

Child Protection Policy

SAATHII

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Table of Content

Sl. No.	Content	Page No.
1	SAATHII's approach towards "child protection"	3
2	Definitions	3
3	Accountability and Procedures for staff	4
4	Audit and Review	6
Annexures		
A	Child Protection Declaration for employees, consultants and volunteers	7
B	Code of Conduct	8
C	SAATHII's good practice guidelines	10
D	Complaint Form	12

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHII)

1. SAATHII's Approach to Child Protection:

SAATHII, a non-profit organization registered in 2002, works towards universal access to healthcare, justice, and social welfare for socio-economically marginalized women and children, communities impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and groups marginalized on account of their sexuality and/or gender identity in India. Currently SAATHII operates through 12 state offices overseeing operations in 400+ districts across the 28 states and 9 UTs of India.

This Child Protection Policy is especially adopted in the context of the range of activities wide spread across the country are being dealt by SAATHII . The interpretation of any alleged incident of violation of a child's right to protection and mainly any form of abuse to children, in so far as it contextually applies to SAATHII, and any recommendations of corrective and/or punitive actions, would be based on various relevant definitions provided hereinafter, subject to following the redressal process prescribed hereunder.

SAATHII's work and service spaces are participatory, inclusive and diverse. The organization recognizes the need to reach out, especially to engage with those groups that are marginalized and therefore includes proactive processes, which involve children and women. The organization strongly advocates 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 organization. The Child protection policy and practices aim to prevent and end sexual exploitation and sexual abuse by SAATHII staff, off-roll staff such as Volunteers / Internship, Consultant and ensure that allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) are responded to in a timely and appropriate manner.

2. Definitions:

Child: Any person either male, female or gender non-conforming, below the age of 18 years, as evidenced by relevant birth certificate or in cases where a birth certificate is not available, as ascertained by competent authorities.

SAATHII Staff: Any person either male, female or transgender (gender non-conforming) employed on the payroll of SAATHII including consultants.

Volunteer: Any person, who has chosen out of his/her own volition, to extend help in any programmatic or non-programmatic operative areas of SAATHII's, without any remuneration whatsoever, and who has signed a declaration to protect children's best interests at all times during the period of his/her association with SAATHII, following the due process of volunteer selection.

Sexual exploitation: Sexual exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation or another.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Victim: A person who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused in any manner. For the purposes of this policy, a victim is a person who is, or has been, sexually assaulted, exploited or abused in any manner by employees, consultants or volunteers associated with SAATHII.

Children's right to protection: Includes freedom from all forms of exploitation, abuse, inhuman or degrading treatment and neglect.

3. Accountability and Procedures for Staff, Consultants and Volunteers:

Every member who is engaged with SAATHII as an employee, consultant or volunteer hereafter termed as Personnel are required to read and strictly adhere to the Code of Conduct and Good Practice Guidelines presented in Annexure B and C.

All Personnel shall be responsible to take cognizance of any untoward incident, unethical conduct or behavior by any Personnel engaged with SAATHII, whether reported to him/her or observed by him/her. If required, this report may be directly submitted to either Individual MC member or group...

The reporting of an incident of violation of Child Protection shall be incorporated in the prescribed Complaint Form attached in Annexure D of this policy document. This form must be submitted preferably within 24 hours of the incident coming to the attention of the concerned personnel. If a staff member is approached by the victim child/child's guardian or any other persons regarding a case of violation of a child's protection rights, the staff member is expected to encourage the person to fill

a complaint form, or to help the person do the same within 24 hours.

