

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### Introduction

Rural Education & Welfare Society (**REWS**) is a non-profit non-governmental organization registered in 1990 under the Society Registration Act, 1860 of India. The Head Office is located in Mahavir Enclave in South-West Delhi.

To work towards empowerment of underprivileged Society through education provision of healthcare facilities and sustainable livelihood.

Accordingly, REWS works for underprivileged people living in slums, urban and rural areas with rights-based approach. It works for children's right and women empowerment -facilitating their access to education, development; socio-economic empowerment and gender equality. Program areas focuses on Education (remedial and mainstreaming to formal schooling), health and hygiene (education and awareness, health check-up and services); Targeted Intervention on HIV/ AIDS; Vocational Training and facilitating suitable employment / self-employment; Awareness and Advocacy programs; Gender issues and women's social and economic empowerment. *A special program on Road Safety education is new vertical under its program portfolio.*

As REWS is sensitive to the children's protection who are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation; it accords top priority to protection and safety of children- their right; following the principles laid down in UN Charter on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

REWS therefore has formulated a Child Protection Policy (CPP) which is strictly followed as safeguard to children against possible abuse and exploitation within the organization, outside in community; by Partners and sponsors; and others who may come in contact with children from time to time during different activities.

This Policy is in accordance with core values of the NGO and also serves as advocacy to create (increase) awareness on child protection.

### **Terminologies**

1. Any person under the age of 18 years is a child.
2. All forms of physical harm, ill treatment (negligent treatment), sexual abuse commercial exploitation of a child constitute Child Abuse. It may be a deliberate act or being a passive witness to the act instead of preventing the abuse.
3. Child Protection Policy strives to safeguard children from any harm deliberate or otherwise and lays responsibilities, measures and activities proposed to be undertaken.

- **Who all the Policy is applicable to?**

The CPP covers and applies to everyone associated with REWS.

- All Staff Members and Resource Persons based in Head Office, Project offices in field areas or elsewhere;
- Members of Board and Others such as Corporate and community volunteers, contractors and others who may come into contact with the children;
- Guests/Visitors from donor organizations, researchers, media etc. who may come into contact with the children

- **Implementation guidelines**

CPP1. Awareness program

1. Organize regular awareness program on Child Rights to Staff, Board Members, Volunteers, community leaders, community volunteers
2. Impart special training to Project Staff on child protection

CPP2. Program intervention

1. Need-based Program development with rights-based approach- embedded with sensitization and empowerment of children, giving them space and encouraging them to speak out;
2. Integrating advocacy in Community as part of all projects;
3. Mobilizing parents and sensitizing them and inculcating responsibility for protection of children from abuse and prevention of exploitation.

CPP3. Compliance mechanism

1. Recruitment of staff, in general, after background verification; their past experience, and interest in education programs and teaching children as important parameters for recruiting suitably qualified candidates- full time or part time. Similar criteria for appointing teachers, Community volunteers, researchers, consultants etc. who must be informed about CPP.
2. A Child Protection Committee (CPC) is established within the organization consisting of Program Manager, Officer-IEC, parents (Community Members) and youths (participants under vocational training). CPC will function under overall supervision of the Secretary of the organization- one of them designated as Nodal officer.
3. Suitably sensitize project staff about child protection, capacitating them to effectively deal with any undesirable acts - kind of exploitations and abuse and promote rights of children.

4. Monitor staff's performance and conduct to ensure the same is in sync with mission and vision of REWS and also culturally sensitive. Children must not be employed as domestic worker by staff and in general, they must be discouraged from labour working as domestic servant or any other job.
5. No one will spend time alone with a child, nor touch private parts of the body or make child feel insecure- staff, volunteers, consultants, visitors or anyone else connected with REWS
6. Children should be given Voice - children must be encouraged to voice their concerns and problems. All staff and whoever comes into contact with children must ensure it. However, interactions should be friendly and decent. Necessary guidance may be given, if need be.

#### CPP 4. Complaints/ Allegations handling

1. All sorts of complain about incident of misbehavior with child (abuse) under any outreach program shall be reported to the Child Protection Committee constituted by REWS. CPC will therefore, first of all, facilitate medical check-up and needed assistance to the victim and thereafter carry out a thorough unbiased investigation. If need be, First Information Report (FIR) is filed and solicit help from local police for appropriate legal formalities and actions.
2. If need be, moral support to parents and the victimized child shall be extended by CPC members who will also help to file the First Information Report (FIR) at the local police station. Secretary of REWS should be immediately informed about the abuse case by CPC who will then initiate appropriate legal recourse - with due sensitivity and confidentiality.
3. In case the alleged guilty person a staff member or any other person connected with REWS, the matter shall be reported to the Nodal Officer of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) constituted. The alleged person shall be put under suspension with immediate effect, initiate appropriate investigations in house. If need be, investigation may be carried out through official machineries. The accused person to be reinstated only after being found innocent by investigations done.
4. Due personal care along with professional, effective counseling is very critical and must be provided to the child who gets psychologically wounded, feel traumatic as such experience leaves permanent scar on mind. Children thereafter are often faced with conflicting emotions- confusion, fear, anger, shame, depression- resultantly into lack of confidence, low self-esteem. Such upheaval may have serious repercussions later in life.
5. In case of sponsorship of child's education. It must be ensured that no inappropriate requests are encouraged from the sponsor and entertained both at organization's level and the same in correspondences from sponsor to the sponsored child.

6. REWS shall encourage visits by donors and also sponsors of child education to projects on receiving prior permission. If requested, Sponsor may be facilitated visit to sponsored child's home accompanied by staff member of REWS and only with the consent of the family. However, it shall be always insisted that sponsor meet the child in Office.

#### CPR-5 Policy issues

1. Rural Welfare and Education Society (REWS) is committed to keep information about children confidential. Child abuse incidents to be kept as confidential and handled with care and concern.
2. REWS shall ensure that pictures/captions in all literature, documents and IEC materials on children are not offensive, commercializing poverty and miseries.
3. It endeavors to work towards bringing relevant changes in public policy that will strengthen Child Rights and protection to children at different levels of government and child rights forums of NGO.
4. It will be networking and collaborate with likeminded individuals and institutions for sharing knowledge and experiences (best practices); and support advocacy campaigns on child protection, development and promote children's participation.
5. Ensure Information about any such incident is shared with people only if it is deemed necessary by Child Protection monitoring group and ensure names and identities are not disclosed outside or to the media.
6. Major Contractors & Vendors shall be made aware of Child Protection Policy and ensure their agreement and adherence to it.

Ms. Nainu Singh  
Secretary, Rural Development and Welfare Society (REWS)