

Dusthya Shasthya Kendra (DSK)

Child Protection Policy (CPP)

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1. Introduction

Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK) is a development Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) registered with the Social Welfare Ministry and NGO Affairs Bureau in Bangladesh. The organization started out by initiating a health program, undertaken after the devastating Bangladeshi floods of 1988.

DSK is committed to address various social, right & justice and economic problems of the financially depressed and vulnerable groups in general and especially extreme poor to up-lift from poverty.

The long-term development program now includes education, health, microfinance, agriculture, economic empowerment, water supply and sanitation, disaster management and human resource empowerment. All these works are aimed at supporting disadvantaged poor people targeting to eliminate poverty situation.

Vision Statement: *DSK's vision is to seek a country of social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. DSK aims to be a partner of choice within a worldwide movement dedicated to ending poverty.*

Mission Statement : *DSK aims at building up strong community based organizations (CBOs) which will eventually be able to plan, priorities and implement their own development programs through mobilization of the following combination of resources: - family and community , government , donor agencies and concerned civil society.*

2. Executive summary

This Child Protection Policy (CPP) articulates DSK's zero tolerance approach to any forms of child abuse and exploitation. It provides a framework for managing and reducing risks of child abuse by persons engaged in delivering DSK's program activities.

The goal of the policy is to *protect children from abuse of all kinds in the delivery of DSK's programmes with special focus to the programme for children.*

The policy focuses four guiding principles:

1. Zero tolerance of child abuse
2. Recognition of children's interests
3. Sharing responsibility for child protection
4. Use of a risk management approach.

Under the policy, DSK is further enhancing its approach to child protection through risk assessment and risk management procedures for programme activities, clear

procedures for raising concerns about child abuse, and training staff on child protection matters.

In line with the guiding principles of sharing responsibility for child protection, all staff under DSK’s payroll, volunteers, interns, consultants, contractors etc must meet DSK’s child protection compliance standards in their operations and must also apply the relevant standards to any persons who may come into contact or provide any form of services to DSK or any of its programmes. The policy is supported by additional documentation for DSK’s staff.

Obviously not all staff or caregivers will abuse children, sexually or otherwise. However, in some rare cases it may happen. This is why it is necessary to have written documents and policies to which to refer when and how aid agencies have to deal with such situations.

3. The Challenge

Across Bangladesh, thousands of girls and boys are subjected to various forms of neglect, abuse, harassment and exploitation including forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence that develop psychosomatic problems in the society. Every many children are trafficked across Bangladesh and international boundaries into exploitative work, many of them into commercial sexual exploitation. Orphaned, displaced, homeless and abandoned children are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, as are children with disabilities. Children are also highly vulnerable during emergency and disaster situations (natural or conflict based), because they are often separated from their parents and other caregivers who would normally protect them from harm.

The common form of child abuses

<p>1. Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishing a child excessively • Smacking, punching, beating, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, grabbing • Hitting a child with an object • Leaving a child in an uncomfortable and/or undignified posture for an extended period of time or in a poor environment • Forcing a child to work in poor working conditions, or in work that is inappropriate for a child’s age, over a long period of time • Gang violence • Harmful initiation ceremonies • Bullying • Threatening to harm someone 	<p>2. Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolating or excluding a child • Stigmatizing a child • Treating a child who is a victim as a suspect (repeated questioning and investigation) • Failing to provide a supportive environment • Failing to give a child an appropriate sense of self (example, criticizing weight) • Main caregiver(s) does not respond to a child’s emotional needs • Exploiting a child • Treating or looking at a child with disdain, disrespect, denigration • Patterns of belittling, denigrating, blaming, scaring, discriminating or ridiculing • Spreading rumours • Blackmailing a child
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalising a child without exploring other options • Cyber bullying and sexual solicitation
<p>3. Sexual : Involvement of a child, in a sexual activity that s/he does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or is not developmentally prepared for, such as:</p>	
<p>Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kissing or holding in a sexual manner • Touching and fondling genital areas • Forcing a child to touch another person's genital areas • Forcing a child to perform oral sex • Vaginal/anal intercourse, other sexual activity • Biting a child's genital area • Incest • Sexual exploitation, where sexual abuse of a child involves some kind of commercial transaction (monetary or in-kind) 	<p>Non-contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obscene calls or obscene remarks on a computer or a phone or in written notes • Virtual sex • Online sexual solicitation and grooming • Voyeurism • Exhibitionism • Exposed to pornography or used to make pornography • Sexually intrusive questions or comments • Forced to self-masturbate or watch others masturbate

