

RCPDS POLICY GUIDELINES – 2016

AS REVISED IN JULY 2016



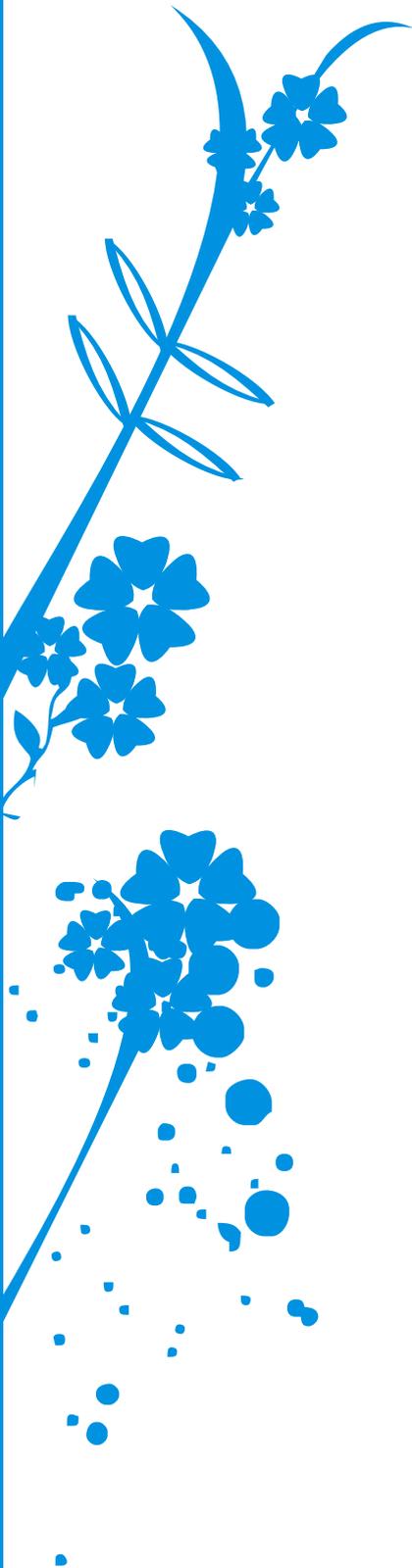
Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies

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**Child Rights
Gender
Disaster
Child Protection
Staff
Finance**



Introduction

Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies RCPDS is a field based development resource agency, which strives to work for sustainable development of vulnerable communities. The non negotiable of RCPDS in its development intervention include Children, Dalits, Gender, Natural Resource Protection and HIV/AIDS. Our recent learning from various disaster management programmes made us to think loudly on our role and need for demarcating a clear policy guideline for the organization. This document is an out come of such dialogue approved in by the general body of the organization.

Involvement and lessons learnt from various earlier interventions of RCPDS and its parent body SPEECH - in recurring disasters such as drought, flood, fire accidents, earthquake and recent tsunami waves in the working area in partnership with various actors such as Government of Tamilnadu, KNH, Germany, German Agro Action, Save the Children, SCIAF and Oxfam made to think of evolving specific disaster policy for the organization. We have made several rounds of discussions with many partner communities, peoples organizations/Federations (CBOs), PRI representatives and board members to crystallize and sharpen our focus on disaster intervention.

Global warming, industrial pollution, globalization, conflicting policies, lack of awareness among implementers, Occupational hazards and vulnerabilities pose great threat to communities, especially to the vulnerable, women and children. The impacts of such disasters have direct impact on the development efforts and investments made on the weaker sections in partnership with various agencies.



“RCPDS, IS PRIMARILY A CHILD CENTRED DEVELOPMENT AGENCY WHICH STRIVE TO CREATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT TO CHILD RIGHTS PROTECTION WITH SUSTAINABLE INTERVENTION THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION. SYSTEM AND MECHANISMS TO ADDRESS STUMBLING BLOCKS TO THIS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS INCLUDING VULNERABILITY AND DISASTERS DUE TO NATURAL CALAMITIES”

Thus it makes all the more important to develop specific policy on disaster response for RCPDS, since it is a development organization working with children working in difficult situations, hazardous industries, dalits and fisher folk from coastal areas, women from lower strata, socially discriminated communities (dalits, gypsies and adivasies). The policy below in parts disaster preparedness, relief, rehabilitation and development mainstreaming specifies the scope and limits of the organization in such cases.



It was inter alias stressed that disaster preparedness, relief, rehabilitation and development are four elements which contribute to and gain, from the implementation of the sustainable development policies. These elements along with environmental protection and sustainable development, are closely inter related, and it was therefore RCPDS should incorporate them in the development plans and ensure efficient follow up measures at the community, sub-unit, district and State level.

