

Child Protection Policy

Preamble

Shifting Orbits Foundation (SOF) is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of children it gets involved with. Thus, SOF has adopted this Child Protection Policy (CPP) requiring organisation representatives to conduct themselves appropriately with the children who participate in SOF related programs and take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of such children.

The policy covers all persons and organizations, becoming binding for all those associated with SOF , in protecting, promoting and securing the rights of all children at all the times, at all levels and in whatever capacity one operates. SOF has a ZERO TOLERANCE towards any forms of child abuse. By adopting this Child Protection Policy, SOF intends to streamline all interventions and make all areas of operation child sensitive and safe for all children.

Scope

SOF engages with Volunteers / Implementing Partners who are committed to protecting children in line with the intentions and provisions of this policy. SOF provides all the support and guidance that any Volunteer / Implementing Partner may need, in implementation of this policy.

This policy applies to all individuals/organisations associated with SOF in any way, hereinafter referred to as SOF Associates, categorised as follows:

1. SOF Staff and Consultants would be all those who have an employment/consultancy contract with the SOF .
2. SOF Volunteers who volunteer their time and contribute to the mission and objectives of the SOF on a volunteer basis and without any financial benefit.
3. SOF Partner staff refers to any paid or unpaid individuals who have committed to or support the SOF in its programs or initiatives. It includes visitors, consultants, interns, sponsors, donors, all staff/consultants of partner organisations or local government bodies, and any other individual or organization working within a Partnership Agreement/contract with SOF.

Why A Child Protection Policy?

SOF believes that each child is born with inherent dignity and right to respect. Safeguarding every young person entrusted to our care, directly or indirectly, is not only our duty and responsibility but also our priority. This Child Protection Policy is our commitment to respect the rights of every child

and to contribute to the welfare, protection and empowerment of each child. By spelling out these policy matters, we know we are applying, interpreting and implementing in our interventions and activities, the laws enacted in our country for ensuring protection and promotion of children

What Constitutes 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 (Source: A report of the consultation on child abuse prevention, WHO, Geneva, 29-31 March 1999, defines child abuse as).

All SOF Associates must be aware of the following types of abuse and understand that they are prohibited as per this policy.

- 1.1. **Physical abuse** : The intentional use of physical force against a child that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity. This includes hitting, beating, kicking, shaking, biting, strangling, scalding, burning, poisoning and suffocating.
- 1.2. **Emotional abuse** : Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with his or her personal potential and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. Acts include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.
- 1.3. **Neglect and negligent treatment** : We hold ourselves responsible that all children in our class are free from our neglect. Neglect is the failure on the part of the parents, guardian, teacher or other responsible party to provide for the child's basic needs, such as food, shelter, medical care, educational opportunities, or protection and supervision. It is abuse through omission of the necessary environment and resources for the child to reach their full potential; and the act of not recognizing physical or emotional abuse.
- 1.4. **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.
- 1.5. **Sexual abuse** :
 - 1.5.1. Sexual abuse is an act or behaviour which constitutes a sexual offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, as amended from time to time. Such sexual offences include penetrative sexual assault (including rape), non-penetrative sexual assault (including touching the private parts of a Child), sexual harassment (including stalking a Child, showing a Child pornography and making a Child exhibit his/her body) and using a Child for pornographic purposes (including storing of pornographic material involving a Child for commercial purposes).

1.5.2. An abetment of and an attempt to commit a sexual offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 are also considered to be offences. Certain offences under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 are considered to be aggravated offences and are subject to stringent punishments. For instance, sexual assault committed by persons in a position of trust or authority in relation to the Child (including relatives of the Child, persons managing or working in an educational institution, police officers or public servants) are considered to be aggravated offences.

