



**Ekta Shakti Foundation**  
To make the world better

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

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## BACKGROUND

Underpinning the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Ekta Shakti Foundation (ESF) is committed to promoting the rights of children including their right to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation. Ekta Shakti Foundation takes active measures to ensure that children's right to protection are fully realized.

For us to imbibe and promote Child Protection Policy, we must first understand the few but nonetheless, quintessential terminologies related to this subject:

**Child:** For the purposes of this policy, a "child" is defined as anyone under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

**Abuse:** Somebody may abuse or neglect a child either directly by inflicting harm, or indirectly, by failing to act to prevent harm to children in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them; or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. There are various types of child abuse – physical, emotional, sexual, neglect and bullying.

**Child Protection:** In the current context, it applies particularly to the duty of organisations - and individuals associated with those organisations - towards children in their care. 'Child Protection' is a term used by many organisations for the work and programmes they undertake in the community or broader social environment. This may lead to confusion when discussing the child protection responsibilities and issues involved in managing an organisation. This policy is about organisational child protection – i.e. building a 'child-safe organisation.'

**Direct Contact with Children:** Being in the physical presence of a child or children in the context of the organisation's work, whether contact is occasional or regular, short or long term. This could involve project/site visits and attending conferences at which children are also present (this list of examples is not exhaustive).

**Indirect Contact with Children:** Examples include having access to information on children in the context of the organisation's work, such as children's names, locations (addresses of individuals or projects), photographs and case studies; providing funding for organisations that work 'directly' with children.

Ekta Shakti Foundation believes in:

- Promoting open lines of communication, both internally and externally, within and between the organisation and individuals, to improve awareness and implementation of child protection policies and practices
- Creating a framework to deal transparently, consistently and fairly with allegations concerning abuse

The Child Protection Policy of Ekta Shakti Foundation demonstrates our commitment to safeguarding children from harm and makes clear to all in the organisation and who come into contact with us what is required in relation to the protection of children, and that child abuse in any form is unacceptable to Ekta Shakti Foundation.

Everyone associated with Ekta Shakti foundation are bound to the commitment not only to abide by, but also to understand and promote the policies, guidelines, principles and practice of child protection in the context of child rights. It is crucial that all staff, volunteers, interns, short term consultants, and representatives uphold the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour while associated with Ekta Shakti Foundation.

Interns, short term consultants, and volunteers are bound to the commitment not only to abide by; but also to promote the policies, guidelines, principles and practice of children's protection in the context of child rights. It is crucial that the interns and volunteers uphold the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour whilst associated with Ekta Shakti Foundation.

Because interns and volunteers are often employed temporarily, managers of interns and volunteers must stress the importance of child protection issues during initial induction training. A copy of Ekta Shakti Foundation's Protection Policy will be included in the Induction Pack which will be presented to every intern, volunteer and short term consultant. Each will be informed of the policy, and asked to sign a 'Self-Declaration Form' (Annexure –A).

#### **CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES**

1. All Ekta Shakti Foundation Staff will:

- Read, understand and accept compliance with ESF's Child Protection Policy and guidelines as part of the terms and conditions. This process will include signing the appropriate Statement of Commitment as a condition of association.
- Sign a self-declaration stating any criminal convictions, including those considered 'spent', and declaring any previous investigations or allegations made against them with respect to child protection issues (Annexure A).

There will be opportunities within ESF to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding to safeguard children. The opportunities shall include an induction process for all staff, consultants, interns and volunteers in familiarisation with the Child Protection Policy and its procedures; opportunities to learn about the nature of abuse, the effects of abuse and how to recognise and respond to concerns about child abuse; information and support on who to contact in the event of any concerns about child protection issues.

New staff, consultants, interns and volunteers should receive 'child protection training' as soon as possible (ideally within 3 months) of taking up their position.

Existing staff, consultants, interns, and volunteers should receive 'child protection training' within a designated time period (ideally within 3 months) of the Child Protection Policy coming into force. Staff, consultants, interns, and volunteers who have access to information about children such as personal contact information, including their address, specific cases or incidents, or any other details of a child's personal life must not disclose the information to any third party.

ESF staff, interns, volunteers and short-term consultants will reflect ESF's core principles and values, upholding a professional approach towards child protection issues and demonstrating awareness on matters of abuse. All ESF staff and interns, volunteers, and consultants will implement child protection. A person who is responsible for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy will be appointed. This role will reflect the nature and structure of the organisation and the person shall have sufficient seniority and support to carry out the role. The responsibilities of the designated person will include:

- Promoting awareness and implementation of the policy throughout the organisation
- Monitoring implementation of the policy and reporting on developments at each Ekta Shakti Foundation meeting
- The development of 'child protection' training resources as required
- Maintaining knowledge of best practices and statutory requirements

Informed consent/the permission of the child, child's parents/guardian must be taken in order to use the image for publicity, fundraising, awareness-raising or other purpose (which should be made clear to the consent-giver).

Individuals or organisations requesting the use of ESF resources such as photographs should be required to sign an agreement with ESF. The agreement could include a statement that any use of such materials for purposes other than what is agreed upon could subject the borrowing individual or organisation to legal action. Furthermore, failure to adhere to the agreed use of the material will result in the immediate termination of the organisation's permission to use the subject materials and/or require immediate return of all materials (including any copies made) provided by ESF.

