

Vidya Poshak's Child Protection Policy

Vidya Poshak's vision for child protection:

We aim to create 'child safe' environments, both internally and externally, where children are respected, protected, empowered and active in their own protection, and where Staff are skilled, confident, competent and well supported in meeting their protection responsibilities.

Statement:

Vidya Poshak is committed to actively safeguarding children from harm and ensuring children's rights to protection are fully realised. It is hereby declared that Vidya Poshak is a child-friendly organization that will enact internal measures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, discrimination and all other forms of violence affecting children.

Definitions under the Child Protection Policy

A child is defined as any person under the age 18 years.

Child Abuse is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or, Processes do or fail to do, intentionally or unintentionally, which harms a child or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

Child Protection,

According to UNICEF, child protection is the prevention of or responding to the incidence of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect of children. This includes commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and child marriage. Protection also allows children to have access to their other rights of survival, development, growth and participation.

Within the scope of this policy, is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that Vidya Poshak undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

Scope of the Child Protection Policy:

The Child Protection policy applies to everyone working for or associated with Vidya Poshak. It encompasses the whole of Vidya Poshak and includes without limitation:

1. Staff at all levels — in office, in field or elsewhere.
2. Vidya Poshak Associates — these include board members (International and National Boards), volunteers, community volunteers, sponsors, consultants and contractors. Also the staff and/or representatives of partner organisations or local governments who have been brought into contact with children or are party to Vidya Poshak child sensitive data while working for or with Vidya Poshak.
3. Vidya Poshak Visitors -- (e.g. donors, journalists, media, researchers, celebrities etc) who may come into contact with children through Vidya Poshak are also bound by this policy.

Code of Conduct: Do's and Don'ts

1. All staff, members, volunteers, coaches and mentors of Vidya Poshak shall:
 - a. Properly plan and organize their events and the respective venues so as to minimize risks
 - b. Ensure that the culture of openness exists so that issues or concerns can be raised and discussed
 - c. Ensure that the sense of accountability exists at all times
 - d. Set good examples such as but not limited to: not smoking, not drinking alcoholic beverages during the entire duration of events and related activities, partnerships or collaborations.
 - e. Maintain professional relationship with children. Staff, members and volunteers are not allowed to give gifts in cash or in kind coming from their own pocket. In cases where direct assistance is needed, financial support should come from Vidya Poshak, if approved thereof.
 - f. Empower children: discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem
 - g. Show respect and follow rules set by Vidya Poshak, the children and organizers for all activities planned.

2. All staff, members, volunteers, coaches and mentors of Vidya Poshak shall not:
 - a. Use corporal punishment, hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children
 - b. Develop physical or sexual relationship with children
 - c. Use language, make suggestions and/or offer advice, which are inappropriate or sexually provocative. All communication must be age-appropriate, eg.: dieting, work, dating, violence and other issues that go against positive reinforcement.
 - d. Behave in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative
 - e. Have a child or children with whom they are working to stay in their home during the day or night without the knowledge of the organization and parents
 - f. Do things for children of personal nature that they can do for themselves. Eg. Bathing, bathroom concerns, etc.
 - g. Condone or participate in behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive, sexual in nature, or those that will have a negative impact on the children.
 - h. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse. Eg: via language used and actions
 - i. Discriminate against, show differential treatment or favor particular children to the exclusion of others
 - j. Post identities, pictures or stories of the children on social networking sites, especially if they are of personal nature.
3. Vidya Poshak staff, coaches, mentors and volunteers are required to abide by the following protocols at all times.
 - a. I shall listen to and respect the views of EVERY child and report and put into writing any reports of abuse
 - b. I shall respect every child's dignity and his or her right to privacy at all times
 - c. I shall not discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favor a particular child/children thereby excluding other children
 - d. I shall strictly maintain a professional relationship with children at all times
 - e. I shall not share my own personal contact details with any child or their family
 - f. I shall observe appropriate and sensitive interactions as well as be mindful about the perception and actual nature of my relationships with all children during events and related activities, partnerships and/or collaborations

- g. I shall never engage in inappropriate physical conduct with children such as unwanted touching, hugging, kissing and culturally unacceptable gesture or act which can be potentially abusive. I SHALL ALSO EDUCATE THE CHILDREN IN PROPER BEHAVIOR SO THEY CAN AVOID SITUATIONS THAT WILL MAKE THEM VULNERABLE TO ABUSE.
- h. I shall not hit, spank and/or physically assault children or threaten to hurt them.
- i. I shall not engage in sexual behavior, unwanted invitations or use power and authority to incite a child to commit sexual acts.
- j. I shall not invite a child or assist in the recruitment of a child to any work that is potentially dangerous or abusive and would separate him/her from his/her immediate family
- k. I shall not post identities, pictures or stories of the children on social networking sites especially if they are personal in nature
- l. I shall never use offensive language or act in a manner that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- m. I shall never offer cigarette, alcohol or illegal drugs to a child
- n. I shall never condone abusive behaviors
- o. I shall not photograph or video graph any child without prior permission from any Vidya Poshak and approval of the child and parents
- p. I shall only photograph children in a decent manner and when they are properly dressed and will not depict them in a pitiful manner
- q. I shall only give gifts that are approved by Vidya Poshak, and I shall not provide cash or in-kind gifts or donations directly to children or their families
- r. In case of doubt in any given situation, I shall immediately consult any ranking Vidya Poshak staff member for the appropriate course of action or remedy, as the case may be.

Confidentiality Rule

Except for statistical data and other figures for purposes of official reporting, research, documentation and case studies as sanctioned by Vidya Poshak Officials, all internal information shall be kept strictly confidential and shall never be disclosed to anybody or through social networking sites.

Reportorial Duties

If any Vidya Poshak official, member, volunteer, teacher, coach or mentor commits an abuse, the matter shall immediately reported to CEO, Vidya Poshak as well as member of the Child Protection Unit, subject to the listed sanctions in this policy.

Disciplinary Action

Vidya Poshak staff, coaches, mentors and volunteers who are suspected or reported to have violated the child protection policy shall be subject to an investigation by the Child Protection Unit.

For minor offences, which are non-life threatening and/or non-sexual violations, the following penalties shall be meted accordingly:

- a. First offense: Warning and reprimand
- b. Second offense: Suspension of employment, membership, or volunteership for a period of not less than 3 months not more than 6 months
- c. Third offense: Termination

For major offences, which are life threatening and sexual violations, the following penalties shall be meted accordingly:

- a. Automatic indefinite suspension pending investigation on the matter
- b. If found guilty: termination with perpetual ban from enlistment and the filling of appropriate legal actions.

Approved by: Secretary

Date: 21st December, 2016