



Department of Probation  
and Child Care Services

# National Guidelines for Village Child Development Committees

*Promoting Children's Rights Together*





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# Foreword

It is our responsibility as adults to guide children for them to create a sustainable future, upholding the cultural and moral values and identities of this country.

The constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka has affirmed to protect the wellbeing of children and youth from exploitation and discrimination as well as ensure their holistic development.

The Government of Sri Lanka ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991 and the Children's Charter was developed and introduced by the Government in 1992. The Children's Charter outlines the priorities for action for children, together with guidance for the implementation of the actions. Furthermore, Sri Lanka has a long history of providing services focusing on child development through government, non-governmental and private sector organisations. The extended family unit has also been an important structure to ensure quality care, protection and wellbeing of children in the country.

However, the threats to children's protection in the rapidly developing global context has impacted our country as well. In addition, the lack of appropriate coordination between the aforementioned organisations and networks has resulted in gaps in the delivery of services to those who are most in need.

These factors indicated the urgent need to ensure that the obligations stipulated within the Children's Charter are upheld by society and communities. With this primary

purpose in mind, in 1999 the Department of Probation and Child Care Services recruited Child Rights Promotion Officers, who were deployed to Divisional Secretariat offices across the country. CRPOs are now stationed in District Secretariats as well, and take the lead in providing child protection services in all divisions and districts.

However, despite the existence of these provisions the Department of Probation and Child Care Services identified the need for a multi sectorial coordination of the services available at village level, in order to ensure the services reach the most deprived children. As a result, the child protection committee structure, introduced by the DPCC in year 2000 was extended to the village level in 2008. This has been a very successful mechanism to coordinate services for child protection and child well-being at village level. In order to expand its strategic framework and to achieve consistency and sustainability of the committees, the DPCC initiated the development of this National Guideline for Village Child Development Committees.

This National Guideline emphasizes the need for a child friendly environment in the village and strategies that ensure children's care, protection and wellbeing with special attention to the roles and responsibilities of parents and communities.

This publication was developed together with children, village child development committee members as well as both government and non-governmental organisations and independent practitioners with extensive expertise and experience in this field. I deeply appreciate their support and assistance for this venture.

**- Yamuna Perera**

*Commissioner -  
Department of Probation  
and Child Care Services*



# Acknowledgements

This manual has been developed collaboratively by the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID), Terre des hommes, Lausanne (Tdh), Save the Children International (SCI), United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Vision International and Plan International.

Particular gratitude to members of the Village Child Development Committees and Child Rights Officers for their inputs in the development of this manual.



