

## The Child Protection Policy of MVSS

### Synopsis

The policy aims to outlining and presenting its views and plans for the protection of children as an important segment of the society. The policy is an outcome of the significance given to children in the vision/mission and programmatic interventions of the organisation. Principle of 'thinking globally and act locally' is the guiding factor of policy. This is reflected through a reference of the internationally accepted UNCRC to organisation's perspective on children and its interventions for them.

### Children, an important segment of society

'Child is the father of man', this view of William Wordsworth, the well known English poet clearly indicates the significance of children in a family, a society and a nation. They form the face of tomorrow and build a nation. That is why, investment in children is considered as one of the most fruitful investments of a country. This realization is reflected right from the United Nations to the grassroots level.

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the concept of 'children's rights'. The rights perspective is embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In 1989, which is a landmark in international human rights legislation. It is a comprehensive, internationally binding agreement on the rights of children, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989. It incorporates children's civil and political rights (like their treatment under the law), social, economic and cultural rights (like an adequate standard of living); and protection rights (from abuse and exploitation). These are:

- ❖ **Survival rights:** include the child rights to life and the needs that are most basic to existence, such as nutrition, shelter, an adequate living standard, and access to medical services.
- ❖ **Development rights:** include the right to education, play, leisure, cultural activities, and access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- ❖ **Protection rights:** ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including special care for refugee children; safeguards for children in the criminal justice system; protection for children in employment; protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered exploitation or abuse of any kind.
- ❖ **Participation rights:** encompass children's freedom to express opinions, to have a say in matters affecting their own lives, to join associations and to assemble peacefully. As their abilities develop, children are to have increasing opportunities to participate in the activities of their society, in preparation for responsible adulthood.

## **An Integrated Approach to Children's Rights**

The UNCRC has adopted an integrated and holistic approach to the rights of child, not least because economic, social and cultural rights are dealt together with civil and political rights.

## **The 1990 World Summit on Children**

In 1990 a big international meeting called "The World Summit for Children" held in New York. The main goal of the meeting was to agree to promises and commitments to improve the lives of children. At this meeting they promised to always put the best interest of children first, in both good times and bad times. They made 27 promises for children which they said they would achieve by the year 2000 and which they put in a document called the "World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of children and Plan of Action".

## **National Programs of Action**

After the 1990 World Summit for Children, many countries developed what is called. "A National Programme of Action". These Programmes of Action explained how governments would achieve the goals and promises they had made. In order to do so, many said that they would work together with non-governmental organisations, other levels of government, the business community and civil society groups.

Today, nearly all cultures share the view that the younger the child the more vulnerable she/he is physically and psychologically and the less able to fend for herself/himself. Age limits are a formal reflection of society's judgment about the evolution of children's capacities and responsibilities. Almost everywhere, age limits formally regulate children's activities: when they can leave school; when they can marry; when they can vote; when they can be treated as adults by the criminal justice system; when they can join the armed forces; and when they can work. But age limits differ from activity, and from country to country.

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## **The Indian Scenario**

As per 1991 census, India has around 150 millions, constituting 17.5% of India's population, who are below the age of 6 years. If children in the age group of 0-18 constitute even 1/3 of the population; they constitute countries 'tomorrow'. There have been since efforts in our country to facilitate emergence of happy childhood. There are several legislations to protect children's rights. Several policies and programs have been formulated by government, gigantic budgetary allocation have been made in our five year plans to promote children's issues. The most important being the adoption of National policy for children. The National Policy for Children was adopted by the Government of India in 1974. This policy declares that children are a **"Supremely important asset"** of the Nation and that their "nurture and solicitude" are the responsibility of the nation. The national policy for children states that it shall be the state to provide adequate services for children both before and after birth and during the period of growth to ensure their full physical, mental and social development.

## **Who is a child**

According to Article 1 of the UNCRC, "a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier".

## **The voluntary efforts**

Significance of the role of voluntary sector was clearly highlighted in the National Program of Action for Children in 1990 when several participating countries spoke of ensuring a participation of voluntary organisation for implementing the National Program of Action for Children.

