

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **RATIONALE**

This Child Protection Policy is especially created in the context of the range of activities that Red Dot Foundation conducts across the country. The interpretation of any alleged incident of violation of a child's right to protection, in so far as it contextually applies to Red Dot Foundation, and any recommendations of corrective and/or punitive actions, would be based on various relevant definitions and terms provided hereinafter, subject to following of the redressal process prescribed hereunder.

Red Dot Foundation works with partner organisations in spaces that are participatory, inclusive and diverse. The organisation recognises the need to reach out especially to engage with those groups that are marginalised and therefore includes proactive processes which involve girls and children from backward communities. The organisation strongly advocates and provides equal opportunities and does not permit or condone discrimination on any grounds.

This Child Protection Policy is framed in the broader context of the values and vision of the organisation. It is to be read in conjunction with the policy on Gender Inclusion and the Sexual Harassment policy of the organisation.

Red Dot Foundation (RDF) is a not for profit organisation registered under section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.

#### **Objectives:**

**Principally, to uphold the right of each child for protection, in an RDF workshop or campaign thus enabling participation and development of the child.**

#### **Operationally,**

- To ensure that RDF upholds and advances every child's right to be protected against every conceivable form of physical and non-physical abuse.
- To provide for a framework of functional mechanisms, comprising of selected members of RDF and eminent external practitioners in the field of child protection, for the redressal of violation/s of children's right to protection and recommending suitable measure(s), corrective or punitive, against any person, irrespective of the nature of that person's association with RDF.

## Definitions:

1. **Child:** Any person, below the age of 18 years, as evidenced by valid birth certificate or in cases where birth certificate is not available, medically ascertained as such by competent authorities, who has or is undergoing workshops or participating in any campaigns undertaken by RDF anywhere in India. This shall include Community Youth Leaders who are under the age of 18 years.
2. **Volunteer:** Any person, who has chosen out of his/her own volition, to extend help in any programmatic or non-programmatic areas of RDF's operations, without any remuneration whatsoever, and who has signed an application cum undertaking to protect children's best interests at all times during the period of his/her association with RDF, following the due process of volunteer selection as laid down in the Volunteer Engagement Policy of the organisation.
3. **Visitor:** Any person who has signed the prescribed undertaking attached to the CPP and escorted by a staff member or authorized volunteer, visiting any location(s) where children's workshops, trainings and activities are conducted.
4. **Children's Right to Protection:** It includes freedom from all forms of exploitation, abuse, inhuman or degrading treatment and neglect
5. **Protection Issues:** In the context of activities of RDF, an indicative list of child protection issues is as follows:
  - Gender discrimination
  - Religious/Caste discrimination
  - Physical, emotional or psychological harassment
  - Sexual abuse
  - Verbal abuse
  - Corporal Punishment

RDF recognises that the children have the right to be protected both from the violation of their rights by adults, as well as by older/other children.

6. **Sexual Abuse:** A child may be abused in any of the following ways:
  - Sexual intercourse through penile penetration i.e. rape, or use of objects or other parts of body.
  - Exposing a child to pornography and using him/her alone or with other persons for producing pornographic materials.
  - Directly or indirectly touching any part of the body of a child with an object or with a part of body for sexual gratification.
  - Exposing or flashing genital organs or other parts of the body with sexual intent.
  - Deriving voyeuristic pleasure by showing sexual activity or forcing two or more children to have sex with each other.
  - Passing sexually coloured remarks or verbally abusing a child using vulgar and obscene language or actions.

7. **Corporal Punishment:** Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child pain, not with the intention of causing injury but for the purpose of correction.

