

Samaj Pragati Sahayog Child/Youth Protection & Safeguard Policy

Introduction

At Samaj Pragati Sahayog (SPS), our commitment to the protection and well-being of children and youth is deeply rooted in the diverse and impactful initiatives under taken by us. Operating within the challenging landscapes of impoverished and backward regions, we recognize the critical importance of safeguarding the most vulnerable members of society.

This policy serves as a testament in establishing environments that ensure the safety and prosperity of children and young individuals. As reflected in our programs that extend to address pressing issues such as malnourishment, midday meals, prevalent child labour, construction activities linked to watershed management, and farm labour in sustainable agriculture.

Furthermore, our dedication go beyond conventional protective measures, embracing the distinctive vulnerabilities inherent in the impoverished environments we navigate. We employ compassionate approaches to guarantee the safety and well-being of youth involved in various aspects of our initiatives..

2. Objectives

- The primary objectives of this Child/Youth Protection & Safeguard Policy are:
- To ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth involved in SPS programs in remote tribal areas.
- To prevent and respond to any potential risks or harm to children and youth in these challenging environments.
- To promote awareness and adherence to ethical standards of behaviour among SPS staff, volunteers, and partners, taking into consideration the unique cultural and social contexts of remote tribal areas.

3. Principles

SPS adheres to the following guiding principles in its child and youth protection efforts in remote tribal areas:

- The best interests of the child are paramount, considering the specific needs of tribal communities.
- All children and youth have the right to be protected from harm and exploitation, taking into account cultural sensitivities.
- Zero tolerance for child abuse and neglect, ensuring that traditional practices are respected.
- Ensuring child and youth participation in decision-making processes affecting them, respecting tribal customs and traditions.
- Collaboration with relevant government agencies and local tribal leaders and stakeholders.

4. Program-Specific Guidelines

4.1 Malnourishment and Midday Meals Programs

SPS is committed to ensuring the safety of children under the age of 5 participating in malnourishment and midday meals programs in remote tribal areas. This includes:

- Sensitivity to the cultural practices of tribal communities and adapting program delivery accordingly.
- Engaging with tribal elders and leaders to gain their trust and support.
- Ensuring nutritious meals that respect local customs and preferences.
- Monitoring the nutritional impact and addressing malnourishment in a culturally sensitive manner.

4.2 Child Labour in Construction Activities in programs like Watershed Management, MGNREGA, Agricultural activities and construction of rural buildings.

As in our area child labour is prevalent due to extreme poverty, SPS will take the following steps to prevent child labour and protect children:

- Promoting livelihood programs for adults to reduce economic pressures on families.
- Identifying and withdrawing children from hazardous labour and facilitating their access to education and support services.
- Ensuring no child labour at worksites.
- Advocating for child protection policies within the construction activities in which SPS is involved.

4.3 Youth Engagement Programs

SPS will work with young people and adolescents on various awareness programs and computer literacy, considering the unique challenges of remote tribal areas:

- Incorporating local languages and cultural elements into awareness programs.
- Ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and partners working with youth have cultural sensitivity training.
- Facilitating youth participation while respecting traditional community decision-making processes.

5. Reporting and Response

- SPS will establish clear procedures for reporting any concerns related to child or youth protection. Any incidents or suspicions of abuse or harm will be promptly reported to the appropriate authorities. SPS will provide support for affected children and youth, including counselling and medical assistance, as required.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

SPS will regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make necessary adjustments. All stakeholders will be encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

7. Menstrual Health Awareness

In addition to the core principles and guidelines mentioned above, SPS acknowledges the importance of spreading awareness about menstrual health among young girls and the community. Menstrual health education is crucial for promoting gender equality and ensuring the well-being of young girls. To address this, SPS will implement the following precautions:

7.1 Menstrual Health Education

SPS will provide age-appropriate menstrual health education to young girls and adolescents as part of our awareness programs. This education will include information about menstrual hygiene, menstrual health management, and breaking the stigma surrounding menstruation.

