



## **BASTAR DHARMA KHEMA SAMITI (BDKS)**

**Sangam Bhavan, Metgda, Jagdalpur**

# **Child Protection Policy (CPP)**

### **Preamble**

Batar Dharma kshema Samiti (BDKS) Social Apostolate wings of Nirmal province. Bastar Dharma kshema Samiti implements direct programmes for 'social sensitization' of the students and involve them in need based development projects through schools, colleges, NGOs, community-based organisations and other civil society organisations.

Bastar Dharma Kshema Samiti (BDKS) was set up in 1977 to coordinate social sensitization programmes for the students and undertake community development projects for marginalized sections of the society involving students. BDKS is a student movement for a humane and just society with children and women as the primary focus.

BDKS has been implementing various projects in different urban slums in Bakawond (Block) and 25 schools around 70 rural communities Involved in this program. Since 2009, BDKS has been implementing Child-Focused Community Development Projects. It was a new experience gained by implementing Child Development Program (CDP) project focusing on various aspects of children through child centred development approach.

Although BDKS envisions **“every student will be aware, sensitive, empathetic and contributing to sustainable changes in the society”**, children from socio-economically marginalised community form the central theme of development discourse and community development engagement. Hence Child Protection Policy (CPP) is supremely important to ensure protection of children from all kinds of abuses and promote children’s rights with holistic development approach.

### **Introduction to Child Protection Policy (CPP) of BDKS**

The standard for children’s rights and protection against harm is given by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the Government of India and reinforced by BDKS. The Convention demands that the best interest of the child is the principle for any action (article 3). According to the Convention, child abuse can be physical, emotional and sexual and also include neglect, exploitation and harassment. BDKS recognises that child abuse can occur in all societies, all cultures and



organisations and its projects in various locations. It is pertinent that abuse by anyone is prevented or that it stops.

### **The Aim of Child Protection Policy of BDKS**

The primary goal and aim of Child Protection Policy of BDKS is two-fold viz: 1) keeping children safe, 2) making children feel safe.

Therefore, BDKS has developed a Child Protection Policy with a Code of Conduct to serve as minimum standard within its projects, as a measure to promote well-being and safety. The Code of Conduct gives clarity on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the company of children. The Child Protection Policy of BDKS and the Code of Conduct of Child Protection,

- defines expectations in dealing with issues of child protection – providing guidance to staff and all stakeholders/visitors working with children;
- is a starting point for an open approach to promoting the well-being of children
- is based on concepts from the Child Rights Convention (1989) and POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act: taking the best interest of the child as the basis for all behaviour, promoting development of the child and preventing harm;
- is part of employment contract: not acting in accordance with it would result in dismissal from employment
- Forms part of staff agreement and adherence is a prerequisite for service/employment with BDKS.

BDKS considers child abuse of any form and any degree as unacceptable in all circumstances and is committed to ensure that in all its activities and those of its staff, volunteers, community stakeholders and visitors all necessary steps are taken to protect the rights of children and to ensure their well-being. The Code of Conduct and the principles underlying it are to be respected by all BDKS staff, volunteers, college/University students and faculty, parents and those visiting projects for whatever reasons, including volunteer work, rendering any type of service or advice, reporting or journalism, and other representatives.

The Child Protection Policy takes into account local concepts of normal adult-child interaction, culture, religion and law except in cases where these are deemed to be contrary to the best interest of the child.

BDKS and its Child Protection Policy aim to raise awareness of child abuse: to prevent, denounce and react to child abuse through: effective recruitment procedures, training of staff, volunteers and others (associated with BDKS) on child protection matters by development of an informed culture within BDKS.



## **1. Child Abuse or Neglect**

Abuse or neglect of a child is caused by inflicting harms or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger.

### **1.1 Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, biting or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or care-giver feigns the symptoms, of, or deliberately causes ill- health to a child being looked after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as, fabricated illness by proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by proxy.

### **1.2 Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child though it may occur alone.

### **1.3 Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. This may include non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at or in the production of pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate manner.

### **1.4 Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access



to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## **1.5 Exploitation**

Using a child for economic purposes, or performing work that may be hazardous or that interferes with the child's development. This includes educational programmes that are focused on production rather than the acquisition of skills, asking children to perform excessive chores and tasks, asking children under the minimum labour age to perform paid labour, and keeping a child out of an educational facility to perform other tasks.

## **2. How BDKS would ensure child protection in its work**

BDKS aims to create a protective environment for children in all areas of its work by raising awareness, empowering children, training staff and other stakeholders associated to work with children in prevention of child abuse, recognizing signs of child abuse, reporting and dealing with child abuse.

### **2.1 Awareness raising and preventing**

BDKS will ensure that all staff, volunteers, college/University students and faculties and those visiting projects for whatever reasons, including volunteer work, rendering any type of service or advice, reporting or journalism, parents and other representatives/ stakeholders are made aware of the problem of child abuse and child exploitation, the risks to children and the role and responsibility of staff and management in the prevention of child abuse. To this effect, staff volunteers, college/University students and faculties and those visiting projects for whatever reasons, including volunteer work, rendering any type of service or advice, reporting or journalism, parents and other representatives/ stakeholders will be trained in child protection measures, and will be required to know the child protection policy and Code of Conduct and adhere to it. BDKS stimulates an open discussion about child protection concerns; contacts for questions or concerns are appointed in BDKS and exist at the Project Coordination/Field Offices. BDKS will make it mandatory for all the staff to sign its Code of Conduct for Child Protection.