Updating the Policy: The document will be updated whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation, to guarantee the best available policies for child protection. Our vision is to build a 'child safe organisation'. We will work towards this by developing and implementing policies and procedures, to the best of our ability, to ensure the respect and wellbeing of children who come into contact with Ekta Shakti Foundation.

Ramifications of Misconduct: If an allegation of a violation of the policies, guidelines, principles or practice of child protection is made concerning a named individual from a verifiable source against any staff, consultant, intern or volunteer, they may be suspended from all activity/association with Ekta Shakti Foundation pending the outcome of an independent investigation. Depending on the outcome of the independent investigation: If it comes to light that anyone associated with Ekta Shakti Foundation commits acts in relation to children – whether within or outside the context of work – which are criminal, grossly infringe children's rights, or contravene the principles and standards contained in this document, the organisation will take immediate disciplinary action and any other action which may be appropriate to the circumstances. This may mean, for example, for:

- Staff – disciplinary action / dismissal from association with Ekta Shakti Foundation
- Volunteers and Interns – ending the relationship with Ekta Shakti Foundation

## **KEY POINTERS**

### **A. Responsibilities under the Child Protection Policy**

#### **Ekta Shakti Foundation Staff, Associates and Visitors *must*:**

1. Never abuse and/or exploit a child or act/ behave in any way that places a child at risk of harm.
2. Report any child abuse and protection concerns they have in accordance with applicable local office procedures. That is a mandatory requirement for staff. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.
3. Respond to a child who may have been abused or exploited in accordance with applicable local office procedures.
4. Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of concerns and allegations.
5. Contribute to an environment where children are respected and encouraged to discuss their concerns and rights.
6. Always ask permission from children (or, in the case of young children, their parent or guardian) before taking images (e.g. photographs, videos) of them. Respect their decision to say no to an image being taken. Ensure that any images taken of children are respectful (For example: children should have adequate clothing that covers up the sexual organs. Images of children in sexually suggestive poses or what in any way might impact negatively on their dignity or privacy are not acceptable. Stories and images of children should be based on the child's best interest.

#### **Ekta Shakti Foundation Associates and Visitors *must not*:**

7. Disclose information that identifies sponsored or grant beneficiary families or children or make it available to the general public without explicit consent from Ekta Shakti Foundation

#### **All Directors, Senior Program Managers, State & Project Managers *must*:**

8. Ensure that each Ekta Shakti Foundation Office has in place local procedures that are consistent with the global Child Protection Policy and with the document reporting and responding to Child Protection issues in Ekta Shakti Foundation to respond to incidents of child abuse. Local procedures should be developed with assistance of local advisors in accordance with the local law. Any deviation therefore must have prior formal approval from the National Director. They must ensure that local procedures are made available in local languages.

## **PERSONAL CONDUCT OUTSIDE WORK**

We are committed to ensuring that our Staff and representatives apply high standards of behaviour towards children within both their professional and their private lives. Staff and Associates therefore are required to bear in mind the principles of the Child Protection Policy and heighten their awareness of how their behaviour may be perceived both at work and outside work.

## **ANNEXURE A: CHILD PROTECTION SELF DECLARATION AND AGREEMENT**

We, at Ekta Shakti Foundation place the safety of women, children and vulnerable people at the forefront. We maintain an organisational value that is free of harassment and exploitation, and ensure the same is maintained in all the communities that we work with.

Ekta Shakti Foundation is intolerant to child abuse and considers it unacceptable in all circumstances. We are committed to ensure that all possible and necessary steps are taken to acknowledge the rights of, and protect the well-being of all children (under the age of 18 years) that we work with.

It is of utmost importance that abuse is not perpetrated nor encouraged by Ekta Shakti Foundation staff, representatives, consultants and volunteers who are in contact with children and in whom children place their trust.

This self-declaration and agreement form relates to all individuals who may come into contact with children (in all Ekta Shakti Foundation intervention sites and across all projects) due to their relationship with Ekta Shakti Foundation.

FIRST NAME:

MIDDLE NAME:

SURNAME:

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:

DESIGNATION:

(please write " same" if you are residing at your permanent address )

I declare that I have never been convicted of any offence involving any type of harm to a child or children, nor have I ever been warned or cautioned in relation to such a matter. I also declare that there are no civil or criminal proceedings of any nature pending against me at the date of this declaration relating to any allegation concerning any type of harm to a child or children.

I understand that if I withhold any relevant information, or present false or inaccurate information, that the contract for services for the above mentioned project will be terminated with immediate effect.

I will adhere to the Ekta Shakti Foundation's *Child Protection Policy* and abide by all Indian law and any local law related to children welfare and protection.

I confirm that I have received, read and understood the written content of the document at the time of signing this declaration.

I confirm that I have received the document and the written content was verbally explained to me in my local language by my (supervisor/manger/colleagues) (name of the translator: .....), and I understood the content written in the document at the time of signing this declaration.

In accordance with Ekta Shakti Foundation Privacy Policy and any other relevant privacy law which applies in India or any country of engagement, this declaration is confidential and is extended solely in order to accredit my suitability to work with children whilst providing services to Ekta Shakti Foundation.

**Signature**

Name

Date