Protection in practice

It is impossible for people to know everything about everyone. Even if you work with someone for a long time, you cannot know all about them. If someone is an abuser of children, do you really think they would make this information public? There is no way to know with certainty if, when and how child abuse may happen within an organisation. But as social workers we must be committed to create as safe an environment for children as possible and ensure all the rights of the children evaluating it as a bounden duty.

Shared responsibility

Our duty of care is our responsibility to take whatever steps are reasonable and practical to protect the well-being of those people we are responsible for. Duty of care in some countries is bound by law. But regardless of whether or not laws exist to reflect duty of care, it is a concept based on our moral or ethical responsibility to keep people in our communities safe. Duty of care acknowledges the shared sense of responsibility that exists when groups of people provide care for each other.

A system: Policies and procedures

DSK can provide better protection for children when the organisation has a system in place. A child protection system includes policies and procedures that are transparent to all staff.

As regards DSK's policies, these are the statements of intent that demonstrate DSK's commitment to safeguard children from harm and makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children and staff. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and staff, as well as to show that DSK is taking on its duty and responsibility of care seriously.

The procedures are policy in action. They provide clear step-by-step guidance on what to do in different circumstances.

The child protection system will protect children and also DSK and its staff. Setting good child protection standards will help the organisation establish its accountability and credibility. A properly implemented system will also guide the organisation to deal with any false allegations, difficult and unexpected situations and uncalled for intricacies.

The child protection policy helps also to protect the organization as a whole from false allegations and will make a passage of trust and confidence to work more effectively in the light of its moral strength.

So, it is important for DSK to create a solid child protection system to minimize the severity and possibility of abuse occurring within the organisation and also within the wider society. When staffs are all made aware of the issue and work united they can prevent many abuses of children.

4. DSK's Child Protection Policy

Towards a child safe organisation

DSK rejects all forms of abuse and exploitation suffered by children, and seeks to ensure that throughout its work it commits to policies, practices and procedures that are consistent with the best interests for the protection of the children at all times.

In this, it is guided by international agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, legal protection afforded children and young people by the state, and by the professional demands of best practice.

In this regard, DSK believes that its employees, and all those whom it may employ, or all those over whom it has any authority and influence, must demonstrate behaviour that is not simply consistent with protocols and legislation, but also with an appropriate set of personal and professional standards.

Child protection is both an institutional and an individual responsibility. DSK is committed to the best practice in recruitment, to ensuring staff understanding of and commitment to child protection principles.

The best protection for children is prevention, and DSK is committed to protecting children. It understands the nature and risks of child abuse and has an open and aware culture. Policies and procedures are developed to protect children and staff. Establishing and maintaining a child-safe-environment is a guiding principle in its activities and management practices.

Those bound by DSK's child protection policy

- All staff of DSK and all volunteers and interns.
- All those acting for DSK, such as consultants, advisors and contractors

Recruitment

All posts in DSK have job descriptions and key selection criteria that describe the ideal skills, experience, knowledge and understanding required from a person, in order to carry out the responsibilities of his/her assigned job/task.

Preferred candidates may be required (if found necessary) to submit a police verification certificate from his/her local police station proving that the candidate has no criminal record.