Recruitment and selection procedures for staff or volunteers will include questions and checks on suitability for working with children, the applicant's criminal record and checking job history and references. Head Office Staff of BDKS and project based staff (full-time and part-time) are encouraged to share any concerns they have regarding child safety and development with the director.



## **2.2 Reporting, protection and responding**

BDKS will ensure that Head Office Staff of BDKS and project based staff (full-time and part-time) and other stakeholders know what step to take when concerns arise regarding the safety of a child. There are different reporting levels:

### **2.2.1 Project Level in different locations**

BDKS will form Child Protection Committees at Head Office Level and each project location. When child abuse occurs in a project implemented in different location, the reporting procedures of the project staff should be followed.

The Core Team of project should always inform BDKS about the child abuse and the steps that need to be taken to deal with it in consultation with Child Protection Committee of Head Office.

### **2.2.2 BDKS Level**

For projects implemented by BDKS itself (so-called own projects) the reporting procedure of BDKS should be followed. BDKS and the Core Team of the Respective Project should respect the following reporting principles:

- Take any concern raised seriously
- Take steps to ensure the protection of the child who is the subject of the concern
- Support children, staff or others who raise the concern
- Act appropriately and effectively. Communicate that staff and other BDKS project related people should not investigate or question any child after an allegation or concern has been raised by him / her.
- This is the job of Child Protection Committee and Head Office Level and each project location. BDKS would also record the facts, address the issue and report these to the management
- Listen to and take seriously the views and wishes of the child
- Reports and information are treated with confidentiality
- Always report cases of serious nature to BDKS director



### **3. Role of Management**

The management team of BDKS at Christ University is responsible for the implementation of the Policy in the organisation and good practice. All individuals, whatever their status and role, who come into contact with children, must be fully informed about this Policy and its accompanying procedures. Records of training of staff should be filed and compiled for subsequent monitoring purposes.

Where concerns of child abuse arise, management takes a leading role in protecting the child, ensuring correct reporting and the correct course of action. In all cases the “best interest of the child” is paramount. Staff should and other stakeholders will be informed that in the event of behaviour incompatible with the Child Protection Policy of BDKS, the organisation would take measures against them. These measures can be administrative and/or legal. BDKS also reserves the right of terminating labour contract or other contracts.

### **4. Special task of Project Coordination/Field Offices**

The Project Coordination/Field Offices of BDKS are responsible for making an inventory of the existence of a Child Protection Policy and to make sure that the content of that policy is sufficient. A copy of the child protection policy of BDKS should be available /displayed at all Project Coordination Offices of BDKS.

All Project Coordination/Field Offices of BDKS use the Child Protection Policy and the Core Team members of each Project Coordination/Field Office will give training to other staff to keep the children safe at the project.

### **5. Child Protection Strategies**

#### **5.1 Awareness and Advocacy**

All BDKS staff, volunteers, college/University students and faculty and those visiting projects for whatever reasons, will be informed of Child Protection Policy and are expected to comply with. Any breach shall be treated with the utmost seriousness, will be investigated and dealt with accordingly.

Child protection awareness will include at all stages of BDKS operations including the hiring, orientation and training of all who are in contact with children at all levels and in all offices. BDKS will ensure that all BDKS staff, volunteers, college/University students and faculties and those visiting projects for whatever reasons have read and are aware of this policy. Any changes made to the policy will be communicated immediately.



## **5.2 Recruitment**

BDKS is committed to child safe recruitment, selection and screening practices. All BDKS employees and volunteers will be informed of this policy during the recruitment process. All employees and volunteers will be required to sign an acknowledgement that they have read this policy and will comply with its requirements.

Where BDKS determines it is necessary or appropriate, employees and volunteers, particularly those who conduct work that brings them into direct contact with children, must provide a “working with children” or similar clearance from the applicable regulator and/or assist BDKS to make background checks.

BDKS may refuse to employ, or terminate the employment of, any person who it reasonably believes may pose a risk to children.

## **5.3 Training**

Child Protection Policy of BDKS will be made available to all staff, full-time and Part-time, volunteers and others involved with BDKS projects. It is the responsibility of the Director to ensure that all BDKS offices have a copy of and that all staff, volunteers and others involved with BDKS projects are aware of, and trained on Child Protection Policy of BDKS. The Director will nominate a person in each office responsible for ensuring that all adhere to Child Protection Policy of BDKS.

## **5.4 Marketing and Printed Material**

BDKS will undertake all reasonable precautions to protect paper and electronic information about children. All staff, volunteers and others involved with BDKS projects are required to adhere to policies of BDKS in relation to privacy and photography – use of image. All communications involving children must use pictures and text that are decent and respectful.