# Acronyms

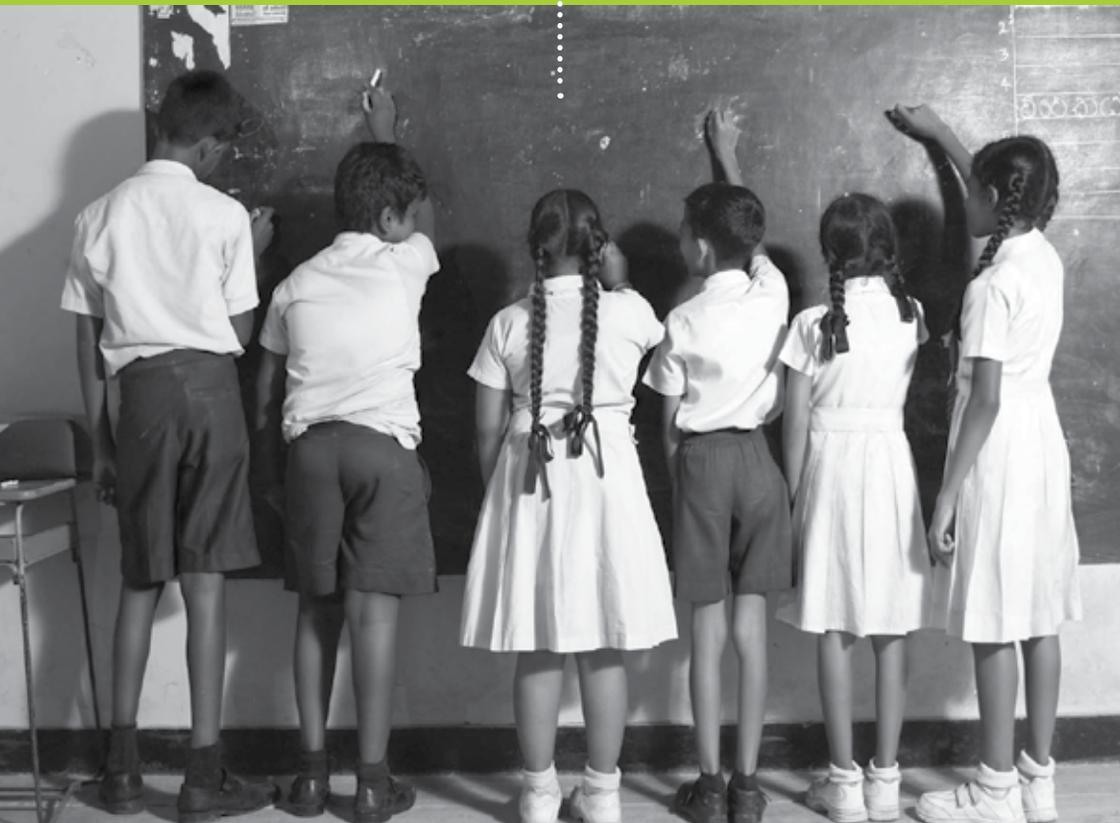
<b>CPC</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Child Protection in Crisis</b>
<b>CRPO</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Child Rights Promoting Officer</b>
<b>CRPA</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Child Rights Promoting Assistant</b>
<b>DCDC</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>District Child Development Committee</b>
<b>DS</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Divisional Secretary</b>
<b>DPPCS</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Department of Probation and Child Care Services</b>
<b>GN</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Grama Niladhari</b>
<b>IPID</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development</b>
<b>PI</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Plan International</b>
<b>PO</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Probation Officer</b>
<b>SCI</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Save the Children International</b>
<b>Tdh</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Terre des hommes Foundation, Lausanne.</b>
<b>UNCRC</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</b>
<b>VCDC</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Village Child Development Committee</b>
<b>VCRMC</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Village Child Rights Monitoring Committee</b>



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# SECTION 1

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# Section 1: Overview

## 1.0 Overview

Services for children’s development, care and protection in Sri Lanka is the responsibility of the Ministry of Child Affairs. These services are delivered through the following institutions:-

1. The Department of Probation and Child Care Services
2. The National Child Protection Authority
3. The Children’s Secretariat

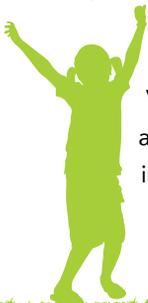
Several other National and Provincial Ministries and Departments have collaborative functions and responsibilities with regards to care and protection of children – Annex 1.

On the 20th of November 1989 the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In 1991 Sri Lanka ratified the UNCRC, and agreed to implement it. Consequently, a Children’s Charter was developed in Sri Lanka in line with the UNCRC with the intent to incorporate the rights enshrined in the UNCRC within a Sri Lankan policy framework, in order to uphold the rights of children in Sri Lanka. The Children’s Charter is a policy document which contributes to the strengthening of child care and child protection in the country. It directly influences policy and practise at the provincial, district, divisional and village levels.

The Village Child Development Committee (VCDC) is a village level structure that is located in each Grama Niladhari (GN) Division. Its remit and the overview and supervision of its work is the responsibility of the Department of Probation and Child Care Services (DPCCS) - see Annex I. The VCDC is comprised of key community actors and government officers working together to promote and ensure the developmental needs and rights of children in the village. The intention of strengthening the VCDC is to ensure an engaged, proactive and community based process in promoting children’s development and an effective protection system at the village level in Sri Lanka.

