

India Literacy Project

Child Protection Policy

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1. Introduction

India Literacy Project (hereafter referred to as ILP) is a non-government development organization and is registered in the USA and in India. ILP has been functioning since 1991 for Children's Education and Socio-economic development of communities in India.

We, India Literacy Project, state that children and young people need to feel safe, secure and participate in all aspects aimed at their development.

ILP, as a development support organization will ensure that all its partner organizations will have a Child Protection Policy within a period of 6 months from the beginning of partnership. We will ensure that ILP and its partner organizations will orient and involve parents about projects and activities in which their children participate.

ILP recognizes that special consideration must be applied to issues of recruitment, training of ILP personnel, and review of interaction and work with children.

2. Vision and Mission

ILP's vision is to be a catalyst for 100% literacy in India. While working towards the development of children in India, protection and promotion of their rights, ILP will strive to create a safe and protective environment for every child through a sensitized and responsive community that upholds the dignity and rights of all children.

3. ILP Belief

ILP believes in the following guiding principles related to child protection:

- All children have a right to protection from abuse irrespective of race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, caste & class, disability, social & educational background.
- Child abuse and exploitation is a heinous offence, punishable under law and is severely condemned.
- Silence and inaction will be considered abetment when it is known that a child is being abused or exploited or is under threat of such abuse or exploitation.
- Children have a right to participate through expression of their views, opinions and feelings, be it oral, written or any other medium of communication. Therefore, wherever appropriate and relevant children shall be included as stakeholders in the process of reviews, research and documentation undertaken by ILP.
- ILP's Governing Body members, staff, donors and volunteers are all bound by the Child Protection Policy and abide by the principles.
- ILP will implement the necessary preventive measures to protect the organization & staff integrity.

4. ILP Commitment

ILP is committed to:

- Uphold the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and all legislative provisions for protection of children.
- Condemn all forms of child exploitation and abuse, especially child sexual abuse (per UN CRC Article 34).
- Ensure that the Governing Body members, staff, volunteers, donors and consultants or any person associated with the organization at any time, in any capacity abide by this policy.
- Evaluate and review this policy periodically based on our experience, changing environment and legislative reforms.

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5. Different Forms of Child Abuse

ILP recognizes the different forms of child abuse as follows:

- a. **Physical Abuse:** Actual or likely physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent injury, or suffering to a child including deliberate or non accidental hitting, beating, shaking, throwing, burning, drowning, suffocating or poisoning.
- b. **Mental/ Emotional Abuse:** Actual or likely severe adverse effect on the emotional and behavioral development of a child caused by persistent and severe emotional ill treatment or rejection. It may involve conveying to the child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate and cause children to feel frightened, and in danger It also includes deprivation of basic needs like food, sleep, rest.
- c. **Neglect:** The persistent or severe neglect of a child, or failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including severe weather conditions and starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health including non-organic failure to thrive.
- d. **Child Sexual Abuse:** Child sexual abuse or child molestation is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. Forms of child sexual abuse include asking or pressuring a child to engage in sexual activities (regardless of the outcome), indecent exposure (of the genitals, female nipples, etc.) to a child with intent to gratify their own sexual desires or to intimidate or groom the child, physical sexual contact with a child. In addition, exploitation of a child for pornographic purposes, making a child available to others as a child prostitute, and stimulating a child with inappropriate solicitation, exhibitionism, and erotic material are also forms of sexual abuse.

6. ILP Code of Conduct

ILP will ensure that all its governing board members, staff, volunteers, consultants, patrons, and visitors will adhere to the following:

1. Respect and treat all children with dignity in professional and personal interactions.
2. Avoid taking photographs or video footage of children without authorization from ILP's Director/Governing Board and the partner organisation (whenever applicable). Videos and photographs will not be used for any purposes outside ILP without prior permission. Permission of parents/guardians and children will also be obtained.
3. Never be alone in a private place with children, who are not their offspring when there are no other responsible adults. This is especially applicable to male members when interacting with girl children,
4. Follow the 'Two-Adult Norm' wherever possible and applicable. According to this norm, two or more adults, one of whom should be a woman as far as possible, must be present at all times to supervise all activities of children/adolescents conducted by ILP. If this is not possible, ILP staff is responsible to ensure alternate arrangements such as being accompanied by community members during such interactions with children.
5. Will not resort to any form of disciplining of children that is violent, abusive or harmful to them.
6. Maintain confidentiality of any case or incident or event pertaining to a child or children and avoid divulging any information to media without ILP permission.
7. Avoid situations that could place the person in a vulnerable or compromising position such as when a child tries to get extra attention owing to his/her own trauma, abuse or experience. The onus is on the adult to handle the situation in a mature and balanced manner.