## **Child Protection Policy of MVSS**

### **A step towards a child-friendly society**

#### **Vision of the organisation**

We visualize communities where all enjoy equal rights, opportunities and the members respect each other and live in harmony with the nature and the divine.

#### **Mission of the organisation**

Empowering the common people to have access to their rights and opportunities as well as brining about systemic changes in view of good governance and social cohesion.

#### **Strategy of the organization**

A continuous process of animation and advocacy among men and women to become aware, form and organize into groups and federation to take actions for integrated, participatory and sustainable development.

**Goal** Making Difference in the life of people

#### **Objectives**

- ❖ Providing assistance to the poor to alleviate their immediate needs;
- ❖ Supporting self help programs which involve children and communities in their own development;
- ❖ Helping those it serves to restore and preserve their dignity and to realize their potential and sustain them;
- ❖ Collaborating with other religious and non- sectarian persons and groups of goodwill in programs and projects which contribute to a more equitable society;
- ❖ Responding to victims of natural and manmade disasters;
- ❖ Promote integrated and right based approach to development;
- ❖ Helping to educate children to fulfill their moral responsibilities in alleviating human suffering, removing its causes and promoting social justice;
- ❖ Promoting gender equality and child protection and rights.

## **Thrust Areas**

- ❖ Setting up and maintaining best practices concerning children.
- ❖ Advocacy and lobbying for a 'child-friendly environment.
- ❖ Programs related to children's development/protection.
- ❖ Replication of best practices.
- ❖ Capacity building of partners, members, staff and stakeholders.
- ❖ Information dissemination and resource mobilization.
- ❖ Research and documentation.

## **Guiding Principles**

- ❖ Dignity
- ❖ Safety
- ❖ Participation
- ❖ Development

## **Who is a child in the eyes of the organisation**

As per UNCRC and law of our land, the organization considers any human being below 18 years of age as a "child".

## **What is child protection in the eyes of the organisation**

The organisation considers removal of all sorts of harms having an effect on children's mental, physical, emotional and intellectual well being under its purview of children's protection.

## **What is child abuse in eyes of the organisation**

All sort of exploitation with the children is child abuse under organisation's purview of child abuse.

### **Programmatic intervention**

**1. CHILDLINE:** A joint venture of Ministry of Women and Child, Government of India and Childline India Foundation (CIF), Mumbai to take care of the children in need and distress through a 24 hours toll free helpline and call centre

**2. Community based rehabilitation:**

**3. Hope, the ability:**

**4. Shelter and care homes**

**5. Udaan:** An annual event in collaboration with the Catholic Diocese of Sagar dedicated to the special children on the occasion of World Disability Day.

### **The roadmap**

1. Voice against child/human trafficking.
2. Shelter home for children in need/distress

### **Scope of the policy**

The policy is applicable to the following groups:

1. Management members.
2. Staff and Volunteers.
3. Network partners.
4. Focus community.

5. Visitors.

6. Any other stake holder.

### **Application of the Child Protection Policy**

All stake holders named under scope of the protection policy:

1. Will always respect the UNCRC.
2. Will cooperate in the effective implementation of the policy of the organization.
3. Will treat all children with grace and dignity. This will be applicable in terms of language, dress, behavior and attitude.
4. Will report the case of child abuse to concerned authority.
5. Will come forward to raise a voice against child abuse/exploitation.
6. Will cooperate with the cause of creation of a child-friendly environment.
7. Will provide the children with all sorts of possibly safety during transit/rehabilitation/repatriation.
8. Will not misuse the information concerning children coming to the organization.
9. Will always take permission of children/their guardians before engaging them in any activity of the organization.
10. Will always take permission of children/their guardians before taking/recording any information from them/their image/photographs/views.

### **Declaration**

The organization will take every possible measure to protect the children from any sort of abuse/exploitation and ensure that the child protection policy is implemented effectively and respected by all the named groups.