## 1.1 Background of the VCDC

In year 2000 the Ministry of Social Services with the approval of cabinet ministers - issued a government circular which first proposed community level action to protect children at the Divisional level. In 2006, six years later, the DPCCS issued another circular (No: PCC/CRPO/11/3/4) which gave a more detailed explanation on how the Village Child Rights Monitoring Committee (VCRMC) should be established and what responsibilities it should hold at the community level. The guidance in this circular for the composition, administration and mandate for the VCRMC has informed the development of the guidelines in this manual – See Annex 2.



Historically, this body has had different names including Child Protection Group, Village Child Rights Monitoring Committee (VCRMC) and Child Protection Committee. In order to achieve national consistency of nomenclature, the DPCCS decided on the use of the term 'Village Child Development Committee' (VCDC). A government circular endorsing this name change will follow.

## 1.2 Rationale for the Village Child Development Committee

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) views the community as the most crucial place for optimal child development and for their attainment of rights.
- The child's primary environment is his / her family and the wider community. They are best placed to identify concerns and respond early to them to reduce any negative impact on the child's development.
- Providing a formal structure whereby the VCDC works together with the community (children, parents, community leaders, religious leaders, teachers and other stakeholders) to promote child protection enables a collective and formal response to concerns.
- VCDCs are embedded within the national child care and protection system. They are thus able to engage with relevant officials such as the Child Rights Promoting Officer (CRPO)/Child Rights Promoting Assistant (CRPA), Probation Officer (PO), psycho-social officers and police officers to mobilise services as the needs require.

## 1.3. Purpose of the VCDC

### **The purpose of the VCDC is :**

To create an enabling environment for the care and protection of children, minimizing negative consequences on the children and building upon good values of society.

### **The VCDC can achieve this through:**

1. Promotion of child rights within the community through awareness raising events.
2. Prevention of child rights violations through risk mapping, early identification, advocacy and intervention.
3. Response to child rights violation concerns through referrals to CRPOs and CRPAs, coordination with community child protection actors and management of low risk cases.



## 1.4. Who is this manual for?

This manual has been written for Village Child Development Committee members, CRPOs, CRPAs, and child rights actors involved in supporting the development of the committee.

The writing of this manual has been led by the DPCCS with support from Save the Children International (SCI), Terre des hommes Lausanne (Tdh) and the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) as the host organization of the Child Protection in Crisis (CPC) - Learning Network, Sri Lanka.

## 1.5. Process of developing the manual

The development of this manual began with sharing of the lessons learnt from the establishment and implementation of village level child rights promotion mechanisms by various government and non-government actors. This included findings by DPCCS, SCI, Plan International (PI), UNICEF and Tdh. Information was gathered from the actors involved and lessons learnt were examined to identify practices that would lead to a successful and sustainable village level structure for promoting children's development. The sharing of the findings was followed with a two-day national consultation forum facilitated by SCI involving CRPOs and representatives from community based child protection bodies. Feedback provided by these and other key stakeholders was captured by IPID and relevant information included in a first draft. This was shared in a consultation forum with CRPOs convened by SCI and field tested with a selection of VCDCs in the community. The final version incorporates feedback from DPCCS, CRPOs, VCDC members, and the Child Protection Working Group.

The aim of the manual is to provide guidance for the setting up and the running of an effective and sustainable Village Child Development Committee.

The DPCC requires all actors involved in supporting village level child rights mechanism to use one name – 'Village Child Development Committee', and follow the guidelines for good practices included in this manual.





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# SECTION 2

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# Section 2: Setting up and running a Village Child Development Committee.

