

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) (Part of CHILD PROTECTION POLICY)

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Disclaimer: This policy has been developed and is being practiced by Indian Grameen Services (IGS) as part of its commitment to strengthening organizational governance, transparency, accountability, and responsible practices.

Approved by Board of Directors, Indian Grameen Services on 19th August 2026

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Indian Grameen Services is a national-level Registered Non-Profit Organization (RNPO) with over four decades of journey as a development catalyst, established in 1987 under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013. We are committed to address complex challenges in India, by design and implementing innovative, demand-driven, impact-oriented, and cost-effective Livelihood solutions. Its work is primarily focused on resource-deficient marginalized communities, vulnerable and poverty-affected geographies, in Central, Eastern, and North-Eastern India. IGS contributes to the broader goal of promoting sustainable livelihoods, with a strong emphasis on improving the wellbeing of rural and peri-urban communities, including women and marginalized populations.

A POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Policy establishes IGS's commitment to protecting children from sexual abuse, exploitation, harassment, and inappropriate conduct, in accordance with the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 and applicable rules. The policy provides clear standards of behaviour, preventive measures, reporting and response mechanisms, and responsibilities for employees, consultants, volunteers, and partners who may come into contact with children. It is important for ensuring a safe, child-friendly, and zero-tolerance environment, while strengthening safeguarding, accountability, ethical conduct, and IGS's legal and institutional responsibility towards children.

Introduction:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is an international treaty that legally obligates nations to protect children's rights.

Articles 34 and 35 of the CRC require states to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. This includes outlawing the coercion of a child to perform sexual acts, the prostitution of children, and the exploitation of children in creating pornography. States are also required to prevent the abduction, sale, or trafficking of children.

World Health Organisation (WHO)-1999 defines Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) as the involvement of a child in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. To simply articulate, CSA is any act, using a child for the sexual gratification of the more powerful person where the later derives power by the differential of age, cognitive difference, socioeconomic differential, religion, and caste. Child Sexual Abuse is mostly committed by someone who is in a position of power and/or authority and a position of trust. Child Sexual Abuse is a violation of the child's body as well as of the child's trust and is against the law.

It includes both contact and non-contact sexual behaviours. CSA encompasses sexual assault, sexual harassment, and use of a child for pornographic purposes (POCSO Act 2012). Contact and non-contact sexual abuse encompass the following behaviours and acts:

As technology advances, new forms of child sexual abuse is happening online which commonly includes grooming, live streaming, consuming child sexual abuse material, and coercing and blackmailing children for sexual purposes (Interpol 2018).

POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act, 2012:

It is defined as "An Act to protect children from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography and provide for the establishment of Special Courts for the trial of such offences and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

It was passed in 2012 under the Ministry of Women and child development.

Key features of the Act:

❖ It is a gender-neutral act

By defining a child as 'any person below the age of 18 years, the POCSO Act sets a gender-neutral tone for the legal framework available to child sexual abuse victims. The act also does not distinguish between perpetrators of child sexual abuse on the grounds of gender.

❖ General principles of the POCSO Act

The Act mentions 12 key principles which are to be followed by anyone, including the State Governments, the Child Welfare Committee, the Police, the Special Courts, NGOs, or any other professional present during the trial and assisting the child during the trial, which are-

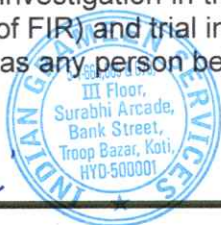
- **Right to life and survival:** A child must be shielded from any kind of physical, psychological, mental, and emotional abuse and neglect
- **Best interests of the child:** The primary consideration must be the harmonious development of the child
- **Right to be treated with dignity and compassion:** Child victims should be treated in a caring and sensitive manner throughout the justice process
- **Right to be protected from discrimination:** The justice process must be transparent and just; irrespective of the child's cultural, religious, linguistic, or social orientation
- **Right to special preventive measures:** It suggests that victimized children are more likely to get abused again, thus, preventive measures and training must be given to them for self-protection
- **Right to be informed:** The child victim or witness must be well informed of the legal proceedings
- **Right to be heard and to express views and concerns:** Every child has the right to be heard in respect of matters affecting him/her
- **Right to effective assistance:** financial, legal, counselling, health, social and educational services, physical and psychological recovery services, and other services necessary for the child's healing must be provided
- **Right to Privacy:** The child's privacy and identity must be protected at all stages of the pre-trial and trial process
- **Right to be protected from hardship during the justice process:** Secondary victimization or hardships for a child during the justice procedure must be minimized