Once the complaint is received, the concerned Project Director/Office Director would initiate the following steps:

- With immediate effect, the “Accused” shall be disallowed from interacting with the victim child in SAATHII spaces until the situation is resolved.
- Report the case to the Child Protection Committee (CPC) within 24 hours. The CPC would then:
 - Conduct a detailed preliminary inquiry on the basis of the complaint by interrogating the staff present at the site of the alleged violation, within a week of the complaint coming to its attention.
 - A conducive atmosphere shall be created where the child does not feel intimidated or constrained while conducting inquiry or discussion with the victim child.
 - Inquire selectively to other a few children, who are present during the incident and well aware of the situation and also capable of expressing themselves without fear.
 - Recommend the course corrective/punitive action (within a week time on receipt of the complaint).
 - Ensure that the recommended action is taken and implemented (within two weeks of the complaint reported to the CPC).
 - In the Meanwhile, immediately on receipt of complaints the CPC shall serve , a ‘show cause’ notice to the alleged Personnel asking him/her/them to show causes why an appropriate action should not be taken against him/her/them. The time for submission of explanation by the alleged personnel shall be preferably within 5 days from the date of receipt of show cause.
 - After detailed interrogation, if there is any prima-facie evidence for proving the allegation, the CPC can recommend for any corrective and/or punitive action to be taken against the alleged violator to the MC for approval. The MC shall approve the recommendation the reasonable time of 1 or 2 days. The CPC shall also be responsible to ensure that the line of action approved by the MC is implemented.

- It shall be a mandatory on part of the CPC to provide adequate opportunity to the alleged wrongdoer to defend himself/herself/themselves, and for this purpose, such persons, should be given a choice of either defending themselves through personal appearance or through written explanation .
- If warrants or valid grounds under which extension of time limit if any sought by the alleged wrongdoer such request can be scrutinized by the CPC and recommend to MC for approval.
- The decision of the CPC, if relevant, shall be communicated to the impacted/aggrieved person.
- In All cases, the entire process of the inquiry must be documented systematically and signed by CPC.
- If the offence is evidently established or proved that a crime has been committed and in that case, the CPC shall, with the approval of MC, report to the appropriate law enforcement Authorities (e.g. the police) . Even after having lodge the complaint with the law enforcement authorities (ie. Policies), the CPC shall give specific instructions has to whether any departmental action within SAATHII can be postponed or specify any other departmental action needs to be initiated (such as suspension, Termination etc.,).

4. Audit and Review:

SAATHII's Child Protection Policy will be reviewed every three years or as revised from time to time if any changes required in the review period.

ANNEXURES

Annexure A.-Child Protection Declaration for Employees, Consultants and Volunteers:

(It is mandatory for all Employees, Consultants and Volunteers at SAATHII, to sign this declaration and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy of the organization).

I, _____ (write name), hereby solemnly declare that I have read the Child Protection Policy of SAATHII, and understand the contents, spirit and purpose of the policy. I agree to abide unconditionally to the said policy, and will ensure that my approach and conduct at all times ensures the protection of children as laid down in the policy.

Signature of the decalrant : _____

Relationship with SAATHII: (Tick the relevant one) Employee/
Consultant/Volunteer

Date: _____

Importance for reading the policy and signing the declaration:

SAATHII is a non-profit organization working among women and children across the country and ensuring child safety at all times is at the core of our work.

SAATHII's Child Protection Policy is based on the principles of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child – India signed the declaration in November 1999. By signing the declaration, which makes India is answerable in terms of making sure every child is protected from any form of 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)

It is a humble request to all the personnel of SAATHII to to adhere to the Code of Conduct while participating in the programmes.

Annexure B: Code Of Conduct

A. SAATHII requires each person engaged in its activities and services to recognize his/her/their responsibility in:

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

B. The principle behind this code of conduct is aiming at the staff, consultant and volunteers should avoid indulging in any actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour. The staff, consultants and volunteers should strictly ensure the followings:

1. Not to hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children
2. Should be avoided physical/sexual relationships with children.
3. Don't develop relationships with children that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
4. Avoid act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse
5. The usage of language, making suggestions or offering advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive, shall be avoided.
6. Any form of Behavior physically in a manner, which is inappropriate or sexually provocative shall be prohibited.
7. In the event of overnight stay, do not stay with a child/children with whom their working in a place which is unsupervised.
12. Do not sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working.

13. Never, Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.

14. It shall not be encourage any form of behavior of children, which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.