Expected Conduct

Expected Behaviour and Actions	Prohibited Behaviour and Actions
Treat every Child with empathy and respect, regardless of his/her race, colour, gender, sexuality, language, religion, religious belief, heritage, political/other opinion, national/ethnic/social origin or property/disability/birth/other status.	Do not use language or behaviour towards Children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, intimidating, offensive, discriminatory or culturally insensitive.
Listen to Children and respect their views.	
Ensure that physical contact with a Child is respectful, culturally appropriate and essential to the purpose of your interaction with the Child.	Do not use any form of corporal punishment on Children.
Establish an atmosphere that fosters the development of Children through your actions and words.	Do not place a Child at risk of harm or abuse and do not harm or abuse any Child physically, emotionally or sexually.
Always take permission from Children before taking their photos or videos.	Do not share with or show Children (electronically or in any other form) inappropriate content including pornographic material or material encouraging crime, violence, terrorism, racism, sexism, self-harm, suicide, cruelty and gambling. Ensure that audiovisual content shared as part of classroom learning is also age, context and culturally appropriate.
Keep all personal information about Children or their parents/guardians confidential and secure and ensure that such information is dispensed to only those individuals who are legitimately entitled to it.	Do not develop, induce or support physical or sexual relationships with Children, in any way.
	Do not use or encourage the use of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes or other intoxicating substances while interacting with Children and from providing such intoxicating substances to Children.

	Do not develop any form of relationship or arrangement (financial or otherwise) with Children which could in any way be deemed to be exploitative or abusive. Do not use Child labour in any form.
Attend all the applicable training sessions and workshops on the CPP and Child-related laws conducted by the Organization. Ensure you implement the lessons learned from such sessions and workshops.	

Our Guiding principle

SOF responds to child abuse concerns keeping the following principles in mind:

- A. Safety and security of the child is paramount. Hence, all steps necessary for the same would be ensured by SOF .
- B. All further steps to address the child abuse concerns would be in the best interest of the child.
- C. All investigation into suspected or actual child abuse cases would be strictly confidential and on a need to know basis.
- D. A person thought, but not yet proven to be responsible for the actions that are the subject of the concern, incident or complaint that is being reported will be referred to as the Alleges Perpetrator
- E. All Associates have a fundamental and inalienable Duty of Care towards all children.

In view of implementing the policy, SOF will do the following;

A. Raise awareness of child abuse and its risks for staff and partners

The development of an open and responsive culture in all SOF and Partner programs and within the communities we work with is essential for protecting children. Therefore every Organisation should strive to create an atmosphere that promotes safety and protection of those entrusted to its care, so that they can assume responsibility for their own growth as human beings.

All SOF, programs and initiatives shall maintain an open culture where staff, children, parents or guardians feel comfortable to express concerns about child protection issues and issues of dealing with children and the concerns will be taken seriously and treated sensitively.

All SOF , programs and initiatives will organise regular awareness raising programs to enhance the awareness, understanding and acceptance of the Child Protection Policy and develop attitudes and behaviour that are congruent with the intentions and objectives of this policy

B. Acknowledge the Need and Importance of Child Protection

All SOF programs and initiatives will ensure that all staff and anyone associated with it have understood the Child Protection Policy and signs a copy of the same in acceptance and acknowledgement.

C. Level of Contacts

All staff and volunteers involved in any way in any SOF program or initiative would be assessed for their Level of Contact with children, based on the frequency, duration, nature and scope of their involvement with children. Accordingly, each would be guided and made aware of the inherent risks and perceptions regarding safe conduct with children as well as helped with safe practices, feedback and help regarding appropriate conduct in any interaction with children.

Reporting Violations

SOF takes all concerns raised seriously, be it in the school or other initiatives and takes appropriate action. SOF has defined clear reporting and responding procedures, internal communication lines, and the roles and responsibilities of all people involved.

Reporting child protection concerns is not an easy thing to do but it is vitally important that everyone understands the need for this to happen as soon as an incident occurs or a concern comes to light, especially if it involves a Staff, Volunteer or Associate of SOF

If any staff member is aware of or suspects any child abuse issue in the institution, he /she is duty bound to report it to the appropriate authority. As it is a mandatory requirement, failure to do so will result in disciplinary action.