## 2. Introduction

The use of a systematic approach to establish a VCDC, including the specific steps suggested below, will increase the likelihood of its success. Using systems and procedures will enable the village to select the most appropriate people as committee members and put in place the processes and procedures that will contribute to an effective and sustainable committee.

### 2.1. Step One – Initiating the formation of the VCDC

The CRPO/CRPA will initiate action to form the committee in consultation with the Divisional Secretary (DS) and guide the formation and functioning of the VCDC. Depending on the location and geographical distances, there is no restriction for people living in one Grama Niladhari Division to obtain membership in the VCDC of an adjoining Grama Niladhari Division. Furthermore two VCDCs may be set up in one Grama Niladhari Division depending on the size (geographic and population), and distances in the division. The prior approval of the Divisional Secretary should be obtained for these special arrangements.

### 2.2. Step Two - Community mobilisation

Before the appointment of committee members it is important to give information about the purpose of the VCDC. Community mobilisation, led by the CRPO, aims to ensure that the purpose of the VCDC is widely understood, and encourages community members' active participation in the VCDC. Information about the criteria (see step 3 below) for becoming a VCDC member and the selection process is shared at this stage.

Community mobilisation can be achieved through awareness raising activities (posters, street drama, meetings, etc.) about children's rights in the village with the involvement of religious leaders and active village societies (Eg: Death Benevolence Society, Women's Associations).



## **2.3. Step Three - Selecting potential members**

The VCDC will have a maximum of 15 members. Appointments are for terms of three years. An ex member is eligible to seek reappointment. The VCDC should aim to have a diverse membership in terms of religion, ethnicities and gender. It will identify those most able and willing to engage and participate actively in the committee's work. Potential members should agree and respect the Code of Ethics – see Annex 3.

### **Membership of the VCDC should ideally include the following people:**

- Chairperson- Grama Niladhari / Divi Neguma Development Officer/ Development Officer/ or nominee by the Divisional Secretary
- Co-chair - selected by the Committee

### **Appointed members of the VCDC - ex officio**

- Grama Niladhari
- Public Health Inspector/ Midwife
- Divi Neguma Development Officer
- Agriculture Research and Development Assistant
- Economic Development Officer
- Police Officer
- Any other relevant officer to be decided by the Divisional Secretary

### **It is encouraged to select at least one member from the following categories and two representatives of the Children's Clubs for the membership of the Committee:**

- Religious leaders
- Representative of the school
- Members from the local community
- Representative of pre-school teachers
- Advisor to the Children's Club
- Two representatives of the Children's Club of the area, registered under the DPCCS (to obtain views of children on relevant issues if and when necessary)

Following community mobilisation, individuals may volunteer for membership of the committee, or be nominated by community members or groups to the CRPO and GN, who will oversee the appointment process. Nominees will be interviewed by the CRPO and GN, taking into account the criteria listed below and reference should be taken from community leaders, to ensure their suitability.



- In the event that the number of candidates is greater than the number of places on the VCDC, then depending on the need of the particular VCDC, the number of Committee members may be increased on the approval of the Divisional Secretariat.

**VCDC membership criteria:**

1. Absence of a criminal record
2. Suitability to work with children.
3. Commitment to promote children's rights in their community and willingness to advocate for their protection.
4. Willingness to work on a voluntary basis.
5. Significant regard and respect in the community.
6. Demonstration of respectful behaviour towards children and adults.
7. Agreement to uphold the VCDC Code of Ethics.

## **2.4. Step Four - Convening the first meeting**

The first meeting should be called within one week of forming the VCDC. At this meeting members should get to know each other, elect office bearers listed below and agree the bi-monthly schedule and venue of meetings. The full mandate of the VCDC and roles and responsibilities of the VCDC members can be found in the circular issued by the DPCCS – Annex 2. These responsibilities should be shared with the VCDC members before electing the office bearers listed below.

