

Child Protection Policy

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MOANOGHAR

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A. Moanoghar: its Objectives and Activities

Moanoghar is the largest children's charity in the region of Chittagong Hill Tracts encompassing the 3 Hill districts of Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachari. Established in 1974 by a group of socially engaged Buddhist monks, it has over the past decades, given free or highly subsidized shelter and education to over 4,000 poor and orphan children belonging to the different ethnic minority indigenous communities from the region.

Moanoghar's raison d'être is to promote and provide education to the children who are vulnerable, deprived and destitute. This is motivated by the convictions that children are the most vulnerable of society yet they also hold the promise of the future.

Children are at the heart of Moanoghar. They call others to share their life. Moanoghar has to contribute to their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. This imposes on Moanoghar the obligation to create an environment so that the children grow up as good humane beings with values that promote tolerance, compassion, non-sectarianism and respect to diversity. It also implies that these values are firmly rooted in the education the children receive at Moanoghar both in and outside the boundary of the school as part of formal education and extra-curricular activities.

This conviction for Moanoghar's activism and service is rooted in the Buddhist concept of compassion, fellow-feeling, solidarity and peace. The philosophy of non-violence is the key to realize this; among individuals, but also communities and societies, as well.

At present, about 1365 children are provided education at Moanoghar. Out of this, 807 live residentially in the dormitories with the remaining attending the school from the neighbouring communities. About 46% of these children are girls. All of them are provided free or highly subsidized (at least 50% of the expenses) education.

The children literally come from all the corners of the CHT region. At present, they come from all the 25 upazillas (sub-district) of the region and from as many as 11 different ethnic minority indigenous communities.

Moanoghar also runs a number of other programmes, project and initiatives to complement the educational activities with the children or to further its objectives to serve the vulnerable, distressed and the destitute. These include;

- **Moanoghar Residential High School:** The school is the epicenter of all Moanoghar activities. At present, 1365 children – both residential and non-residential – study in the school.
- **Moanoghar Indigenous People's Language and Culture Preservation Program:** This project is run with the objectives of preservation and development of language and culture of the indigenous peoples of CHT. Five indigenous languages are taught as part of the regular curriculum of the school at present with the objective of covering all the languages in the future. Also, there a number of 'cultural troupes' of the children, in addition to publication of regular school magazines, research journals and other publications.

- **Moanoghar Mini-Hospital and Community Health Programme:** The hospital offers primary health care services to the children. Moanoghar also operates community outreach services on primary health care. At present, the medical staffs of Moanoghar go to three different nodes 2 days a week at each node and provide free medical prescription service, medicines and awareness orientation on sanitation and reproductive health.
- **Higher Education Stipend Program:** Under this scheme, Moanoghar provides monthly stipends for tertiary level students. More than 400 students have so far received stipends under the programme. After a gap of several years, the programme has resumed recently and currently 70 students are provided interest free loans. The refund of these loans serves for providing support to additional students.
- **Moanoghar IT Education Centre:** Moanoghar has an IT education lab with 35 PCs and other accessories. Children are taught basic computer lessons as part of regular school curriculum.
- **Moanoghar Library:** The library has a rich collection of books exceeding 5,000 volumes on Buddhism, Children, Education and CHT & Indigenous peoples. The library is a point of reference and resources in the entire CHT region.
- **Moanoghar Pali College:** It provides students with courses on Buddhism and Pali language.
- **Moanoghar Technical School:** It offers courses on vocational trades and small entrepreneurship. The following courses are offered at present; Weaving, Sewing, Bakery products and carpentry. Moanoghar has plan to expand the school with additional vocational trade courses in the coming years.
- **Fishery, Nursery, Agriculture & Afforestation:** These are income generating projects of Moanoghar, implemented by the students of Moanoghar on lands/fixed assets that Moanoghar owns.

In all of these programmes and activities, Moanoghar work with and for the children; to serve them with care and well-being, to impart education and to finally, to defend their rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

B. Aim & Objectives and Purpose of the Child Protection Policy

The present Child Protection Policy is adopted with the objective of ensuring and promoting the rights of the children that Moanoghar serves. It aims to ensure the children's physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional and spiritual growth with care, love and affection and as well as to prevent any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse.

