

CHILD SAFE GUARDING CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

(Commitments Trust's Child Protection Policy will be in effect from 1st April, 2022. It will be reviewed every five years. This policy will be reviewed before 31st March, 2027)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Child protection is at the core of COMMITMENTS work because the organization believes strongly that without child protection, children are not able to make right choices, express their views and communicate effectively. Commitments believes that children should not be discriminated on the basis of disability, religion, race, class and caste. All children have equal rights to protection from abuse and exploitation.

2.0 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to Commitment's Board of Directors, Commitment's employees, consultants, volunteers and interns, Visitors to Commitment's programs, and organizations or contactors who receive payments from commitments

3.0 CODE OF CONDUCT

Commitments has laid out the Code of Conduct which aims to provide clear guidelines to its employees and partners about the organization's child protection policy. The Child Protection policy of Commitments states clearly the behavior expected of staff and the consequences that are in place if this is not adhered to. The policy also stresses the need for all the stakeholders to follow the values and principles of Commitments, as spelt out below:

- Respect the basic rights of the child, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, caste, language, HIV Status and other aspects of identity.

- Desist from making unreasonable demands, using improper language or insulting children.
- Act fairly, honestly and tactfully and treat children with dignity and respect.
- Respect the national law like RPwD Act 2016 and local culture, traditions, customs and practices that are in line with UN Conventions.
- Avoid any form of discrimination, harassment, abuse, intimidation (physical, sexual or verbal) or exploitation in any other way infringing the rights of children.
- Support the special needs of the persons with disabilities (PwDs).
- advocate for barrier free environment in education, sports, disable friendly infrastructure etc. for PwDs, particularly children among them, so that they are able to perform to their full potential
- Empower children with knowledge about their rights, acceptable and unacceptable behavior from others, and how Commitments would intervene if there is a problem.
- Encourage children to raise their voice and to fight for their rights.

Commitments also expect all the trustees, staff, volunteers of their own organization and their partner organizations to strictly abstain from:

- physically assaulting or abusing children
- any physical/sexual/abusive relationship with children
- Using language, making suggestions or offering advice, which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
- asking children to run errands for them
- Condoning or participating in illegal, unsafe and abusive behavior with children.
- Acting in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- supplying alcohol/drugs to children;

- engaging children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage
- inviting unaccompanied children into private residences (unless they are at immediate risk or danger)
- sleeping close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case the supervisor's permission must be obtained, and ensuring that another adult is present if possible (noting that this does not apply to an individual's own children)
- engaging—directly or indirectly—anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children”

Commitments also have guidelines on the use of children's images. Commitments will portray children in a respectful, appropriate and consensual way, including;

- obtaining informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child, and explaining how the images will be used
- assessing and endeavoring to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images
- photographing children with a guardian where possible
- Presenting the subject in a dignified, respectful manner, portraying them as equal partners in the development process. Children should be adequately clothed and not depicted as vulnerable or submissive or in poses that are sexually suggestive
- ensuring images are honest representations of the context and the facts
- ensuring file labels, meta data or text descriptions limit identifying information about a child to first name, age and region or city, when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form (for example, not including surnames, school or village)

4.0 RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING PROCESS

For all prospective staff, Commitments will undertake referee checks. In respect of staff members who will work directly with children, mandatory criminal record checks will be done.

Commitments will not knowingly engage – directly or indirectly – anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children.

5.0 RISK MANAGEMENT

While it is not possible to eliminate all risks of child exploitation and abuse, careful management can identify, mitigate, manage or reduce the risks to children that may be associated with Commitments functions and programs.

6.0 CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING AND AWARENESS

For effective implementation of child protection policy, it is imperative that all the stakeholders of Commitments are made aware of the importance of child protection and their duties and responsibilities towards children. Commitments will be adopting the following strategy to achieve this goal:

Commitments will develop communication material to train and brief staff about child protection (including details of the policy), their obligations to protect children, and how to report allegations of child exploitation and abuse

Commitments will maintain details of the trainings conducted including the training material, records of attendance in the trainings etc.

Commitments will develop investigation and internal reporting mechanism for the staff and require them to report any suspected or alleged instances of child abuse, exploitation, and harm or child protection non-compliance.

Clear guidelines will be issued to all the employees about investigation procedures and reporting mechanism to be adopted. In addition to the

guidelines, the Head Office staff of Commitments, during their project visits, will counsel the field staff about the importance of Child Protection and the action to be taken while following up with any allegations or complaints received.

7.0 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION PROCESS

. Commitments agrees to put in place an effective child abuse complaint lodging process for clients and community members, and at regular intervals inform the beneficiaries/community members of this through posters and other information. \

Concerns or allegations of child exploitation and abuse, and policy non-compliance should be raised immediately with the Executive Director or any other Employee of Commitments designated by the Board of Trustees. The ED can be contacted on ed@commitmentstrust.org. In the case of any complaints of child abuse or misconduct, Commitments will make all efforts to reassure the community/complainant that their complaint is taken seriously and the necessary steps are being taken. The Complainant will be provided with an acknowledgement that their grievance/complaint was received. Such an acknowledgement will include Commitment's commitment to confidentiality with respect to the complainant's name and personal details to anyone other than the people involved in handling the complaint, without the complainant's permission.

A written record of the complaint, actions taken and outcomes will be maintained by Commitments Executive Director or any other designated Official.

Available sanctions include dismissal, suspension or transfer to other duties for any employee who breaches the child protection policy or code of conduct.

Commitments will report to appropriate stakeholders any suspected or alleged instances of child abuse, exploitation, and harm or Child Protection Policy noncompliance and will notify relevant law enforcement agencies as appropriate.