerns related to this, please contact:

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REACH's Child Protection Policy

In keeping with the organisation's mandate to promote equitable health for all, REACH is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children. In this context, REACH supports the principles contained in the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child and has zero tolerance to any form of child abuse or exploitation. This is also in keeping with Indian law, according to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO). For the purposes of this policy, the words defined here shall mean and be understood and applied as follows:

1. **Child** means any person below the age of 18 years.
2. **Child Rights** means the rights of any person below the age of eighteen years of age as recognised in the Constitution of India
3. **Child Abuse** means 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.

I. Purpose of this policy:

This policy is designed keeping in mind the best interests of a child, with the objectives of:

- (a) creating awareness on the importance of safeguarding children
- (b) establishing expected behaviours and practices by all REACH team members
- (c) outlining potential consequences and responses in the event of violation of these standards

REACH also commits to undertake special measures for especially vulnerable children based on age, disability, gender, geographical location, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status to ensure that they are not further marginalised or unprotected.

II. Scope and Applicability:

All staff of REACH are expected to strictly adhere to this policy. This policy is applicable to all persons directly employed or contracted by REACH including consultants, interns, volunteers, service providers and other stakeholders. In addition:

- (a) Every NGO or implementing partner of REACH will have the primary responsibility in having adequate reporting and redressal systems in place.
- (b) In matters involving the staff of REACH, the direct obligation shall lie with the organisation.
- (c) This policy is also applicable to visitors of REACH – who visit the project sites or initiatives of REACH and come into contact with children and also includes media persons, students, celebrities, researchers etc.

III. REACH's interface with children:

In general, the REACH team has contact with children on many occasions during the course of their work. Some of the situations where children may be involved include:



- (a) *Provision of care services:* REACH provides care and support services, including diagnostic support and treatment, to children with symptoms of TB, children diagnosed with TB and children with NCDs or other comorbidities. These services include:
- Facility-based interactions with children and their families
 - Home visits by health staff to follow-up on treatment
 - Provision of TB Preventive Treatment to those less than 18 years if they are contacts of people with TB
 - Provision of care for NCDs/other comorbidities to children
- (b) *Education and awareness programmes:* REACH facilitates the implementation of programmes directly or through its partners. Children also form a part of target audience during field visits, community awareness meetings and other interactions. For example, awareness meetings may be held in schools.
- (c) *Development of communication collaterals:* In keeping with the organisation's mandate to educate communities, REACH uses collaterals such as posters, brochures, leaflets, short films etc. Occasionally, these may also include the use of children's images and stories.

IV. Code of Conduct for ensuring protection of children:

At the organisation level, REACH will ensure that children under the age of 18 are not hired for any position (including internships) at any project location, under any circumstances.

In addition, staff will be sensitised on the following:

- (a) All care and support services to children will be provided only with the consent/assent of their parents or guardians. No services will be forcibly provided without consent.
- (b) Visuals of children – photographs, video, etc. – will not be used without explicit written consent from parents as well as assent from children (if between the ages of 11-18).
- (c) The privacy and confidentiality of all children will be respected, in all circumstances.
- (d) All awareness activities in schools or similar premises will be conducted with the permission of the relevant authorities.
- (e) Any children who are required to travel for participating in any project activities will do so only with the written consent of their parents or guardian, and will be accompanied by an adult.

At the individual level, all REACH employees are required to ensure that they:

- (a) Do not spend excessive time alone, more than what is professionally required, with children they meet through work
- (b) Do not take any children to their homes, unsupervised and without parental consent
- (c) Do not share, via email, Whatsapp or other means, photographs of children without consent, including children with TB
- (d) Do not hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children



- (e) Do not develop physical or sexual relationships with children. This includes unnecessary or inappropriate touching, holding or cuddling of children.
- (f) Do not develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- (g) Do not act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse including
 - I. the use of any inappropriate or abusive language directed at children.
 - II. the viewing of any digital content that is child pornography, in the presence of a child.
 - III. Any discriminatory actions that favour one child or some children over others

V. Reporting mechanisms for violation of code of conduct:

In the event that any aspect of this code of conduct is violated, REACH staff are expected to immediately bring this to the notice of the Deputy Director, who will be the nodal person for ensuring implementation of this policy. The Deputy Director will bring any reports to the immediate attention of the Director, who may choose at their discretion to share such reports immediately with the REACH Executive Committee. Depending on the nature of the issue reported, REACH may also report this to the relevant authorities as required. In such cases, the interests of the child will supersede the rights of any employee to privacy or confidentiality.

Based on the specific violations reported, REACH reserves the right to undertake any or a combination of the following actions:

- (a) Constitute a special committee to look into the issue
- (b) Engage external consultants to look into the issue
- (c) Enforce disciplinary action on staff found to have violated this code of conduct
- (d) Terminate the employment of staff found to have violated this code of conduct

REACH will ensure that this Child Protection Policy is circulated to all staff and that they understand and acknowledge the need and importance of Child Protection. REACH will organize annual sensitization programmes for all the staff. All forms of abuse to children will be considered serious and REACH will ensure that fair and transparent procedures are followed. REACH will fully cooperate with legal authorities if any investigation ensues. All decisions will be taken in the best interests of children involved.

For Resource Group for Education and
Advocacy for Community Health
Remya Santhakrishnan
Authorized Signatory