On appointment, DSK staff will be given a copy of the child protection policy and the behaviour code of conduct, and will be asked to sign a declaration that they understand it and agree to be bound by it. This is a contractual obligation for building up an ethical morale among themselves.

In the light of the above comprehension staff and volunteers to DSK will be given a copy of the child protection policy and asked to sign the Statement of Commitment (Annex-3.)

Consultants, Volunteers and Interns

Consultants working for DSK will be asked to abide by its Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Code of Conduct.

Consultants/ Volunteers/ Interns from overseas, coming to work for DSK or DSK activities on particular assignments, must follow DSK's CPP.

DSK's contracts with Consultants/ Volunteers / Interns will include a signed commitment to abide by DSK's Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Code of Conduct. (Annex-4.)

Management, Education and Training

DSK believes that every employee and volunteer should be aware of the principles and procedures of child protection and also be aware of the responsibilities to recognise and respond to child abuse. To this end, DSK will:

- a. Designate the programme heads (project director, project coordinators/ project managers – who heads the particular project) to be responsible for child protection implementation. S/he will be responsible for training, supervision, monitoring and support of child protection within the organisation through its various staff.
- b. DSK believes in awareness-raising providing education for staff, board members and volunteers in the definition of exploitation and sexual abuse in the local context.
- c. All staff, board members and other personnel is required to acknowledge in writing the receipt and understanding of DSK's Child Protection Policies. They are to be kept informed of policy changes as they arise.
- d. All staff, volunteers and other representatives [of the organisation] must be familiar with the policy and be aware of the problem of abuse and the risks to children.
- e. It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these.
- f. Centre/ unit/managers are accountable for ensuring that all work is risk assessed and steps taken as necessary to minimise risks to children.
- g. It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.
- h. It is important for all staff and others (where necessary) in contact with children to empower children - discuss with them about their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.
- i. Children are considered active participants whose hopes and aspirations are respected, whose welfare is of paramount importance. They are involved in programmes designed to protect them through mechanisms that give them a voice and provide them with skills for protecting themselves. However, the responsibility for protection of children lies with adults. Children should not be expected to make adult decisions.
- j. For effective implementation, a policy needs to be understood accurately by all staff. DSK will conduct a series of briefings/ meeting/ training/ discussion etc. for staff members, other relevant members, partners, volunteers, interns, consultants and other representatives.

Behaviour Protocols

As a child safe organisation, DSK works to secure a wide and an open awareness culture where all participants feel responsible for the protection of children in their programmes. An essential element of this is a comprehensive understanding of moral and legal responsibilities, best laid out in behaviour protocols.

A Code of Conduct for Behaviour (*Annex-1*) includes explicit clarification of unacceptable forms of behaviour that will result in a formal enquiry and which could lead to disciplinary measures being taken, or criminal proceedings instituted as well as guidance on appropriate/expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children and also of children towards other children.

The CPP and Code shall be prominently displayed/easily accessible for all organisation representatives.

Representatives of DSK shall disseminate and promote copies of the Code of Conduct in all situations where DSK is responsible for bringing children in contact with adults.

Child protection in project partnership

DSK believes to protect children from all sort of abuse. DSK expects from its staff that children be involved in maintaining and influencing the environment of maximum safety.

Therefore, in relation to the work, DSK will:

- Advise staff and partners on DSK's *Child Protection Policy*.
- Require its staff to implement a *Child Protection Policy*. Where assistance is required, DSK will prioritise child protection training, policy development and implementation, as a capacity building priority.
- Monitor safe mechanisms in place for child participation, including structured group feedback on project management.
- Encourage a reporting system that confers respect on complainants and respects confidentiality.

Reporting Mechanism (for Concern and Cases)

- a. Where a DSK staff develops concerns or suspicions regarding abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same centre or not, s/he must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms (*Annex-2a*).
- b. It is important for all staff and others in contact with children to ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised or discussed.
- c. DSK will ensure that it takes seriously any concerns raised.
- d. DSK will ensure that it listens to and takes seriously the views and wishes of children.
- e. DSK will ensure that it supports children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns.