Staff members should speak up on any case of abusive behaviour to the appropriate authorities, without gossip mongering or indulging in behaviour that could adversely affect the dignity, character or reputation of the persons concerned.

All Child protection related complaints should be sent to cpp@shiftingorbits.org

Responding to violation

SOF will ensure that clear action is taken when child abuse is suspected or reported . All forms of child abuse are taken seriously, without exception in all SOF programs, and are to be responded according to the gravity of the offence. SOF ensures that there is always a response, regardless of whether the abuse committed is considered large or small. By responding we guarantee that a transparent and fair procedure is followed, so that nobody is falsely convicted and the rights of everyone involved are protected.

As prescribed by law, the institutions, programs or other initiatives of the SOF will fully cooperate with legal authorities in case of any allegation of child abuse or violation of the child protection policy.

Child Protection and Safety Guidelines for Online Learning

With the rise in online learning during the pandemic lockdown and increasing access to virtual learning platforms across our cities, there is a marked shift in the learning environment and ways in which students and SOF associate may interact. SOF is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all students in an online learning environment.

The objectives of these guidelines are to reinforce child safety measures in the virtual space as an extension of our Child Protection Policy and to model professional conduct online as role models for students.

Since working together online means students and SOF associate are interacting in a more informal setting, here are a few guidelines to follow:

Guidelines for SOF associated involved in teaching/counselling

1. Continue to abide by the recommendations and guidelines as outlined in the Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy to set clear professional standards.
2. In case of suspected or observed child abuse of any kind, follow the reporting process outlined in the Child Protection Policy and inform your Supervisor. Proactively check on the wellbeing of your students.
3. Maintain communication channels on appropriate platforms, DO NOT interact with students over Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok or Twitter.
4. Ensure that your broadcasting location, clothing, surrounding environment, language, behavior, and body language is professional, appropriate, and culturally sensitive.
5. Use your full name as a display name in virtual spaces that you interact with students, do not use abbreviations, nicknames or characters that resemble alphabets.
6. Set up norms with your students about what can be shared on the group, and appropriate timings to do so.
7. Avoid sharing personal details, contact information, and details of your day to day life unless in the context of a learning session.
8. Check that the online learning platform you are using is secure and whether you have control over any intrusions, screen sharing or unwanted attendees.
9. Advise your students to engage in the learning session from a common space within earshot of parents/guardians wherever possible or in a space known to parents/guardians.
10. Engage with parents/guardians by sharing a digital learning plan and schedule to inform them of times of interaction.
11. Ensure that the content you are creating, using, or sharing is age-appropriate and culturally sensitive.
12. Do not schedule sessions beyond 7PM unless absolutely otherwise not possible, and only do so after informing the student(s) and parent(s) about any upcoming session at least 48 hours in advance.

13. Do not share student work/data/opinions or images/videos from online learning sessions without taking consent from the student(s) involved.

Guidelines for Students:

1. Students must use their full name and an appropriate profile picture on any platform they're interacting with other students and teachers.
2. Students must not share personal information about themselves or anyone else on any platforms.
3. Students must not share images, videos or audio clips with personal or inappropriate content of themselves or anyone else.
4. Students must inform their parents/guardians about any and all online sessions and interactions. Access to online learning also presents risks to student safety that you as a teacher or caregiver will need to be cognizant of. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Cyberbullying, harassment, blackmail or intimidation.
 - b) Sharing inappropriate content of a sexual or violent nature, or content that can harm, instigate, target or otherwise spread misinformation.
 - c) Impersonation or identity theft.
 - d) Sharing of fake news.
 - e) Sharing personal information and media.

If you suspect or have noticed signs of any of the above risks, or have seen/heard about violation(s) of the guidelines, please inform immediately via email to cpp@shiftingorbits.org

Self Declaration

I have read thru and understood the Child Protection Policy of Shifting Orbits Foundation and give my undertaking to abide by it under all circumstances

Name	
Signature	
Signing Date	