Its purpose consists of;

- To ensure the growth of the Moanoghar children with care, love and affection
- To raise awareness of the problem of child abuse and the risks to children
- To provide guidance to Moanoghar staff on working more effectively with the children

- To ensure that, when abuse is suspected, it is clear what action must be taken.

C. Scope, Issues of Care, Well-being, and Rights of Children in Moanoghar

The policy is applicable to all involved with Moanoghar. This includes the staff with various responsibilities, teachers in the school, volunteers, and other project and programme staff involved with supplementary and/or complementary activities. Each and every one of them has respective duties, responsibilities and obligations with regard to the children who are supported and cared by Moanoghar. The conditions laid down in this Policy are binding and non-negotiable for all.

C.1. Activities that are Encouraged

To this end, Moanoghar will encourage approaches, actions and initiatives that safeguards and promotes the children's development as an individual capable of appreciating of the following values; positive sharing, mutual tolerance, compassionate listening and understanding, and appreciation of diversity.

C.2. Activities that are Banned and Prohibited

By this Policy, Moanoghar unambiguously, with 'zero tolerance', prohibit and ban the following;

- Abuse;
- Discrimination;
- Child labour and exploitation;
- Violence;
- Bullying or peer abuse

C.2.1 Child abuse, in all forms, is totally prohibited at Moanoghar. It will include the following;

Physical abuse or corporal punishment

No child at Moanoghar will be given any form or corporal punishment. Corporal punishment will include the following;

- Beating
- Striking a child physically, such as with fist, hitting with the palms, etc.
- Other forms of physical punishments such as asking a child to stand with one-leg for long hours, or in other uncomfortable positions (as is quite common in many educational and caregiving institutions in Bangladeshi)

Sexual abuse

There will be 'zero tolerance' to any behaviour that amounts to be sexually abusive to a child. This will include all forms of sexual activity involving children.

Neglect

No child in Moanoghar will be left neglected which may lead a child to be exposed to danger, resulting in a significant impairment of the child's health or development.

C.2.2. Discrimination against Children

Moanoghar totally prohibits any form of discrimination of its children based on ethnicity, sex, religion, creed and disability.

C.2.3. Child labour and exploitation

Moanoghar declares itself totally against any form of child exploitation, including child labour. No child at Moanoghar or beneficiary to its various outreach programme will be subject to such exploitation.

C.2.4. Bullying or peer abuse

Moanoghar ban any behaviour by the caregivers that purports to bullying or peer abuse. It'll also remain vigilant to any such behaviour by the children to another child and will take immediate measures that put a stop to such behaviour.

D. Implementation Mechanism of the Moanoghar Child Protection Policy

All the staff, teachers, volunteers, partners and other caregivers in Moanoghar will have obligation to follow the provisions of this Child Protection Policy. If anyone at Moanoghar found in violation of any of the provisions of this Policy, s/he will be meted out with due punishment commensurate to the degree of the offense. The punishment will include fine, reduction in pay, dismissal from job and expulsion from Moanoghar. Depending on the severity of the offense, this may even lead to submitting the accused to the police by the Moanoghar authority.

Executive Director of Moanoghar will be, ex-officio, responsible for the execution of the Child Protection Policy. In case of the Moanoghar School, the Principal will assume these responsibilities.

For the oversight on implementation of the Child Protection Policy, Moanoghar has established the office of the Ombudsperson, Child Rights Protection, who will work independently and will report periodically to the Executive Council via the General Secretary. S/he will have access to all relevant information of Moanoghar in this regard and anyone dissatisfied with the sanctions by the administrative authority of Moanoghar (i.e. Executive Director) will have the opportunity to raise his/her appeal to the Ombudsperson. In such cases, the verdict/opinion of the Ombudsperson will be taken as final.

E. Amendments and Modification.

No part of the provisions of this Child Protection Policy will be amended except after 2 deliberations by the Moanoghar Executive Council. In all such cases, consent of at least two-third of the members of the Executive Council will be required.

The Policy is also developed in Bangla which is accepted equally as authentic version. The Bangla version will be made available to all the caregivers in Moanoghar and will also be posted on the notice boards of the administrative office, school, residential dormitories and the outreach project offices.
