

Dhaka Ahsania Mission

Child Protection Policy

[Approved in DAM EC meeting of 1 September 2012]

1. Introduction:

Bangladesh is one of the first countries that ratified the convention of child rights immediate after opening for signature on 26 January 1990. The Convention stipulates, among other things, that every child has their right to life, and that states shall ensure the maximum child survival and development; that every child has the right to a name and nationality from birth; and that when courts, welfare institutions or administrative authorities deal with children, the child's best interests shall be a primary consideration. Furthermore, States shall ensure that each child enjoys full rights without discrimination or distinction of any kind, and shall ensure that children should not be separated from their parents, unless by competent authorities for their well-being. In addition, States shall facilitate reunification of families by permitting travel into, or out of, their territories; and States shall protect children from physical or mental harm and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation. Also according to the Convention, disabled children shall have the right to special treatment, education and care; primary education shall be free and compulsory and discipline in school should respect the child's dignity; capital punishment or life imprisonment shall not be imposed for crimes committed before the age of 18; no child under 15 should take any part in hostilities and children exposed to armed conflict shall receive special protection; and children of minority and indigenous populations shall freely enjoy their own cultures, religions and languages. The UN definition of a child is limited to 18 years old. Ratification and importance to this in real life situation in Bangladesh where about 35% of total population are children need special attention being the fact of issues on child labor, abuse, violence, trafficking and so many other rights of children. Dhaka Ahsania Mission founded in 1958 has been working to address the issues of disadvantaged and deprived people including children through many projects and programs. DAM has set out policy for common values, principles and beliefs to meet our organizational commitment to protect children and work for their rights and entitlements. Some clauses of DAM explicitly states that the organization will initiate and implement projects with special emphasis on:

- Early childhood care development.
- Children's education for development and fundamental rights.
- Prevention of children and women from trafficking rehabilitation of trafficked victims.
- Sports and Cultural program for youth and children.
- Rehabilitation of destitute and orphan children.
- Children protection and participation in our program and processes.
- Working with partners should be equally responsible to meet protection standards for children in their programs.

DAM has developed this policy document to ensure protection of children from any social, physical, mental exploitation, abuse and negligence rather to complement in their potential growth and participation in DAM's child friendly program enabling to raise their voice on their issues. DAM will use this policy document as an organizational strategic instrument in planning, designing, organizing, involving, monitoring, evaluating and managing any kind program and institutional initiatives where children are part of it.

2. Rational for Child Protection policy:

Bangladesh is land of NGOs working at grassroots level to address issues of women and men including children and thus contribute to this nation. Moreover, these NGOs analyze different issues and facts and work in collective manner for policy advocacy at national level. DAM being one of the largest and oldest NGO has been working on children issues at micro and macro level.

DAM has been developing various programs and projects on children issues and implementation of those projects have involvement of children. The organization needs policy guidelines in order to design and implement those programs and projects to ensure children rights and entitlements.

In many projects children participation has been mandated in implementation process, which demands clear policy and guideline to determine that such participation cannot be defined as child labor and contradiction to their potential growth.

Children mobility and involvement in community base activity is another crucial element to child rights. Therefore, DAM needs policy guidelines for their mobility within and outside of their community and participation in community mobilization and sensitization with certain level.

The organization's staff maintains contact with children and their parents during various programs and events when communication and dealing with children needs special attention because of children age, risk of abuse, behavior pattern and local culture. The organization should have policy guideline, which could be followed by staff to communicate and deal with the children and their parents.

The organization has many events and various contacts with children ensuring image of the organization. Staff on behalf of the organization is responsible to maintain such image ensuring that the organization's capabilities and clear understanding about child sensitive issues. The staff needs to be oriented and aware about their roles and responsibilities, which could be defined through code of conduct enabling to behave and deal with children complying with organizational policy and guideline.

The children need special attention during any disaster happens in the community. More over their protection and security from abuse is important while they stay at any emergency shelter centers. Policy and guidelines are necessary to support children for survival and protection of children during disaster.

DAM implements and manages many programs in partnership with many national and international organizations while child protection policy is referred as an essential element in the partnership agreement particularly with child focused organizations like Plan, Save the children. DAM's policy and guideline will be a strategic document to complement in such partnership agreement.

3. DAM'S experience on children issues:

DAM has gained experiences in programs and projects implementation on children issues for their development and entitlement to complement in different articles of child rights.

Some significant projects are:

- Pre-school for early childhood education and preparedness for primary school enrolment

- Quality education for slow learners
- Non formal education to urban working children
- Non formal primary and secondary education to urban working and poor children, Drop in center
- Primary education classes for working children (class-V) Junior secondary education (Class-VI-VIII)
- Combating cross boarder trafficking of women and children
- Urban Community Learning Center (UCLC) for street and working children

DAM has addressed issues on child labor, health, education, protection, rehabilitation and gained many experiences, learnt lessons, which have been considered and taken under policy guideline so that organization equally can become competent in policy, dialogue with other national and international organizations.

4. Principles:

The guiding principles of the CRC are: non-discrimination by race, sex religion, origin, and economic status etc. (Article 2); and the right to life, survival and development (Article 6). The first article refers to all children having the same right to develop their potential. In order to ensure observation of the latter, it is fundamental to guarantee.

Respect for the opinion and participation of children (Article) establishes that the ideas and points of view of children must be respected. Also, children must participate in decision-making on those questions, which affect them, in accordance with their age.