- f. If any staff member has any suspicions or concerns regarding possible child abuse, or if there is anything with which s/he feels uncomfortable, s/he should raise these with their line manager or your main contact within DSK. If this is not possible, seek out the programme head/ project head/ line manager.
- g. The welfare of a child is of great importance to DSK. If sexual abuse is proven or suspected, every effort will be made to assist the child in coping with any trauma or guilt he or she may be experiencing. This may include psychological counselling or another form of assistance deemed necessary and appropriate.
- h. The employee will be informed that charges have been made against him or her and given an opportunity to respond. Furthermore, as a result of these charges, DSK will have an obligation to initiate an internal investigation following DSK service rule. At the conclusion of the investigation, the employee will be informed of the results of the investigation and what corrective action, if any, will be taken.
- i. All information concerning the incident and investigation are to be documented in writing. A copy of the confidential report of the investigation and conclusion will be provided to the Executive Director.
- j. If an employee raises a legitimate concern about suspected child abuse, which proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the employee. Any employee who makes false and malicious accusations, however, will face disciplinary action as per DSK service rule (Annex-2b).

DSK's Communications Guidelines

DSK will sometimes use text and imagery from its projects. We recognise a child's right to be accurately represented and accept our responsibility not to portray a manipulated or sensationalised depiction of the child's life and circumstances.

Policy and Procedures

- a. DSK believes that the abuse of children is an abuse of their rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- b. A *child* means every human being below the age of 18 years (or as defined by the Govt of Bangladesh) .
- c. *Child abuse* means sexual abuse or other physical or mental harm deliberately caused to a child (or as defined by the Govt. of Bangladesh) .
- d. The policy recognises that, on occasions, staff and others engaged by DSK or its partners to work with children may pose a risk to children and abuse their position of trust.
- e. The policy demands the standards of professional practice in work with children and describes the values and principles that must underpin our approach to children.

- f. Programme/Project heads are accountable for ensuring that all staff, partners and relevant others have access to the child protection policy and are aware of its contents and clear about the responsibilities it places on them
- g. Programme/Project heads are accountable for ensuring that an open and responsive management culture is developed so that staff and others are able to discuss the issue of child abuse and be confident of a positive response to any concerns that may arise.
- h. DSK will ensure that the child protection policy is referenced in all contracts, grant/partnership agreements etc.
- i. DSK will ensure that child protection systems are subject to periodic monitoring and review and that issues and processes are fully documented so that appropriate action can be taken and lessons from experience drawn together at local and national levels.
- j. DSK shall maintain confidentiality of information of children considering children interest of privacy, security and dignity.
- k. DSK also recognises that it has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that children are protected from exploitation, abuse, violence from its staff members, board members, partners, volunteers, interns, consultants and other representatives, within and outside the programmes - directly or indirectly.

Dusthya Shasthya Kendra (DSK)

Behaviour Code of Conduct

A component of DSK's Child Protection policy

The aim of DSK's Behaviour Code of Conduct is to protect children from abuse. By setting standards for appropriate behaviour it also protects people who come into contact with children from unfounded accusations of improper conduct.

It clarifies unacceptable forms of behaviour that will result in a formal enquiry and which could lead to disciplinary measures being taken or criminal proceedings instituted. Additionally, the Code of Conduct gives guidance on expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children and also of children towards other children.

This Code of Conduct applies to DSK's staff and anyone acting as a representative of or on behalf of, DSK who may come into direct contact with, or be responsible for, bringing children into contact with adults.

Minimising Risk situations

NEVER

- Condone or participate in behaviour that is illicit, illegal or unsafe.

TRY NOT TO:

- Be alone with a single child, including in the following situations: in a car, overnight, in your home, or the home of a child.
- Show favouritism of any kind or spend excessive amounts of time with one child.