7.2 Gender Sensitivity

SPS staff and volunteers will receive training on gender sensitivity, ensuring that they approach menstrual health education with respect and empathy, recognizing the cultural and social contexts surrounding menstruation.

7.3 Privacy and Dignity

SPS will ensure that facilities, such as sanitation infrastructure in schools and community centres, provide a safe and private environment for young girls and women to manage their menstrual hygiene.

7.4 Inclusion and Participation

SPS will actively involve young girls and women in the development of menstrual health awareness programs. Their perspectives and needs will be considered in the planning and implementation of such initiatives.

7.5 Support Services

SPS will facilitate access to menstrual hygiene products and support services for young girls and women, ensuring they have the resources needed to manage their menstruation with dignity.

7.6 Community Engagement

SPS will work closely with the community to address cultural and social norms related to menstruation. Sensitization campaigns will be conducted to reduce stigma and promote understanding.

7.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

The impact of menstrual health awareness programs will be regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure their effectiveness and relevance. Feedback from young girls, women, and the community will be sought to make necessary adjustments.

By incorporating these precautions into our Child/Youth Protection & Safeguard Policy, SPS aims to empower young girls with the knowledge and resources necessary to manage their menstrual health effectively while ensuring their safety and dignity.

8. Conclusion

Samaj Pragati Sahayog is committed to upholding the highest standards of child and youth protection and safeguarding. This policy reflects our dedication to ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people in all our programs. We will continually work to create a protective and nurturing environment for the most vulnerable in the communities we serve.

Ensuring child and youth protection in a Menstrual Health Awareness program is crucial to providing a safe and supportive environment for young girls. Here are some steps to ensure Child/Youth Protection & Safeguarding in such a program:

Staff and Volunteer Training:

- Train all staff and volunteers involved in the program about child and youth protection policies and procedures.
- Include training on understanding the cultural and social aspects of menstruation in the community.

Age-Appropriate Information:

- Provide age-appropriate menstrual health education to young girls and adolescents.
- Use language and teaching materials that are culturally sensitive and easily understood by the target audience.

Informed Consent:

- Ensure that participation in the program is based on informed consent from both the young participants and their parents or guardians.
- Respect the right of participants to opt out of certain discussions or activities if they are uncomfortable.

Privacy and Dignity:

- Create a safe and private environment for discussing menstrual health, including separate spaces for girls to ask questions or seek guidance.
- Ensure that any materials, such as sanitary products, are distributed discreetly.

Cultural Sensitivity:

- Respect and incorporate local customs and traditions related to menstruation in the program.
- Consult with community leaders and elders to gain their support and insights.

Inclusion and Participation:

- Actively involve young girls and adolescents in the planning and implementation of the menstrual health awareness program.
- Encourage them to share their perspectives, needs, and suggestions for improving the program.

Support Services:

- Provide access to menstrual hygiene products, such as sanitary pads or reusable alternatives, as part of the program.
- Offer access to counselling or medical assistance for girls who may need it.

Community Engagement:

- Conduct community awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and promote understanding about menstruation.
- Involve parents, guardians, and the broader community in the program to create a supportive network.

Reporting Mechanisms:

- Establish clear and confidential procedures for reporting any concerns related to child and youth protection in the menstrual health awareness program.
- Ensure that participants are aware of how to report any issues, and that they feel safe doing so.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Regularly assess the impact and effectiveness of the program in terms of child and youth protection.
- Seek feedback from participants and their parents or guardians to make necessary adjustments.

External Oversight:

- Consider involving external organizations or individuals to conduct periodic audits or reviews of the program's child and youth protection measures.

Legal Compliance:

- Ensure compliance with all relevant laws and regulations pertaining to child and youth protection in your region.

By implementing these steps, you can help ensure that your Menstrual Health Awareness program not only educates young girls about their health but also safeguards their well-being and dignity while respecting their cultural and social contexts.