



Child Protection Policy Draft

VANI – Voluntary Action Network India – is unwavering in its commitment to uphold the rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Constitution of India. We stand for the principle that all children, irrespective of social, economic, or cultural barriers, have an equal right to dignity, safety, and freedom from abuse, exploitation, violence, and neglect.

VANI firmly believes that every child deserves a joyful, safe, and nurturing childhood. We are dedicated to empowering individuals, civil society organizations (CSOs), and communities to contribute their unique skills and passion toward protecting and advancing the rights of children, ensuring their voices are heard and their futures secured.

Purpose

- To ensure that the safety, care, protection, and welfare of the child are imperative in all our actions.
- To provide a child protection framework to guide all programs, communications, and stakeholder engagements.
- To establish a code of conduct and standardized procedures for VANI staff, board members, and associates, ensuring no harm or abuse is caused to any child.
- To build awareness and capacity among VANI's team and its network of partners to uphold children's safety and dignity in all activities.

Definitions

- **Child:** A person below the age of 18 years.
- **Child Abuse:** All forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect, or negligent treatment of a child. This includes actions or inactions that result in potential or actual harm.
- **Child Protection:** The safeguarding of children from all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect. For VANI, this includes advocacy, capacity building, and ensuring policy adherence across its engagements.
- **Staff Member of VANI:** All individuals employed full-time, part-time, or on contract, or on deputation with VANI.
- **Board of VANI:** Members of the Governing Board of VANI.
- **Informed Consent:** Explicit agreement obtained from children and/or their guardians before taking and using photographs, videos, or written materials involving the child.

Applicability: This policy applies to:

- All staff members of VANI
- All associates, consultants, interns, and volunteers affiliated with VANI
- All visitors to VANI's offices or field sites
- Board members
- Any representative of a CSO or other partner engaging with children on behalf of or through VANI's platform.

Code of Conduct

All VANI staff and affiliated individuals/organizations must:

- Respect the privacy, dignity, and safety of every child.
- Actively assess and manage risks in all spaces where children may be present.
- Be especially sensitive to the needs of children with disabilities or vulnerabilities.
- Promote inclusion and non-discrimination based on age, gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, or background.
- Encourage environments where children feel safe to voice concerns.
- Handle child-related data with confidentiality and care; share publicly only with informed consent.
- Always obtain informed consent before conducting interviews, taking photographs/videos, or using children's stories for public dissemination.
- Respect a child's right to refuse participation or documentation.
- Ensure children's images and stories are portrayed respectfully and appropriately.
- Maintain professional boundaries in all child interactions.
- Avoid sharing inappropriate material with or around children.
- Be vigilant and report any incident or concern that may place a child at risk.

Implementation & Review:

This policy will be administered by VANI's HR & Admin function. All staff and associates will receive periodic orientation on child protection standards.

Review Frequency:

This policy shall be reviewed every three years or earlier if deemed necessary by VANI's leadership or in response to an emergent issue.

Partnership and Network Responsibility:

VANI operates through a wide network of CSOs. Therefore, it is crucial to include the responsibility of ensuring that **partner organizations** also adhere to child protection principles.

Partner Compliance:

VANI will advocate for and encourage all its partner CSOs and stakeholders to adopt child protection policies aligned with this framework. VANI may support partners in capacity building, training, and policy development to ensure child safety practices are mainstreamed across the network.

Capacity Building and Training:

VANI is committed to building the capacity of its staff, board members, associates, and partner organizations on child protection. Regular sensitization workshops, orientation sessions, and updated resources will be made available to ensure clarity on reporting, prevention, and response mechanisms.

Reporting and Redressal:

Even though VANI does not directly implement programs with children, any violation or suspicion of violation of this policy must be immediately reported to the CEO at VANI. A transparent, confidential, and survivor-sensitive mechanism shall be in place to address such issues in a timely and responsible manner.

The identity of the complainant and the child will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law or necessary to protect the child. VANI will ensure a survivor-centered, trauma-informed approach that prioritizes the safety and dignity of the child.

A Child Protection Committee may be constituted to independently assess the case and recommend appropriate measures. The process will ensure:

- Timely acknowledgment of the complaint
- Fair and impartial investigation
- Support services such as counseling referrals where needed
- Immediate steps to protect any child at risk

False or malicious complaints will also be reviewed with sensitivity, ensuring accountability without undermining genuine voices. All complaints will be documented and stored securely.

Advocacy for Child Rights:

VANI will continue to raise its voice in policy forums and with government stakeholders to strengthen child protection laws, systems, and accountability. VANI will also work to ensure that the voice of civil society is included in national dialogues on child safety and welfare.

Digital Protection:

VANI will ensure that all digital platforms and communication channels involving children are secure and child-friendly. Any virtual engagements involving children will adhere to ethical standards and privacy protocols.

Monitoring Implementation:

VANI will regularly monitor the implementation of this policy within its offices and among its network partners, and take corrective action where necessary.

Feedback mechanisms will be put in place to allow anonymous reporting and continuous improvement.

- VANI believes that listening to feedback helps improve how we protect children. We have simple ways for staff, partners, and others to safely share suggestions or raise concerns.
- Staff and visitors can share feedback through physical or online suggestion boxes without sharing their name.
- VANI will create safe spaces for CSOs to share experiences and challenges related to child safety during meetings or webinars.
- All serious feedback will be kept confidential, reviewed carefully, and acted on quickly. We will also inform the person who gave the feedback—when possible—about what was done.