15. Never act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.

16. Avoid any form of discrimination, differential/partial treatment, or favour to particular child/children by excluding others .

It is important for all in contact with children to: 17. Be aware of situations, and should adopt strategy to overcome or manage any risk if arises.

18. To minimize the risks, a proper planning should be adopted in organizing work and the workplace. .

19. As far as possible be visible in working with children.

20. Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.

21. Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between adults – staff and visitors so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged.

22. Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.

23. Empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.

24. Don't smoke or use any form of illegal substances (drugs) either illegal or hazardous to health.

25. Keep the place/ area where the activities of the SAATHII' are conducted neat tidy and clean. .

26. Be aware that children are watching and learning from you – and may emulate behaviour 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: 27. Spend excessive time alone with children away from others.

Annexure C -Good Practicing Guidelines for Staff, Consultants and Volunteers:

The safety and security of children is the top most priority and responsibility of every SAATHII staff member who is engaged directly with the children. SAATHII has created a set of Good Practice Guidelines that helps all staff to ensure that children participate in a safe, joyful environment that assures maximum learning. A strict Code of Conduct that each staff member of the organisation is required to adhere and supports these guidelines.

DO's:

1. Be alert to situations and objects that can potentially harm, risk or hurt the children.
2. Be a good role model – do not smoke, drink alcohol, take drugs, consume paan/ghutka/misrin in the company of the children; do not deface the surroundings in any way.
3. SAATHII strictly prohibits spitting, littering and destruction of public property in any way.
4. Adhere to the time schedules.
5. Always work in an open environment, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
6. Be warm, friendly and caring towards the children.
7. Share feedback that is enthusiastic and constructive.
8. Recognize the developmental needs and capacities of children. Avoid excessive training or competition and pushing them against their will.
9. Treat all children equally with respect and dignity.
10. Be sensitive to the issues of children who are especially vulnerable in the given contexts. For instance, the female child, children with disabilities, children from backward socioeconomic groups etc.
11. Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with the children.
 - i. Do not sleep in close proximity to the children.
 - ii. Do not enter a bathroom or toilet being used by the children.

DONT's:

1. Use foul language, inappropriate words, tease, ridicule or humiliate children.
2. Bully or harass children
3. Counsel children on a one on one basis unless you are authorized by SAATHII to do so.

4. Ever punish children.
5. Make any promises you cannot keep.
6. Give your phone numbers and addresses to the children.
7. Take personal numbers and addresses of the children unless you are authorized by SAATHII to do so.
8. Carry any separate snacks or refreshments for yourself while on SAATHII activities.
9. Take photographs of the children without prior permission from the Director or the concerned reporting authority.

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:

1. Spending excessive amount of time alone with children away from others.

NEVER

SAATHII never sanctions the following under any circumstances: :

1. Rough physical or sexually provocative games.
2. Sharing a room with a child. In case there are no parents/community staff/teachers accompanying the children, the Director must designate a staff member to stay in the dorm/room during the night where the children are staying. It is recommended that s/he/they depute at least two staff for safety reasons. Male staff must be allotted to the boys' group and female staff to the girls' group. The staff member needs to accompany the children to the toilets during the night if they are not in the same premises.
3. Any form of inappropriate touching.
4. The use of inappropriate language.
5. Sexually suggestive comments made to a child, even in fun.
6. Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
7. Doing things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
8. Inviting or allowing children to stay with you at your home.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list.

Annexure D. 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 CPC. To file a formal complaint, please fill this form and submit first to the Project Director/Office Director/Incharge, who in turn would submit it to any person on the CPC.

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 SAATHII 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 number: _____

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 _____

Please describe any efforts you have made to resolve your complaint informally and the responses to your efforts: _____

With whom did you share your experience? _____

Describe the conversation and the response you received: _____

(OPTIONAL) Please describe the outcome or remedy you seek for this complaint: _____

Signature of person submitting the Complaint : _____

Signature of member, CPC for Child Protection: _____

Date and Place filed: _____