**In order for the VCDC to function efficiently, the management structure should include:**

1. Chairperson (appointed)
2. Co-chairperson (elected)
3. Secretary (elected)
4. Vice-secretary (elected)
5. Treasurer (elected)
6. Members.



Agreement should also be reached for the process of calling emergency meetings and date for the Annual General Meeting.

Members should also be informed about the requirement of a quorum for decision making. The quorum should be two –thirds of the committee members and if this not possible for all meetings, then decisions made without a quorum should be approved at the next meeting.

The newly formed committee will be registered under the name of the respective Grama Niladhari Division in which it is established. A record should also be made for each member of the committee, with their name, designation in the village and role on the committee –Annex 4.

At this first meeting an induction is provided to all committee members jointly by the CRPO and Chairperson comprising of an overview of the role and responsibilities of the VCDC. The induction also includes information about the code of ethics issued by the DPCCS and a copy is given to all members who are requested to make a pledge to uphold this when undertaking their role and responsibilities – Annex 5.

## **2.5. Step Five – VCDC Registration and Identity Card**

Registration for the VCDC will be carried out by the Divisional Secretary. The VCDC should provide the name, location, details of committee members (Annex 4) along with a photograph of each member when applying for registration. The Divisional Secretary will issue a registration document, and identity cards only if the need arises. The issuance of the identity cards is at the discretion of the Divisional Secretary. The registration document should be stored in a safe place. The VCDC should ensure that identity cards are only used when carrying out the work of the VCDC. Members should be cautioned to never misuse the authority vested in their role or misuse the identity cards.



## **2.6. Step Six - Developing an annual work plan**

The annual work plan provides a road map for the work of the VCDC and makes it easier for the committee to monitor its activities and to gauge whether work is on track. The development of the work plan involves identification of key child rights issues in the village, identification of services, prioritization of activities, allocation of responsibilities and time frames for completion. The VCDC can form sub-committees to help with the development and later the implementation of the work-plan. (Eg: sub-committee on risk mapping and finding support services). The annual work plan should be developed in consultation with the CRPO and presented to the District Child Development Committee (DCDC). The annual work plan should be displayed at the GN Office and copies should be distributed to all families in the village. A template is provided in Annex 6. Section 4 of this manual provides suggestions for activities to help the VCDC identify the needs of children and support services in the village.

## **2.7. Step Seven – Implementing the work plan**

For the work plan to be implemented effectively, the VCDC should plan and prepare for the agreed activities to ensure that they are completed on time. Responsibilities should be shared among committee members and volunteers from the community, including children where this is appropriate.

As stated above it is helpful if the committee forms sub-committees for specific responsibilities. The members of the sub-committees can approach service providers and explore ways of working together to raise awareness about child rights in the village as well as to provide support to families where children are at risk of harm. Further details on risk mapping and identifying support services can be found in Section 4.1. The VCDC can decide on priorities for the year and specific individuals in the committee who will lead each activity and are responsible for the successful completion of each activity. Other committee members should support one another's work responsibilities.



## Sustaining the VCDC

One of the biggest challenges for the VCDC is its sustainability. . The VCDC should discuss ideas for sustainability and work together as a team to ensure the committee continues to function. Two very important strategies that would sustain the committee is to keep both the group and individual members motivated and ensure financial support for its operation and activities. Individual members can be motivated by giving them specific responsibilities, supporting them to fulfil their responsibilities and publicly acknowledging successes and commitment. A VCDC can do this by agreeing with the CRPO and the community on how to acknowledge their work in public forums and meetings.

The VCDC should also ensure that children participate actively in the village, remove any barriers that discourage their involvement and publicly acknowledge their contribution to the committee's work.

## Regular meetings

The implementation of the work plan will be greatly assisted if regular meetings are conducted, chaired well and attended by all committee members. To ensure this the Chairperson and Secretary can prepare for the meetings in advance and circulate an agenda prior to the meeting to provide information to committee members about the discussion topics.. Committee members may also be invited to add to, or change the agenda. Having information and an agenda beforehand will enable committee members to prepare for the meeting and make appropriate contributions. This will also enable the committee to focus completely on the business of the VCDC during the allocated time.

