



Child Rights, Protection and Safeguarding Policy (CRPSP)

This Policy strengthens our commitment towards protecting and safeguarding children from all harm and abuses. We see that the protection of children, promotion of their wellbeing and upholding their dignity are fundamental to our work.

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

In line with NEG-FIRE's vision and mission, we aim to create 'child safe' environments, both internally and externally, where children are respected, protected and empowered. The purpose of this policy is to create awareness on Child Protection - how to prevent, how to report and respond to child abuse by all stakeholders of NEG-FIRE. We are committed to the wellbeing of children and have 'zero tolerance' to any form of child abuse or exploitation. This policy is within the framework of the international and national laws and policies such as - UN Convention on Rights of the Child (1989) other Child Protection Laws in India. (*The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012; Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act, 2000*).

1.2 NEG-FIRE's interface with children

NEG-FIRE comes face to face with children on many occasions during the course of its work. Some of the situations where children may be involved are:

Programmes – NEG-FIRE facilitates the implementation of our programmes through its Partner NGOs where children form a significant focus group.

- a) **Communications and Fundraising** – NEG-FIRE uses collaterals such as posters, brochures, hand-outs, and other communications and fundraising materials which use children's images and stories to convey the work done in the project areas.
- b) **Children of the staff of NEG-FIRE:** NEG-FIRE respects the dignity and rights of the children of the staff of NEG-FIRE.

1.3 Definitions

Child - For the purpose of this document, any person under the physical age of 18 years would be deemed to be a Child and as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of Children.

Child Protection means and includes:



- protecting children from any perceived risk or danger to their life, their personhood, and their childhood.
- reducing their vulnerability to harmful situations and protecting them against social, psychological, and emotional insecurity and distress.
- believing that a child is entitled to express her/his opinion and can take decisions for herself/himself and acting accordingly.

Child Abuse refers to all forms of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial 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.

Child Protection Violation in this policy amounts to:

- Any act or behavior that puts a child at risk of abuse.
- Any act or behavior 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.

1.4 Scope of the Child Protection Policy

This Policy applies to everyone working for or associated with NEG FIRE including:

- **NEG-FIRE:** Board, all staff, consultants, interns, retainers and volunteers.
- **Project partner organizations:** All its staff (part-time and full-time), board, consultants (short-term and long-term), interns, and volunteers.
- **Other Associates:** all vendors, suppliers, donors (institutional and individual), resource persons/trainers, community volunteers, contractors.
- **Visitors** – (e.g. journalists, media, researchers, celebrities etc.) who may come into contact with children through NEG FIRE are also bound by this policy.

1.5 Guiding Principles

Recognition of children's rights: The rights of all children must be protected and promoted as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes the right to freedom from abuse and exploitation and NEG-FIRE is committed to upholding the rights and obligations of children. Child Protection forms an integral part of all NEG-



FIRE's work where children are made aware of their rights which would help them to be safe from abuses.

Zero tolerance of Child Abuse: We have a commitment to protecting children with whom we work. Child abuse would not be tolerated by NEG-FIRE in any form. We would not engage directly or indirectly with any individuals or organisations who pose an unacceptable risk to children. When we work through partners, they have a responsibility to meet standards of protection for children in their programmes.

1.6 Prevention and Redressal Mechanism

1.6.1 Child Protection Committee

A Child Protection Committee shall be set up within the organization. This committee will consist of existing PAC (Process Approval Committee) members plus 2 more internal members (1 operations; 1 program). A child rights specialist or a Legal Expert will be invited for inquiry process in case of a reported violation. The term of the committee shall be for 3 years. The Role of the Committee shall be:

- i. Support the NEG-FIRE team on prevention mechanisms and process
- ii. Support NEG-FIRE in ensuring awareness building, monitoring and redressal
- iii. Regular meeting of the Committee and give recommendations to the Board
- iv. Ensure availability of the contact details for registering complaints on violation of this policy.
- v. The actions/ redressal undertaken by the Committee will be informed by the Board and Executive Director annually.
- vi. Be responsible for investigating, monitoring and evaluating the cases of Child Protection Violation.

1.6.2 Recruitment and selection process

Child Protection would be made integral part of NEG-FIRE's recruitment and selection process.

- i. Advertisements for jobs should clearly state (as given below in quotes) that a child protection policy exists and that a screening process is in place.

"This post involves regular contact with children and NEG-FIRE does rigorous selection procedures and reference checks that reflect its commitment to the protection of children from abuse. The applicant is required to be aware and in compliance of the NEG-FIRE



Child Protection Policy (CPP) which is available on our website. By submitting an application for this post you consent to be governed by this policy.”

- i. Relevant job descriptions will contain specific reference to the responsibilities of the post holder for implementing and safeguarding NEG-FIRE’s Child Protection Policy and procedures.
- ii. Child right related question(s) would be made mandatory part of assessment format as well as reference check.
- iii. As part of the acceptance procedure, staff would be asked to sign a declaration stating that they are aware of the policy and would abide/adhere to it. The declaration will be kept in the staff member’s personal file and may be referred to in legal proceedings if a staff member is found to be in breach of the policy.

1.6.3 Awareness building

A concerted effort would be made to generate awareness on Child Protection with all stakeholders of NEG-FIRE.