Provisions of the POCSO act:

The POCSO Act was enacted to protect children aged less than 18 from sexual assault sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and pornography.

- The act mandates that investigation in the cases is to be completed in two months (from the date of registration of FIR) and trial in six months.
- The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age.

Signature



- POCSO states a sexual assault is to be considered aggravated if –
 - The abused child is mentally ill or,
 - When the abuse is committed by
 - A member of the armed forces or Security forces
 - A public servant
 - A person in a position of trust or authority of the child, like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor or a person-management or staff of a hospital, whether Government or private.
- It prescribes rigorous imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than ten years, but which may extend to imprisonment for life and also fine as punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault.
- It also makes provisions for avoiding the re-victimization of the child at the hands of the judicial system.
- The Act also makes it mandatory to report such cases. It makes it the legal duty of a person aware of the offence to report the sexual abuse. In case he fails to do so, the person can be punished with six months' imprisonment or a fine.
- It also prescribes punishment to the people who traffic children for sexual purposes.
- The Act also provides for punishment against false complaints or untrue information.
- The act was amended in 2019 to increase the minimum punishment from seven years to ten years. It further adds that if a person commits penetrative sexual assault on a child below the age of 16 years, he will be punishable with imprisonment between 20 years to life, with a fine.
- Aggravated penetrative sexual assault under POCSO Act, 2012 is the equivalent provision for aggravated rape.
- A person can be charged with this offence in certain aggravating circumstances, such as if the rape occurs within a relationship of trust or authority, or if it leads to pregnancy, among others.
- Under POCSO, the consent of a person under the age of 18 is irrelevant, regardless of the nature and circumstance of the sexual interaction, or the particulars of the person with whom it takes place. This means that any sex with a minor is rape

IGS - POCSO

IGS is a zero-tolerant organization to any kind of sexual harassment at workplace. The organization is committed to ensuring a **safe work environment** free from sexual harassment. Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who breaches this policy. Witnesses and bystanders will be supported to act against sexual harassment. In compliance with the mandate of the **POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act, 2012** IGS adopts the present Policy for the prevention, prohibition and redressal of Child Sexual Abuse encompasses sexual assault, sexual harassment, at its workplace be it contact and non-contact sexual behaviours. The same is termed as **IGS Policy Against Protection of Children from Sexual Offences and shall hereafter be referred to as IGS - POCSO.**

❖ Scope:

The policy will be applicable to all staff of IGS, including full-time employees, international staff, interns, voluntary staff, and consultants, employees of project partners, vendors and third party.

❖ Dealing with Retaliation:

Any retaliation against any complainant and/ or employee who participates in a sexual harassment case enquiry is liable for action by the organization. This will be addressed in the




manner as given in the Redressal Process through regular reports from HR to ICC and management to monitor the follow up of the cases for at least one year.

❖ **Confidentiality:**

All complaints (oral/ written) of sexual harassment will be treated with utmost confidentiality by the Committee. However, to conduct an inquiry limited disclosure of pertinent information to certain parties, including the alleged harasser may be required. The Chairperson of the ICC and the Employer shall be responsible for ensuring that there is strict compliance with the Rule prohibiting publication or disclosure and maintaining confidentiality.

❖ **Enquiry Process:**

Once a complaint is received, the Internal Complaints Committee will initiate a prompt and thorough inquiry. The ICC shall conduct an enquiry into the complaint in accordance with the principles of natural justice.