The CRC has had great influence owing to its character: universal, it covers all children, in all situations and in all countries; unconditional, it calls on even the poorest countries to protect the rights of the child; and integrated, as all rights are essential, indivisible, interdependent and shared by all.

Another important aspect of the CRC is its extent, as it covers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, It guarantees the right to life (Article 6), to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Articles 13 and 14) to health (Article 24), to a level of life permitting self- development (Article 27) and to recreation play and cultural activities (Article 31).

In order to ensure that States fulfill all these rights, the Convention established the creation of the Child Rights Committee. All the States, which approved the CRC, are obliged to present periodical reports. So as to ensure their objectivity, the 10 members of the committee work totally independently from their respective governments.

DAM envisions a world where justice, respects, dignity prevail for all. For that, the policy sets out how to work to achieve this in practice and protecting children both from intentional and unintentional harm and behavior.

- DAM has a duty of care and a duty to act solely in the interests of the organization and its beneficiaries.
- DAM will follow the rule of law of Bangladesh for any legal aspect in respect of children issues.
- Abuse of any child by employees of members of the organization constitute misconduct is subject to disciplinary measure as per norms of the organization.
- Create and maintain an environment that prevents exploitation and abuse, and promotes child rights.
- Treating children with respect and dignity

- Plan and organize the work and the work place so as to minimize risks.
- As far as possible, be visible in working with children.
- Implement child interest events line, Child education day, child rights week, child labor day, etc.
- Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed on children issues.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior does not go unchallenged.
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concern.
- Take all practical steps to develop procedures and protecting child practices as a continuous process of DAM.
- Ensure DAM supported projects routinely report on the status of child protection activities.

5. Applying Child Protection Policy:

This policy document applies to develop an organizational culture, practices, staff behavior, management, program development, partnership and implementation that enable child protection and development with their rights and entitlements.

Code of conduct of staff members:

- Staff members shall abide by a code of conduct to ensure proper behavior, attitude, relationship and conduct with children.
- Any staff engages or is accused for physical/sexual relationship with children is subject to disciplinary action and legal prosecution if necessary.
- Never use language, behave, make suggestions or offer advice, which are inappropriate
- Never Condone, or participate in, behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abuse
- Make commitment never act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade
- Children or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse
- Never discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others.

Children participation in program:

- Implement project activities by them, but should not be treated as child labor.
- Implement Program in favor of child rights
- Child services need to confer respect, dignity and acceptance.
- Empower them to discuss about their rights.
- Encourage them have energy to involve development program.
- Create social consciousness by them, for local resource mobilization.
- Empower children, discuss with them about their rights
- Disseminate Information by children for mobilization of people
- Incorporate new project about child oriented and ensure child participation.
- Implement child consciousness program.
- Encourage children to contribute for making policy to control project activities.

- Avoid placing yourself in a potentially compromising position, where you might be vulnerable to accusations of abuse.
- Be aware of the risk of unintentional harm posed by physical hazards and develop clear procedures to minimize these.

Child focused/Friendly Programming:

- In program design where appropriate the children are clearly defined as beneficiaries.
- Prioritize child oriented project in the field
- Ensure child participation in development program
- Register child participation as a work force in program
- Establish child centered institute, and Implementation by children

Children protection during disaster:

During humanitarian emergencies many of the rights of children are regularly compromised and violated. Children are the most vulnerable victims of any humanitarian crisis. Environment disaster such as floods, hurricanes, Tsunami & earthquakes increasingly caused wide spread destruction, especially in areas where overcrowding and poverty area already endemic.

Looking at children's protection needs during floods and plan accordingly to meet those needs. Following are few exemplar measures:

- Select safe place for children on emergency basis.
- Ensure social security, available child food and nutrition in center.
- Ensure available child food and other child related food and security for lactating mother.
- Identify the assistance children need in order to cope with the floods
- Outline whether and how the current disaster responses meet children's special protection needs during floods
- Identify ways of improving the emergency response plans in order to meet children's protection needs during flood.

Communication with children:

- Seek to portray and represent people in an accurate and balanced way, making as much reference as possible to their social, cultural and economic environment, and emphasising everyone's dignity.
- Avoid using or supporting degrading, victimising or shaming language and images.
- Avoid manipulating or sensationalising text and images; making inaccurate generalisations;
- Never use images of anyone in inappropriate clothing or provocative poses.
- Secure the informed consent of the person to use images for further use.
- Listen their demand/talk with patient
- Try to meet up their demands, if demands are not rational make them understand to change their demands.
- Listen their talk with concentration
- Assist them planning some specific steps to the solution
- Make arrangement for talking with one child or more children at a time.

- Listen carefully and politely. Don't interrupt the child when he/she is trying to tell his story.
- Assist the children for planning some specific steps for problem solving.
- Always tell children the truth.
- Empower children-discuss with them with their rights.
- Do not ask why but do ask what happened.
- Encourage to them for express their right.

Organizational mandates:

- All partners will abide by the code of conduct
- Induction will include briefing on child protection issues
- Every work place will display contact details for reporting possible child abuse.
- Ensure child consultation and participation in program implementation as appropriate.
- Implement project for the children and by the children where and when it is possible.
- Systems will be establish by every member/ partners to investigate possible abuse once reported and to deal with it
- Training, learning opportunities and support will be provided as appropriate to ensure commitments are met.

6. Policy decision and Administration:

- Executive committee of DAM have the overall responsibility to ensure this policy and guidelines and will evaluate regularly for its effectiveness and make amendment if necessary.
- The Executive Director of DAM is responsible to implement and use of policy guideline as appropriate to program and management of the organization.