## **5.5 Allegation, Reporting, Case Management and Investigation**

BDKS is committed to take all possible efforts to prevent the abuse of children and to hold accountable to all those who do. All staff, volunteers and others involved with BDKS projects are required to report immediately to the Director any:

- Disclosure or allegation from a child or community member or BDKS representative regarding the safety, abuse or exploitation of a child



- Observation of concerning behaviour by any BDKS staff, volunteers and others involved with BDKS projects that breaches this Policy or the Child Protection Code of Conduct
- Inappropriate use of tools, equipments and technology including computers and photographic equipment
- Person engaging in suspicious behaviour that could be associated with child abuse or exploitation or trafficking

If a person knowingly chooses not to report an incident or any suspicion of child abuse or exploitation, then they will be removed from associating with BDKS.

The Director and along with the Core Team will conduct an investigation in a timely and thorough manner, and may require the assistance of outside legal, mediation or other expert advice. The investigation and its outcome will be appropriately documented.

The investigation may require the interview of the person making an allegation, other witnesses and the person who is alleged to have been involved in the incident or is the subject of the suspicion. The matter may be referred to local police or other authorities if it is considered to involve criminal behaviour.

BDKS will treat all concerns raised seriously and treat all parties involved fairly. All reports will be handled professionally, confidentially and expediently. All reports, the names of people involved and the details will remain confidential and any disclosure will be on a “need to know” basis or when required by relevant state or central law or when police or child protection authorities are notified of the incident or allegation.

All reports made in good faith will be viewed as being made in the best interests of the child, regardless of the outcome of any investigation. BDKS will ensure that the interests of the BDKS representative reporting child abuse in good faith are protected. Any BDKS representative who intentionally makes false or malicious allegations will face disciplinary action.

The rights and welfare of the child is of prime importance. Every effort will be made to protect the rights and safety of the child throughout any investigation.





## 6. Child Protection Code of Conduct

I, \_\_\_\_\_(name) agree that in the course of my association with Bastar Dharma Kshema Samiti (BDKS),

### ***I will:***

- Treat all children and young people with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, disability, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, birth or other status
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all children, young people, parents, employees and volunteers
- Encourage children, young people, parents, employees and volunteers to speak up about issues that affect them
- Refrain from using corporal punishment on children
- Immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with BDKS
- Comply with local, national and international child protection laws
- Ensure that, whenever possible, another adult is present when I am working with children, or in the proximity of children
- Inform my supervisor/manager of my involvement in any situation where my actions could be misinterpreted
- Bring to the notice of my supervisor/manager if I am involved in any situation which would be likely to bring the organisation into disrepute, and inform my supervisor/manager if I am investigated for any crime or charged with any criminal offence.

### ***And I will not:***

- Use inappropriate language – whether of an offensive, discriminatory, demeaning, abusive or sexual nature – when speaking with or whilst in the presence of a child or young person
- Engage in behaviour to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade a child or young person, or otherwise emotionally abuse a child or young person
- Marry a person under the age of 18
- Act in a sexually provocative manner or engage children in any form of sexual activity, including paying for sexual services
- Hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child in an inappropriate, unnecessary or culturally insensitive way



- Condone or participate in, behaviour with children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive
- Discriminate against or in favour of particular children to the exclusion of others
- Spend time outside work requirements with any child or young person connected with the programme of BDKS
- Hire children for domestic or any other labour which is inappropriate for their age or development, interferes with their education or play, or places them at risk of injury
- do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves such as toileting them or changing their clothes
- Sleep in close proximity to any children unless it is absolutely necessary, in which case I will keep my supervisor/manager informed and ensure another adult is present, where possible (noting that this does not apply to my own children)
- Access or create sexually abusive images of children, and use computers, mobile phones, video or digital cameras or any other technology for the purpose of exploiting or harassing children.

## **Use of Children's Images**

Before photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, I will:

- Assess and comply with local traditions or restrictions on reproducing personal images
- At a minimum, obtain and document verbal consent from children and/or their parent or guardian and explain how the photograph or film will be used. Written consent should be obtained, where possible
- Ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner.
- Children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be perceived as sexually suggestive
- Ensure images are honest representations of the situations and the facts
- Ensure the identities of children and young people in photographic and electronic images are not disclosed
- Ensure these files are stored securely and access is limited on a needs basis to relevant staff only.



***I confirm that I have read and understood BDKS's:***

- Child Protection Policy, and
- Child Protection Code of Conduct

I agree to comply with the Policy and Code of Conduct. I understand that a breach of the Policy or Code may provide grounds for my employment/service/association with BDKS to be terminated. I also understand that a breach of the Policy or Code could result in criminal prosecution.

I understand that it is my responsibility, as a person engaged by BDKS/visiting BDKS, to use common sense and avoid actions or behaviours that are abusive or exploitative of children or young people, or could be construed as such.

I hereby authorize BDKS to undertake any necessary inquiries, including criminal record checks and reference checks, as part of my appointment or recruitment process.

I confirm my willingness to participate in BDKS training sessions on child protection and safety.

**Name of Staff/Member/Volunteer/Visitor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Designation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organisation and Address:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_