- i. Child Protection would form a part of the induction training which would be facilitated by HR. HR will also ensure access to child protection policy and the names of Committee members made readily available to all.
- ii. All the program managers in the regions shall be responsible for facilitating the training to the partners.
- iii. The Executive Director shall be responsible to take it to the Board members.
- iv. HR-Admin Dept. shall be responsible for creating awareness among their vendors

1.6.4 Communications

NEG-FIRE shall ensure that pictures/captions in all literature, documents and IEC materials on children are not offensive, and do not commercialize poverty and misery.

- i. In its communication and fundraising strategy NEG-FIRE may at times use images and recordings of children and field texts. NEG-FIRE has a responsibility towards the children who are portrayed and should ensure that children are treated with dignity as humans with rights by avoiding the following:
 - ii. Inaccurate representation of children through words and images.
 - iii. Communication that shames, degrades or victimises children.
 - iv. Taking pictures or statements from children without informed consent.
 - v. Depicting children in sexually provocative poses



1.6.5 Expected behaviours

All staff of NEG-FIRE are expected to sign the standards of behaviours mentioned below as a commitment to the CRPSP in the format given in **Annexure H-1**.

Staff, interns, volunteers, consultants and visitors shall:

- Be aware of the situations that can lead to risks for the child and should be prepared to cope with them.
- Have a keen observation and monitoring of the children's activity, as much as possible, should be incorporated to avoid risk situations.
- Report corporal punishment to the competent authority.
- Promote a sense of accountability among the staff so that poor practices can be reviewed without any conflict and disownment.
- Encourage the children to raise their concerns about staff and others. Help them to voice their specific dislikes for those in contact with them.
- Make the children aware about their rights, they need to be empowered and made aware of what is validly theirs and what steps they need to adopt when they find themselves confronting a risk situation.
- Adopt child friendly techniques when interacting with the children
- The attire of all staff and others should be sensitive to the situation and not a cause of discomfort while working with the children.
- In relation to children with HIV/AIDS who are identified, the confidentiality of the family and children is to be maintained.
- Prevent marriages of children before the legal age of marriage.
- Report child Labour to Competent State authorities. Strive to create access to education for children out of school (Child Labour)
- Be sensitive and respect the cultural identity of children in areas and communities where we work.

Staff, interns, volunteers, consultants and visitors shall NOT:

- Employ children as domestic workers in their homes. Should not take services provided by child labour or any activity/action that leads to child labour.
- Under any circumstances physically and mentally hurt, harass, abuse, torture, inhumanly punish or assault or sexually abuse a child.



- ✗ Develop a sexual/physical relation with any child.
- ✗ Allow project children to visit the homes of any staff, intern, etc. unless it is precipitated by a severe threat to the safety of the child.
- ✗ Exploit the child for personal gains.
- ✗ Place the child in a situation that can lead to abuse or risk of abuse.
- ✗ Use abusive or demeaning language or remarks in front of the child.
- ✗ Behave in a manner that is sexually provocative.
- ✗ Do any emotional harm to the child by belittling, humiliating, repeatedly discouraging or degrading the child.
- ✗ Display any kind of discrimination towards the child or unduly favour a child.
- ✗ Share the same bed with the child (implies especially to the Night Shelter/ Group Home facilities, hotels, guest-houses, training centers and outdoor camps accessed by the children).
- ✗ Spend excessive time alone with a child in the absence of others.

**This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that staff should avoid actions which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

1.6.6 Organization Responsibilities

- i. This organization maintains a zero tolerance policy towards child abuse and towards that end, will take disciplinary and/or other appropriate action against her/ him based on the recommendation by the Child Protection Committee.
- ii. All laws, rules and guidelines related to child protection and children shall be adhered strictly.
- iii. NEG-FIRE shall establish project partnership/continue with those organizations who have Child Protection Policy or those who commit to develop it within a period of 3 months. NEG-FIRE shall support in formulating the policy where required.
- iv. In all decisions, the best interest of the child will be taken as the primary consideration.
- v. Counseling services and therapeutic intervention will be available to all children and/or family if and when the need arises and/or it is requested.
- vi. It is the responsibility of NEG-FIRE to ensure that the child protection policies are understood and signed by all staff

1.6.7 Complaint Mechanism

- vii. Children in intervention areas or their representatives can make individual requests or complaints to the director / management of the institution.



- viii. The Committee may appoint any person to attend to any complaint brought before it and to report thereon to the Committee.
- ix. In case of any false complaint being made, the Committee shall provide the accused with necessary support including professional counselling.
- x. In case a complaint is found to be at fault, appropriate action will be taken against the complainant.
- xi. The outcome of complaints and its redressal shall be informed to the child or their representative within 30 days of the complaint being made.

1.7 Dealing with Non-Compliance/Grievance

- i. All NEG-FIRE Staff and partners, having firsthand account of child abuse will inform the child protection committee. Confidentiality will be maintained for each case.
- ii. All children, NEG-FIRE staff, partner staff, volunteers, consultants will be informed about the redressal mechanism process and also the communication process to report cases of child abuse and exploitation.
- iii. All incidents of abuse, complaints, enquiry proceedings and redressal of same would be documented formally and monitored on regular basis.
- iv. Disciplinary measures would be initiated against any Staff member found to be violating the 'code of conduct'.
- v. If any allegations are proved against a partner or vendor, NEG-FIRE would discontinue working with such a partner or vendor.