### **General Framework of Safety Norms For RDF while Dealing with Children:**

- All RDF employees, visitors and volunteers (by whatever designation called or known) must follow the Best Practice Guidelines during sessions. (Refer Annexures D and E)
- Training and Monitoring Officers as well as management staff above this level are authorised to make visits to sessions to ensure that these measures are in place.
- In case of an accident and/or medical emergency during a workshop, campaign or training program, the RDF employee/volunteer must immediately contact the partner organisation host as well as RDF supervisor.
- If the child/ children impacted are girls, a female staff member should manage the matter in the presence of a community coordinator/NGO staff/parent/ guardian. If a female member is not available and public services cannot be accessed due to any reason, and also the situation warrants immediate action to save life or limb of the affected child or likely to be affected due to any emergent cause, then the male member shall administer and extend assistance as far as a private citizen exercises rights under the applicable laws of the land.
- As a rule, it is required that First Aid be administered to a child by the staff of the same gender (not applicable in case of Transgender), unless it is not possible to do so due to any exceptional circumstances. In such cases, the First Aid should be administered in the presence of at least two adult witnesses.
- The relevant facilitator (RDF staff or volunteer) must fill up and submit the accident/incident form (Annexure 3) and submit it to the Program & Outreach Manager within 3 days of the conclusion of the event or incident/accident, whichever is later.
- All incident/accident forms must be submitted to the Administration manager within a fortnight of the incident/accident, duly signed by relevant parties.
- The administration department shall do the necessary follow ups required and maintain necessary records.
- RDF will ensure that children in intervention communities are aware of support systems they can access when they face violations of their rights to protection. The organisation shall especially spread awareness on the availability of the free telephone helpline for children i.e 1098.
- CONSENT - All children can attend the programme with the consent of their parent/ guardian or host organisation like the school. The organisation ensures that consent is recorded on the registration form within the first quarter of the implementation or execution of the programme.
- All existing RDF employees and volunteers who work with children will be taken through a CP workshop once a year which will include a reiteration of the CPP.
- In exceptional cases, if police verification of a potential new joinee is warranted in the opinion of the relevant recruiting authority within the organisation, the same may be obtained, subject to the approval of the HR Manager.
- RDF also ensures that children consent to the use of their photographs or case stories for promotional material for the organisation. The written consent of the child's parent/guardian will be taken prior to the use of these in external communication

material.

- Staff Conduct - It is expected from RDF staff that their conduct towards children is exemplary even outside of the RDF session framework. The management of RDF reserves the right to take any appropriate action that it deems fit against any staffer if it learns about any untoward incident involving a RDF staff member with any child(ren).
- Child Protection outside of RDF sessions - If any untoward incident involving children is reported to have occurred within the family of a child in the RDF programme, the relevant staff members (including the Child Protection/Gender Inclusion Executive and State Head) will extend all possible non-monetary assistance in the form of counselling (if possessing the requisite expertise), or share contact details of relevant counsellors, NGOs, police officials or Child Welfare Committee members.

### **Constitution of the Committee for Child Protection:**

RDF has established a system of internal redressal that engages with issues and complaints of violations of child protection by staff, visitors and volunteers.

The overall responsibility for Child Protection lies with the Executive Committee for Child Protection which comprises of:

- Founder and CEO - Ms. ElsaMarie D'Silva
- Director & COO - Ms. Supreet K Singh
- Director Operations and Partnerships- Ms. Tania Echaporina
- The committee can co-opt other members, including external persons as may be necessary, from time to time on the basis of situational needs.
- The committee has terminal responsibility for all matters related to the protection of children in the RDF programme.
- Each RDF staff shall be responsible to communicate within 3 days of the incident, in writing, to the Executive Committee for Child Protection.
- It shall be the responsibility of Executive committee to look into every instance of CPP violation brought to its notice by following the prescribed process, examining the issues thoroughly and recommending further action, punitive or otherwise, impartially and judiciously.
- The Executive Committee for Child Protection will have the option of inviting any external expert of eminence in the field of child protection to help and guide its approach in dealing with persons where there is no definitive legal relationship with RDF.
- The Executive Committee for Child Protection shall submit an annual report on Child Protection cases with relevant action taken, to the Board.
- On receiving the written complaint, with immediate effect, the concerned staffer would be taken off his/her duties – i.e. disallow the person from interacting with children in RDF programs and workshops until the situation is resolved.

