

Child Protection is Everybody's Business

Child Protection Policy paper of SOS Children's Villages – summary in a child friendly language

Dear Friends,

This document is very important for our organisation! It tells everybody what we believe about keeping children safe and how we work for your rights. It is called a policy because everyone – adults and children – has to respect what is written here. We all need to do so in order to get on well with each other and to feel safe and protected.



The child protection policy of SOS Children's Villages clearly states:

- Any kind of abuse and neglect of children must not be accepted!
- The protection of children is everybody's business!

The policy answers the following queries:

- ◆ what we understand by "child abuse" and "neglect"
- ◆ what SOS Children's Villages (SOS) is willing to do so that children are safe from any kind of abuse
- ◆ and what to do if a child has been harmed.

SOS Children's Villages needs a child protection policy because:

- Any child can be at risk of abuse and neglect;
- Some girls and boys are more likely to be abused and maltreated because they are ill or have a disability; because they look different or speak in a different language, etc.
- Often, children have been maltreated and abused by someone they trusted before
- The wounds of maltreatment and abuse are not always visible. But these wounds need to heal so that the child can live a happy life again.

Did you know that there are different kinds of child abuse? Do you understand what we mean by "neglect"?

Physical abuse :

Some children experience bad things: They are beaten or are maltreated in other ways. But nobody has the right to cause others pain, and certainly not people that are weaker! Nor is it all right when parents or other adults who are responsible for children allow other people to treat children badly or do not help them.



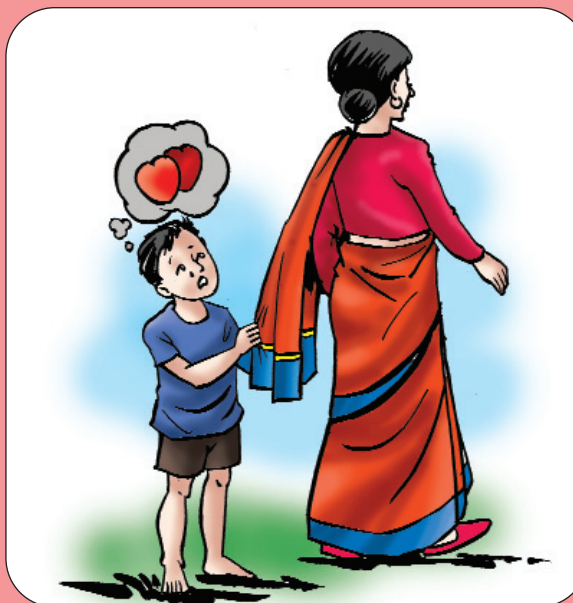
Sexual abuse :

It's up to you – whether you are an adult or a child – to decide if someone can kiss, caress or touch you. Nobody has the right to force someone else to touch them. If you don't like the way you are touched or even looked at, you can and must say "no". Nobody has to look at repulsive pictures of naked people.



Neglect :

Growing up is not always easy. In order to develop well, children need support. It is the responsibility of the adults, in particular of parents, to give the children this support. This includes looking after them so that nothing happens to them, giving them good food and enough of it, enabling them to go to school, and treating them well and with love. When adults don't care for their child properly, this is called neglect.



Emotional abuse :

All adults should give children the feeling that they are valuable and that they are worth living. It is an abuse to keep scaring children, to speak ill of them or to make them look stupid. Nobody must ask children to do things for which they are still too young.



Child to child abuse :

Abuse does not always happen from adult to children. It also happens between children to children. Some children are not aware that what they do to other children is not always right. Some one has to explain to them that they should not do it. But this is the role of adults.



What SOS wants to tell the children:

- ◆ You have rights – and this includes the right to say ‘No’.
- ◆ Violence is not allowed.
- ◆ We listen to you and take you seriously.

What SOS wants to tell people who live and work with children :

- ◆ All people, and certainly all children, want to be loved. This is important for us to be able to build good relationships in our lives. To embrace a child in a loving way is not abuse.
- ◆ SOS Children’s Villages supports you in raising children in an atmosphere without violence.
- ◆ In case of abuse you are not alone.
- ◆ The rights and the well-being of children come first.



- ◆ Take every indication of abuse, even the slightest, seriously and be there if children need you.

What to do in the case of abuse: where to turn to

- ◆ In each SOS Children's Village, in each SOS Herman Gmeiner School and in each Family Strengthening Programme there are people that are called persons of trust who you can turn to when there is something that worries you and you want to talk about. If you feel that you have been abused or have observed abuse, you should talk to these persons of trust. You have a say when electing your persons of trust. Each child and each adult should know who these persons are and how to contact them (it would be easiest to have a list with their names in a place which is accessible to everyone).



- ◆ If you have any concerns the persons of trust will talk to you and decide together with you what to do. They will only talk about what happened with those people who have to know about it.
- ◆ They will also ensure that you, or the child that has been abused, feel(s) better. They will do their very best to protect you from further harm.

Is there anything else you want us to do to make you feel more protected ?

Do you know who the tutors in your SOS Children's Village, at your school, are?

Dear Friends,

This is what this document, which we call 'policy paper', is all about. The best way to prevent child abuse and neglect is that you are familiar with your rights and know what to do if you or one of your friends is at risk of being harmed. We would like to encourage you to speak openly about child protection – even if it might be difficult at times. This will help the adults to have a better understanding of what you need to feel safe and how to protect you.

Thank you!



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