

Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

1. Policy Statement

Meaningful Miles is committed to protecting all children from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. We believe every child has the right to grow up in a safe, supportive, and respectful environment. This policy outlines our commitment to safeguarding children and sets out the responsibilities of all staff, volunteers, partners, and associates working with or on behalf of Meaningful Miles in India.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as any person under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Indian law.

This policy is aligned with relevant Indian child protection legislation, including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All Meaningful Miles staff, volunteers, consultants, interns, and board members
- Partner organisations and suppliers acting on behalf of Meaningful Miles
- All activities, programmes, travel experiences, and community engagements involving children, whether directly or indirectly

Compliance with this policy is mandatory.

3. Our Safeguarding Principles

Meaningful Miles is guided by the following safeguarding principles:

- The best interests of the child are paramount
- Zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse and exploitation
- Prevention of harm through awareness, training, and safe practices
- Accountability through clear reporting and response mechanisms
- Respect for local cultures while upholding international child protection standards

4. Forms of Abuse and Harm

Child abuse may include, but is not limited to:

- Physical abuse: causing physical harm or injury
 - Emotional abuse: persistent emotional harm affecting a child's wellbeing
 - Sexual abuse or exploitation: any sexual activity with a child, including exploitation online or through imagery
 - Neglect: failure to meet a child's basic physical or emotional needs
 - Economic exploitation: involving children in work that is harmful or interferes with education
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5. Expected Standards of Behaviour

All representatives of Meaningful Miles must:

- Treat children with dignity, patience, and respect at all times
 - Maintain appropriate professional boundaries with children
 - Never engage in physical, sexual, or emotional relationships with children
 - Never use language or behaviour that is abusive, threatening, humiliating, or culturally inappropriate
 - Avoid being alone with a child unless authorised and supervised
 - Challenge and report inappropriate behaviour involving children
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6. Safe Working Practices

To reduce the risk of harm, Meaningful Miles commits to:

- Working with reputable partner organisations that share safeguarding values
- Ensuring roles involving children are clearly defined and supervised
- Limiting one-to-one contact with children wherever possible
- Ensuring activities involving children take place in open, observable environments

- Using risk assessments to identify and mitigate safeguarding risks
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7. Photography, Filming & Online Safety

- Informed consent must be obtained from a parent, guardian, or authorised organisation before taking images of children
 - Images must never portray children in a sexualised, degrading, or exploitative manner
 - Children’s full names, locations, or identifying details must not be shared publicly
 - Online communication with children must be transparent and, where possible, involve a responsible adult
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8. Recruitment, Screening & Training

Meaningful Miles will:

- Use safer recruitment practices for staff and volunteers working with children
 - Conduct appropriate background checks where legally permissible
 - Provide safeguarding information and guidance to volunteers and partners
 - Ensure all representatives understand their safeguarding responsibilities
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9. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

All safeguarding concerns must be taken seriously.

If you:

- Witness or suspect abuse or exploitation of a child
- Are concerned about inappropriate behaviour by a volunteer, staff member, or partner

You must report it immediately to Meaningful Miles.

Reports should include factual information and avoid personal judgement. Confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible, with information shared only on a need-to-know basis.

10. Response to Concerns

Meaningful Miles will:

- Act promptly and sensitively on all safeguarding reports
 - Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of the child
 - Cooperate with local authorities, child protection agencies, and partner organisations
 - Take appropriate disciplinary or corrective action where required
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11. Confidentiality & Data Protection

- All safeguarding information will be handled confidentially and securely
 - Information will be shared only when necessary to protect a child
 - Data will be processed in line with applicable data protection laws
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12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as required to ensure continued relevance, legal compliance, and best practice, including alignment with changes in Indian law and safeguarding standards.

13. Policy Acceptance

All individuals working with or representing Meaningful Miles are required to read, understand, and comply with this Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy. Failure to do so may result in removal from activities and, where required, reporting to relevant authorities.

14. Legal Framework & References (India)

This policy is informed by and aligned with the following national and international frameworks:

Indian Legislation

- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 – Provides protection of children from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography, and establishes child-friendly judicial processes.

- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 – Governs care, protection, rehabilitation, and welfare of children in need of care and protection.
- Information Technology Act, 2000 (and amendments) – Addresses online abuse, exploitation, and misuse of digital content involving children.
- Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 – Reinforces children’s rights to safe and inclusive learning environments.

International Frameworks

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989
- Keeping Children Safe Coalition – International Safeguarding Standards
- WHO Guidelines for the Management of Child Abuse

India-based Good Practice References

- Bhumi India – Child Protection Policy & Safeguarding Framework – A nationally recognised Indian youth volunteer organisation whose safeguarding standards inform best practice for volunteer-led programmes involving children in India.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), Government of India – Child protection guidelines and national safeguarding mechanisms.
- CHILDLINE India Foundation (1098) – National emergency helpline and child protection response system.*