Thus the Board of RCPDS has adopted mitigation and prevention as essential components of their development strategy. This General Body has a detailed presentation on Disaster Management. The plan emphasizes the fact that development cannot be sustainable without mitigation being built into developmental process. Each unit of RCPDS is supposed to prepare a plan scheme for disaster mitigation. In brief, mitigation, disaster preparedness, relief involvement and rehabilitation processes are being mainstreamed into developmental planning.

There has been an increase in the number of natural disasters over the past years, and with it, increasing losses on account of globalization, industrialization, environmental degradation and population growth, as a result of which the impact of natural disasters is now felt to a larger extent. Natural disasters are not bound by political boundaries and have no social or economic considerations. They are borderless as they affect both developing and developed countries. They are also merciless, and as such the vulnerable tend to suffer more at the impact of natural disasters.

The extent to which a community or population is affected by a calamity does not purely lie in the physical components of vulnerability, but is contextual also to the prevailing social and economic conditions and its consequential effect on human activities within a given society.

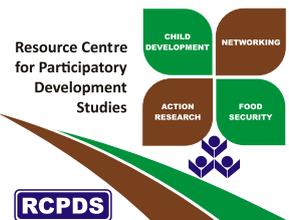
Study in areas affected by earthquakes, flood and tsunami indicates that single parent families, women, handicapped people, children and the aged are particularly vulnerable social groups. The occupational hazards of fire in cotton industries, match and fire industries indicate that marginalized temporary wage labourers, women and unfortunate child laborers (adolescent children) are the worst affected. This factor sometimes tends to be as important as physical vulnerability attributed to geography and infrastructure alone.



In the earthquake in Gujarat, more than 14,000 lives were lost, ten lakh houses were damaged and the asset loss has been indicated to be worth 15,000 crore. In the recent tsunami disaster, only along the Tamilnadu coast more than 10,000 lives were lost, 30,000 houses were damaged and the asset loss is estimated at 9,000 crore. The dimensions of the damage due to natural disasters cause major setbacks to development and it is the poorest and the weakest that are the most vulnerable to disasters. Given the high frequency with which one or the other part of the state/country suffers due to disasters, mitigating the impact of disasters is considered to be an integral component of our development planning and be part of our poverty reduction strategy.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments of Government of India recognize Panchayati Raj Institutions as 'Institutions of self- government'. The amendment has also laid down necessary guidelines for the structure of their composition, powers, functions, devolution of finances, regular holding of elections and reservation of seats for weaker sections including women. These local bodies can be effective instruments in tackling disasters through early warning system, relief distribution, providing shelter to the victims, medical assistance etc. Thus it becomes all the more necessary to work closer to this available resource and constitutional frame work.

CHILD RIGHTS POLICY OF RCPDS - 2016



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Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies - RCPDS is a development NGO based in Madurai with strong commitment to facilitate conducive environment to enable the least and vulnerable, especially dalit, women and children, to participate in the development process. The guiding policies of RCPDS consider women, children, dalit; conservation of natural resource and prevention of HIV/AIDS as cross cutting and non-negotiable in all its intervention. The mission of RCPDS started since 1997 from its strong roots of parent body called SPEECH, which started its mission 1987. As part of its strategy and visionary growth, RCPDS discussed about evolving appropriate policy guidelines on key thrust areas of human development. The first of its section as agreed in the annual general body meeting of the society dated 17 August 2007, is the CHILD RIGHTS, SAFETY AND PARTICIPATION AND POLICY OF THE ORGANISATION. We aim for excellence by positive engagement with children of all section including physical challenge, +ve parents as well children and children at risk. In this way we will make the most of the potential of the individual children and so benefit the organization, family, local communities and society at large. The child rights policy describes the specific actions we are taking to tackle the vulnerability level of all children below the age of 18 and assumptions about child participation. In doing this we take into account stakeholders at all levels.

Our understanding of Child Protection and rights

The following definitions apply to this Policy:

- Child: A person under the age of 18 years.
- RCPDS is committed to protection of child rights and child safety.
- RCPDS as development NGO with special emphasis on child protection will oblige to abide by the obligation of ensuring safe environment not only within the organization but also at the community and any outsider concerned with the organization.

Child rights policy of RCPDS is based on the premise that all children below the age of 18 right from day one in the mothers womb has the right to live in protected environment with Appropriate access to basic rights.