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8. Dress appropriately and in a culturally sensitive manner when visiting or working with children, families and communities.
9. Maintain exemplary behavior/character in presence of children, through dignified language, action and manner of relating to children.
10. Avoid personal attachment with any child while mentoring, supervising or relating to him/her.
11. Avoid dealing with children who require special attention such as victims of sexual abuse, children trafficked etc. where special skill and expertise are required. Refer such children to professionals or experts.
12. All correspondences with children will use child-friendly language and content.
13. Inform the appropriate authorities/ Board Member immediately of any suspected misconduct with children. Such information would be treated as confidential and disclosed only to those concerned.

7. External Communication

1. ILP recognizes that the worldwide web is increasingly being used by those seeking to abuse children, and that photographs are doctored to create further abuse of children. ILP will take utmost care to protect the identity and privacy of children whose photographs are used for publication/documentation.
2. ILP will never display pictures of children in vulnerable situations and environments. All forms of communications about children will use language, pictures and videos that are respectful, and not presenting them as victims or with intent of evoking sympathy.
3. Disclosure of information about past or present abuse of children and any of the persons involved will be only on a need-to-know basis.
4. Individuals or organizations can use ILP resources such as videos or photographs only with prior permission.

8. Screening and Recruitment

The Board members, staff, consultants, and volunteers of ILP will:

1. Be subjected to careful screening during their recruitment/induction including obtaining a previous employment reference.
2. Ensure that all the references of approved local candidates for work are checked, preferably by telephone, and recorded in the staff files before the new member is offered the position. This will include a verbal and written request to the referee for expression of their concerns.
3. No person with a conviction for child abuse, pedophilia or related offences may be hired into any position that gives direct access to children.
4. ILP reserves the right not to hire an applicant if the background check reveals that the person is not suitable to work with children.
5. Ensure that individuals hired as independent consultants are oriented on ILP Child Protection Policy.

9. Responses to Complaints of Offences by ILP Staff

1. ILP committee members, staff, volunteers and visitors will be encouraged to openly discuss the potential of abuse within the organization
2. Where a complaint has been made of child abuse against any of the ILP committee members, staff, volunteers or visitors, ILP will immediately take appropriate action to deal with the situation.

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3. ILP will not dismiss a child's accusation of abuse without appropriate investigation, no matter who the alleged perpetrator is.
4. The chairperson of ILP's Board of Trustees will be informed of the complaint. If the chairperson is the subject of the complaint/allegation, then the other members of the Board of Trustees will be informed.
5. In the event of a complaint/allegation of child sexual abuse, ILP will follow the legal procedures, and not handle the issue internally. If a foreign national is involved, the relevant embassy will be informed.
6. All the details of the complaint will be recorded. The complaint will be kept confidential. Any investigations will take place under external advice and counsel.
7. The child and alleged perpetrator will be treated with respect throughout the review process and there will fair hearing for both parties concerned.
8. ILP will confer with other organizations in a case where the child involved requires extra protection such as temporary shelter, counseling etc.
9. ILP will designate someone to deal with the media and the police if necessary. Consideration will be made beforehand by the Committee about how the police and media will be informed/ involved.

10. Responses to Complaints of Offences by a Non-ILP Person

1. In order to facilitate the reporting, investigation and follow up of cases, ILP will set up formal support systems with concerned professionals and authority. That is, ILP will coordinate with local police, government or non-government social services, doctors, lawyers, social workers and teachers.
2. Whenever an ILP staff member has a reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused, he/she must report it immediately to the Chairperson. ILP will report it immediately to local authority.

11. Sensitization

1. ILP Board, staff, consultants and volunteers will sensitized on the Child Protection Policy.
2. ILP will be committed to the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of child protection procedures and behavior protocols.

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12. Declaration

I declare that:

1. I have read the “Child Protection Policy” of India Literacy Project and will abide by it.
2. I have not been accused or convicted of any offence involving any form of abuse of children or young people.
3. I understand that if a complaint is brought against me regarding the abuse of children while engaged in the activities of India Literacy Project the allegation will be thoroughly investigated in cooperation with the appropriate authorities, and I will lend full support to the process

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____