Committee meetings should start and aim to close on time as planned and notes should be taken by the Secretary as a record. These notes are known as the minutes of the meeting– Annex 7. The minutes of the meeting must always be referred to at the next meeting and agreed as a true and accurate record and signed by the chairperson and secretary. The minutes should then be carefully filed and stored in a secure place (the GN office is the most appropriate place for storage).

The Chairperson's management of meetings must be impartial and must ensure that everyone has the chance to speak if they wish to and that everyone is listened to and respected. No one person or group should be allowed to dominate the meeting. Decision-making in the meeting should be a consultative process where people discuss and negotiate, and if necessary vote to reach consensus.



## **2.8. Step Eight - Following up the work plan**

The VCDC should set up a system to make sure that planned activities are achieved. This can be done through observations, meetings and feedback from the community and CRPOs. Regular information should be provided to the key stakeholders of the VCDC so that everyone is updated on progress and achievements. The work plan should be reviewed by the VCDC every three months to ensure that the activities of the VCDC are on track.

## **2.9. Step Nine - Resignation and removal of the VCDC members**

A member of the Committee may resign his/her office by a letter addressed to the DS with a copy to the Chairperson. The resignation will be effective from the date on which it is accepted by the DS.

Where a complaint has been made about the conduct (against the code of ethics) of a VCDC member and upheld by the DS, his/her membership of the VCDC can be terminated.

## **2.10. Step Ten – Informing the community of the work of the committee**

Informing the community and the CRPO of the work of the committee is very important for reasons of transparency and accountability. This should be done formally at least once per year during the annual general meeting. Planning for this event is the responsibility of the committee. To this end, notes and records of all activities should be kept and shared with the community through photographs and displays. Children should be involved in the preparation, planning and presentation of the work of the committee at the general meeting.





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# SECTION 3

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# Section 3: VCDC Guiding Principles

## 3. Introduction

In order to meet its mandate, the VCDC should adhere to core child protection principles such as the best interest of the child, do no harm, child participation, confidentiality, non-discrimination, coordination and collaboration, and accountability. Each principle is discussed in this section to guide the VCDC members in carrying out their functions. These principles are cross-cutting and thus should be applied in all matters relating to children's care and protection.

### 3.1. Definition of a child

Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as, "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier". The Declaration of the Rights of the Child states that the child, "by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth". It is universally recognized that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. In the community, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and such children need special consideration.

### 3.2. Best interests of the child

According to the 'best interests' principle, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions affecting children. This is a right guaranteed by Article 3 of the UNCRC. The term 'best interests' broadly describes the well-being of a child. This means that all aspects of the child's development – physical, emotional, intellectual, social and moral – must be considered when making a decision. The decision must contribute in helping the child grow and reach his or her fullest potential. In cases of legal matters pertaining to the protection of the child, the principle of 'best interest' of the child is always taken into consideration when making decisions about their future care.

#### **Best interests in practice:**

- Consider the possible solutions that would promote the child's care and development and opt for the solution which protects the child's best interests in the circumstances.



- Prioritise children's needs in decisions where a solution may appear to be in conflict or compete with the needs of the caregiver or wider community.
- Listen to the child's opinion on what would be the best solution in the given situation and take that opinion into consideration when making the decision.

*A VCDC received complaints about a number of children being sexually molested in a faith based school. Worried about being seen as culturally insensitive or discriminatory - and fearful of triggering conflict in the community - the VCDC decided not to inform the CRPO, deciding instead to address the wider issue by raising the community's awareness of the issue of sexual abuse. By taking this course of action, the rights and needs of the complainants remained unaddressed, other children in the school remained unconvinced of the benefits of disclosure, the school was unable to address urgent child protection issues and the alleged perpetrator was not brought to justice. The action taken by the VCDC was not in the best interests of the children*

### 3.3. Child Participation

Child participation means providing opportunities for children to express their opinions freely and giving these due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity when taking decisions and actions that affect their lives. This is a right of the child enshrined in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Actively involving children in the work of the VCDC can increase awareness about child rights in the committee, in the community and with other children. Child participation should be active, meaningful, inclusive and ethical.