### **Accountability and Process For Staff**

- Each member of staff of RDF is expected to read, understand and adhere to the Best Practice Guidelines and Code of Conduct. (Refer Annexures D, E, F)
- The immediate reporting head shall be responsible to take cognizance of any untoward incident, unbecoming conduct or behaviour, by any person falling within the definition of staff, whether reported to him/her or observed by him/her, and immediately report the same to the relevant Program and Outreach Officer/ Manager Training. If required, this report may be directly submitted to the Executive committee.
- The reporting of an incident of violation of Child Protection is to be done on the Complaint Form attached in Annexure G of this policy document. It is also available by writing to info@safecity.in
- This form must be submitted within 24 hours of the incident coming to the attention of the concerned person.
- If a staff member is approached by a child/ child's guardian/ friend regarding a case of violation of a child's protection rights, the staff member is expected to encourage the person to fill out a complaint form, or to help the person do the same within 24 hours.
- Program and Outreach Officer/ The Manager Training would then take the following steps:
  1. With immediate effect, “bench” the concerned staffer – i.e. disallow the person from interacting with children in RDF programs and workshops until the situation is resolved.
  2. Communicate the case to the Executive Committee for Child Protection within 24 hours. The Executive Committee for Child Protection which would then:
    - Conduct a detailed inquiry of the complaint by talking to staff present at the site of the alleged violation (within a week of the complaint coming to its attention)
    - Talk to the concerned child in an atmosphere where the child does not feel intimidated or constrained. The parents of the child should also be consulted to find out if there have been any unusual changes in the behaviour of the child at home, as a possible result of the incident.
    - Talk selectively to a few other children in the same group/session, who are, in his/her opinion, capable of expressing themselves without fear
    - Recommend corrective/ punitive action (within a week of the complaint coming to its attention)
    - Ensure that the recommended action is taken (within two weeks of the complaint coming to its attention)
    - The Executive Committee for Child Protection shall be at complete liberty, if it so desires, to order another time bound inquiry by any other person , to eliminate possibilities of any bias or prejudice in the findings of the original inquiry. This must be done within two weeks of the matter coming to its attention.
- Following discussions in Executive Committee for Child Protection, a show cause notice shall be issued to the alleged wrongdoer, asking him/her to show causes why appropriate action should not be taken against him/her.
- After due deliberations, Executive Committee for Child Protection shall recommend any

corrective and/or punitive action to be taken against the alleged violator. The Executive Committee shall also be responsible to ensure that the action recommended is implemented.

- It shall be mandatory for the Executive Committee for Child Protection to give adequate opportunity to the alleged wrongdoer to defend him/herself, and for this purpose, s/he should be given a choice of either defending him/herself through personal appearance or through written submission.
- The decision of the Executive Committee for Child Protection as relevant will be communicated to the impacted/aggrieved person.
- All cases must be documented systematically and signed by all relevant persons i.e. the reporting person, the Executive Committee for Child Protection head, relevant HR personnel.
- Consolidations of all cases and their resolutions will be prepared by the Executive Committee for Child Protection annually and shared with the board.

### **Accountability and Processes for Visitors and Volunteers:**

Each volunteer and visitor at RDF is expected to read, understand and adhere to the Best Practice Guidelines and the Code of Conduct. (Refer Annexures C and D)

- The immediate reporting Head, shall be responsible to take cognizance of any untoward incident, unbecoming conduct or behavior, by any person falling within the definitions of volunteers or visitor, whether reported to him/her or observed by him/her.
- The reporting head shall inform the Executive Committee for Child Protection within 24 hours of the incident coming to his/her attention.
- The volunteer/ visitor will immediately be disallowed from RDF programme locations by the Executive Committee for Child Protection. The Executive Committee for Child Protection will inform the person that an internal RDF committee will conduct an inquiry into the incident and take further action as deemed necessary.
- The same process as prescribed in Section G of this CPP will be followed.
- The Executive Committee for Child Protection will inquire the matter, prepare a report and may register a complaint with the appropriate legal body as necessary. The aggrieved party will be informed regarding the action taken by the organisation.

### **Proactive Prevention**

The following responsibilities rest with the HR department of the organisation.

- The orientation and induction programme of every new employee at every location must contain mandatory disclosure of the CPP and the mechanisms thereof.
- Each employee, volunteer or visitor to the organisation must sign the CPP prior to assuming responsibilities/ interacting with children at RDF.

## **Audit and Review**

The Red Dot Foundation Protection Policy will be reviewed periodically. Once in each two year span the organisation will do a review of the organization from a Child Protection lens to ensure adherence to norms laid down in the policy.

ElsaMarie D'Silva  
Founder and CEO  
Mumbai  
7<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## **Concluding Remarks**

Red Dot Foundation reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the full participation of children by providing them with safe spaces for learning. It also commits to fostering strong and healthy relationships between facilitators and learners, supported by strict action against anyone who exploits this relationship in any way. In this manner, the organisation reinforces its pledge to help each child in its programme develop a greater degree of control and choice in his/her life, thus contributing to a nurturing journey from childhood to livelihood.

While the actual efficacy of the CPP will be determined only over a period of time, it is expected that it will serve its purpose of being a significant step in protecting the best interests of children.