TRY TO:

- Avoid placing yourself in a compromising or vulnerable position.
- Be accompanied by a second adult whenever possible.
- Meet with a child in a central, public location, in presence with parents/ caregiver/ family member whenever possible.
- Immediately note the circumstances of any situation which occurs which may be subject to misinterpretation by a third party.
- Avoid doing something that could be misinterpreted by a third party.

Sexual Behaviour

NEVER:

- Develop physical/sexual relationships with a child.
- Behave physically in a manner that is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
- Engage in or allow sexually provocative games with children to take place.
- Do things of a personal nature that a child could do for him/herself, including dressing, bathing, and grooming.

Physical Behaviour

NEVER:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse a child.
- Engage children in any health risky activities.

DO:

- Wait for appropriate physical contact such as holding hands, to be initiated by the child.
- Ask permission from children before taking photographs of child/children except under exceptional circumstances, based on the child/children's best interest, where this might not be possible or desirable.

Psychosocial Behaviour

DO:

- Be aware of the power balance between an adult and child, and avoid taking any advantage this may provide.

DO NOT:

- Use language that will mentally or emotionally harm a child.
- Suggest inappropriate behaviour or relations of any kind.
- Act in any way that intends to embarrass, shame, humiliate or degrade a child.
- Encourage any inappropriate attention seeking behaviour, such as tantrums by a child.
- Show discrimination of race, culture, age, gender, disability, religion, sexuality, or political persuasion.
- Evolve children in program activities during children's own time (for example during schooling etc).

Peer Abuse

DO:

- Be aware of the potential for peer abuse.
- Encourage DSK's staff to develop special measures/supervision to protect younger and especially vulnerable children.
- Avoid placing children in high-risk peer situations (e.g. Unsupervised mixing of older and younger children).

DO NOT:

- Allow children to engage in sexually provocative games/ pornography/erotic songs etc. with each other.

Physical Environment

DO:

- Encourage staff to develop clear rules to address specific physical safety issues relative to the local physical environment of a project (e.g. For projects based near water, heavy road traffic, railway lines).

What to do if you suspect or witness an abuse/ potentially abusive behaviour

Immediately bring to the attention of the line manager any instance of witnessed or suspected abuse, and any action or behaviour that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive.

DSK 's Behaviour Code of Conduct

Declaration

I have read the DSK's behaviour code of conduct. I understand it to be an essential component of DSK's Child Protection Policy and that this policy is available for me to read in full.

I declare that I have had every opportunity to discuss both the behaviour code of conduct and the Child Protection Policy with the Program/project heads or designated person.

I declare that I understand it, the behaviour code of conduct, and agree to comply with it.

Name: _____

Designation: _____

Programme/ Project: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Dusthya Shasthya Kendra (DSK)

Annex 2 (b)

Record of Follow Up, Subsequent Action and Information		Case Number:
Date	Action Information	Record made by

Dusthya Shasthya Kendra (DSK)

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

To DSK's Child Protection Policy

DSK– staff, volunteer, consultant, interns

"I, _____[name], have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in DSK's Child Protection Policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing child protection policies and practice while working with DSK.

(Name)

(Job title)

(Organisation and Contact address)

(Signature)

(Date)

Dusthya Shasthya Kendra (DSK)

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

To DSK's Child Protection Policy

Consultants Interns and Project partner in Bangladesh

"I, _____ [name], on behalf of _____

(*Organisation*) have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this Child Protection Policy of DSK. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing child protection policy and practice while associated with _____ (*Organisation*) is open to work with DSK to explore the implications of this policy and to work together to maintain child protection policy and practice while associated with DSK.

The designated contact person within _____ (*Organisation*) is responsible for communication with DSK on child protection issues is

(*name of individual*).

Senior organisation representative:

(*Print name*)

**(Job title / role)*

(*Organisation and Contact address*)

(*Signature*)

(*Date*)