While making commitment to child safety, any form of violation by way of physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, leading to wage earning status including denial of participation is considered under the scope of this policy.

This policy reaffirms rights of the children in line with our national commitment as laid in the UN convention of child rights. While talking about rights of the children factors related to local context, cultural uniqueness, socio religious are taken into consideration.

The policy provides a broad framework for addressing children of all section access the basic rights beyond inequalities forces by the system and obligate the organization to address issues related child abuse,



discrimination, attitudes of individuals and structures within RCPDS and its partner communities including CBOs, networks promoted by RCPDS.

RCPDS insist and make it mandatory to review all its policies, plans and administrative actions, present and future, in the lights of child safety and child first backed by child rights approach.

It is binding on all the units/departments of RCPDS to ensure child protection, participation facilitation of child rights approach backed by legal system.



The substance of this policy states that we will consider our own staff, partners and partner communities for their god given human potentials and facilitate to assist them to best utilize the same to ensure human dignity and social transformation,

We will seek to make the most of the positive contribution that individuals can make to change the social environment in favor of the weaker by using the skills and knowledge that each individual (both men and women) possesses.

Though RCPDS is a front-line development NGO registered under the Tamilnadu government societies Act, partner with communities and institutions abroad for the betterment of children in a manner consistent with social beliefs and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

RCPDS seeks commitment from its own staff, Board, volunteers and external visitors to refrain from engaging in any behavior that may be abusive towards children in general and with special emphasis to children with disabilities, socially excluded, and are vulnerable to any external attraction.

RCPDS commits to providing privacy and space for participation respecting children as potential recipient of human rights.

RCPDS seeks to enhance the welfare of children and reduce the risk of child rights violation by reaffirming commitments and fostering conducive environments by taking careful steps in staff recruitment policy, work place ethics and visits from local or external individual or organizations.

RCPDS is committed to increasing awareness of our staff, community representative, Board members on areas of child rights violation, child abuse and its implication on the child as well the offender by making acquainted with this policy document and getting clarity on the issue.

Our staff policy will set minimum standards in consideration of the local socio cultural, political and economic factors and legal framework.

RCPDS will not partner, engage in any project or activity that may contribute directly or indirectly to disturb child safety or child right violation.

No children under the age of 18 from partner communities will be met alone by any of our employees or visitor linked with project or partner organization but can make visits jointly or protocol leaders.

with family members or local community representative of the same sex or protocol leaders.

Any violation and cases with strong evidence of mis behavior with children below the age of 18 by the above mentioned parties (representatives of RCPDS, our employees or any visitors associated with the project or partner organization) disciplinary and/or possibly legal action as determined by the legal system.

The application of the policy is the responsibility of every person within RCPDS.

Within this policy we will:

seek to consult with appropriate stakeholder groups, to make sure, our development interventions are sound with child first and appropriate to the needs of all children below the age of 18.

Take into account the specific child related needs on access, support and participation with appropriate representation.

Our Staff will

Value, empower and provide training and development opportunities to all children with good governance and child safety in perspective.

Work with our fellow staff members to overcome traditional barriers to child participation.

Review our flexible working arrangements to take account of the diverse needs of our staff.

Work with our partners to make sure that traditional knowledge and value system of the community regenerate and community development happen to achieve children to use their fullest potentials.

This policy is part of a collection of policies that describe how we operate. This policy sits within our overall Equality and Diversity Policy, which includes specific policies relating to Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Religion, Faith and Belief. Other related policies include our disaster policy, child rights policy, accounts and audit policy and staff policy which look at the role and mission of the organization as a whole. Any change to this policy paper could be promoted as per the protocol to reach the general body and officially approve by the same in the form of resolution and announcement.

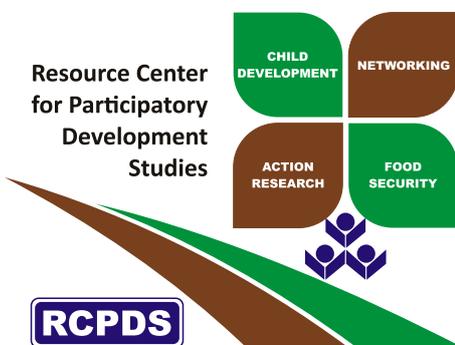
This policy of RCPDS is put to use and will be made operational only from FY 2008 -09 onwards. The draft policy is circulated among stakeholders, Board members and support agencies for further refinement and final version made in the General Body meeting.





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Updated from earlier version of 2013



Please send your comments to
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These policy papers due for review during 2015

Designed by:

Documentation Division **SPEECH**