## ANNEXURES

### **A. Child Protection Declaration for Employees and Volunteers**

It is mandatory for all Employees, Volunteers and Visitors at Red Dot Foundation, to sign this declaration and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy of Red Dot Foundation. I, \_\_\_\_\_ (write name), hereby declare that I have read the Child Protection Policy of Red Dot Foundation, and understand its contents, spirit and purpose. I agree to abide unconditionally to the said policy, and will ensure that my conduct at all times ensures the protection of children as laid down in the policy.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship with Red Dot Foundation: (Tick one) Employee/ Volunteer / Visitor

### **B. Child Protection Policy for Visitors**

#### **Why are we asking you to read and sign this?**

Red Dot Foundation is a non-profit organization working with children across some of India's poorest neighbourhoods. Ensuring child safety at all times is at the core of our work. Red Dot Foundation gives children an opportunity to learn about sexual harassment and way to protect themselves. We cannot do this without making sure that the surroundings are safe and that adults (and the children themselves) do not violate any of the codes of dignity and protection.

The Red Dot Foundation Policy is based on the principles of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child, - a declaration India signed in November 1999. Signing this makes India answerable to its children in terms of making sure every child is protected from abuse.

“States Parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.”(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 19)

We would request you to adhere to the Code of Conduct while participating on the programme.



## **C. Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Visitors**

The principle behind this code of conduct is that staff and visitors should avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.

Visitors must never

- hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children
- develop physical/sexual relationships with children
- develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse
- use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive
- behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
- have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised
- sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves
- condone, or participate in, behaviour of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list.

It is important for all in contact with children to:

- be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these
- plan and organise the work and the workplace so as to minimise risks
- as far as possible, be visible in working with children
- ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed
- ensure that a sense of accountability exists between adults – staff and visitors so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
- talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns
- empower children - discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem
- not smoke or use any other form of illegal substances (drugs)
- not litter the area where sessions are being conducted – the play spaces Red Dot Foundation creates are safe spaces that should not pose any germ threats
- be aware that children are watching and learning from you – and may emulate behavior you display. For example, a friendly punch among adults may look different to a child with whom we are trying to share the message of non-violence

It is inappropriate to:

- spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
- take children to your home, especially where they will be alone with you.
- take any photographs of the children during or after the session.

## **D. Red Dot Foundation Best Practice Guidelines for Volunteers and Visitors**

### **DO**

- Be alert and support the Red Dot Foundation team to protect the children from any physical, emotional or sexual injury or harm.
- Be a good role model – do not smoke, drink alcohol, take drugs, consume paan/ ghutka / misri in the presence of the children.
- Respect the surroundings – littering, spitting, defacing plants and the physical environment in any way is against the Red Dot Foundation ethic.
- Be warm, friendly and caring toward the children.
- Inform the activity facilitator in advance if you want to provide children with snacks or refreshments.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacities of children. Avoid excessive training or competition and pushing them against their will.
- Adhere to the time schedules.
- Wear clothing and shoes that are appropriate for sports and adventure activities. Avoid tight clothing, revealing clothes and high heeled shoes.
- Treat all children equally with respect and dignity.
- Be sensitive to the issues of children who are especially vulnerable in given contexts. For instance, the girl child, children with disabilities, children from backward socioeconomic groups etc.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with the children.

### **DO NOT**

- Carry any separate snacks or refreshments for yourself during sessions unless advised by a Doctor.
- Take photographs of the children during the session without prior permission.
- Counsel children on a one on one basis unless you are authorised by Red Dot Foundation to do so.
- Conduct any games/ sports activities with the children unless Red Dot Foundation authorises you to do so.
- Make promises you cannot keep.
- Give your phone numbers, email address or postal address to the children. Do not take personal numbers, address of the children. Your contact point with the children is Red Dot Foundation.
- Use foul language, inappropriate words, tease, ridicule or humiliate children.
- Bully or harass any child.

- Punish children. Always report problems and issues to the Red Dot Foundation staff.

## **AVOID**

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. Where unavoidable (e.g. the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital) ensure that action is taken only with the full knowledge and consent of person in charge).

Otherwise, avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking children to or dropping them off, an event.

## **NEVER**

Under no circumstances, does Red Dot Foundation sanction the following:

- Rough physical or sexually provocative games.
- Sharing a room with a child.
- Any form of inappropriate touching.
- The use of inappropriate language.
- Sexually suggestive comments made to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Doing things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Inviting or allowing children to stay with you at your home.

## **E. Red Dot Foundation Best Practice Guidelines for Staff**

The safety and security of children is the number one priority and responsibility of every Red Dot Foundation staff member who engages directly with children. Red Dot Foundation has created a set of Best Practice Guidelines that help all staff to ensure that children participate in a safe, joyful environment that ensures maximum learning.

These guidelines are supported by a strict Code of Conduct that each staff member of the organisation is required to adhere to.

### **Best Practice Guidelines:**

#### **Dos:**

- Be alert to situations and objects that can potentially harm, risk or hurt the children.
- Be a good role model – do not smoke, drink alcohol, take drugs, consume paan/ ghutka / misri in the company of the children; do not deface the surroundings in any way. Red Dot Foundation strictly prohibits spitting, littering and destruction of public property in any way.
- Adhere to the time schedules.
- Always work in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.

- Be warm, friendly and caring toward the children.
- Share feedback that is enthusiastic and constructive.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacities of children. Avoid excessive training or competition and pushing them against their will.
- Treat all children equally, with respect and dignity.
- Be sensitive to the issues of children who are especially vulnerable in given contexts. For instance, the girl child, children with disabilities, children from backward socioeconomic groups etc.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with the children.
  - a. Do not sleep in close proximity to the children.
  - b. Do not enter a bathroom or toilet being used by the children.

#### **Do Nots:**

- Do not use foul language, inappropriate words, tease, ridicule or humiliate children.
- Do not bully or harass the child.
- Do not counsel children on a one on one basis unless you are authorised by Red Dot Foundation to do so.
- Do not ever punish children.
- Do not make any promises you cannot keep.
- Do not give your phone numbers, address to the children.
- Do not take personal numbers, address of the children. Your contact point with the children is Red Dot Foundation only.
- Do not carry any separate snacks or refreshments for yourself while on Red Dot Foundation activities.
- Do not take photographs of the children during the session without prior permission from the child's guardian.
- Do not conduct any additional games, sports activities with the children unless Red Dot Foundation authorises you to do so.

#### **AVOID**

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. Where unavoidable (e.g. the child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital) ensure that action is taken only with the full knowledge and consent of person in charge).

Otherwise, avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Taking children to or dropping them off, an event.

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- The use of inappropriate language.
- Sexually suggestive comments made to a child, even in fun.

- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Doing things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Inviting or allowing children to stay with you at your home.

### ***F.* Code of Conduct For Red Dot Foundation Staff, Volunteers and Visitors**

Red Dot Foundation recognizes the role that each person of the Red Dot Foundation programme, including staff, volunteers and visitors, plays in the lives of children. It therefore requires each person to recognize his/her responsibility in:

- Ensuring that the welfare and safety of the children is paramount.
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of every child and treating everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- Acting as a good role model and maintaining the highest standards of personal conduct.
- Following the good practice guidelines for volunteers and visitors as stated in the Child Protection Policy to ensure physical, emotional and sexual safety of the children.

## G. Complaint Form

Every instance of violation of a child's Right to Protection must be registered in writing and brought to the attention of the Executive Committee. To file a formal complaint, please fill out this form completely in writing and submit it to any person on the Committee. If you need help completing the form, or want to discuss the issue before completing the complaint form, you can approach any person in the Committee or any person you trust within or outside the organisation.

### PART I: Person(s) Submitting the Complaint

Name of the Person completing this form \_\_\_\_\_

Tick any one of the following:

I am the child making the complaint

I am the child's parent/guardian

I am a Red Dot Foundation staff member Other

- Name of the Complainant:
- Address of the Complainant:
- Telephone number of the Complainant: \_\_\_\_\_
- If you would like to have your parent(s), guardian(s), or another person attend a meeting with the Committee please provide the following information:

Name of the person/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Part II: Complaint

Please describe the situation that has caused you to complain

Date/ Time Period of the Incident:

Location of the Incident:

Description of the Incident:

Person/s who witnessed the Incident:

Please share with us how this incident has affected you so that we can know best how we can be of help to you.

1. Please describe any efforts you have made to resolve your complaint informally and the responses to your efforts.

Date:

With whom did you share your experience?

Describe the conversation and the response you received.

2. (OPTIONAL) Please describe the outcome or remedy you seek for this complaint.

Signature of Person Submitting Report \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of member, Executive Committee for Child Protection/ Gender Inclusion:

Date Filed \_\_\_\_\_

**Elsa D'silva**  
**Founder and CEO**  
**7th August 2020**