#### **Child participation in practice:**

- Inform children about their right to participate and facilitate opportunities for meaningful participation
- Invite children and/or representatives of the children's clubs to the VCDC meetings, allow the children to raise their concerns whenever necessary and work with children to develop and implement plans to address the concerns raised
- Provide opportunities for children's involvement in assessing needs, in awareness raising activities, in case management and in annual general meetings when the work of the VCDC is shared.



## 3.4. Non-discrimination

Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious country. This requires the VCDC members to adopt an inclusive approach that addresses issues of culture, language, ethnicity and faith. In the process of protecting children, committee members should be open-minded and inclusive in their attitude to difference. The concept of equal rights of all communities is a cornerstone of professional child protection.

When working with children, committee members should not discriminate against any child because of his or her ethnicity, caste, gender, language, religion, vulnerability, disability or social status. The personal views of the VCDC members should not influence decision making. This right is enshrined in Article 2 of the UNCRC.

### **Non-discrimination in practice**

- Make suitable arrangements for children with disabilities to participate in consultations and activities.
- Ensure there is a balance of diversity, especially in gender, ethnicity within the membership of the VCDC.
- Empower and provide equal opportunities for both girls and boys to participate in activities.

The CRPO in one VCDC worked with the Chairperson to ensure that there was a balance of men and women, faith and social status in the committee. This was done when selecting potential members. There was gender balance in Office bearer positions as well. The CRPO then worked with the Chairperson to help the VCDC to ensure that both boys and girls were included in the planning and execution of awareness raising activities. Leadership was alternated between boys and girls and the children were encouraged to find ways of ensuring that children with disabilities could participate so that their wishes and feelings were always included. This was done through ensuring the venue was accessible and enough time was given for children with disabilities to share their thoughts.



### 3.5. Do No Harm

This means ensuring that actions and interventions designed to support the child (and their family) do not expose them to further harm. The 'do no harm' principle is particularly important when responding to child care concerns and case management.

#### **Do no harm in practice:**

- Ensure that the intervention to help one child does not cause conflict between individuals, families and communities and expose the child and his or her family to further harm such as revenge or violence.
- Refer children who disclose abuse to relevant officials responsible for the care and protection of children. . Action should ensure that the child is not subject to any psychological distress throughout the process..
- Refrain from sharing information that can harm children.

### 3.6. Confidentiality

Members of the VCDC will become aware of sensitive information about children's care and protection. The principle of confidentiality must be respected so as not to cause further harm to the child or to his or her family. It is therefore important that any information pertaining to a child's situation is shared only with people who need to know, which includes the CRPO and the core member(s) of the VCDC selected by the latter. Any further sharing of information should be decided by the CRPO.

#### **Confidentiality in practice:**

- Protect information and ensure that it is only shared after explicit permission of the child/family is obtained, unless the process of obtaining consent is judged to place the child at risk.
- Withhold identification information from anyone not directly involved with the child. This includes information shared during informal conversations.
- Store sensitive and confidential information in a safe and secure place.



## 3.7. Coordination and Collaboration

The effectiveness of the work of the VCDC can be improved if there is good coordination and collaboration among the CRPO/CRPA, community based organisations and actors working with children. Where possible the VCDC should try and work closely with organisations promoting children's rights and work collaboratively with them. The VCDC can also be more successful in helping children who are experiencing harm or are at risk of harm by sharing relevant information about the children with the CRPOs.

### **Coordination and collaboration in practice:**

- Gather information about all the resources in the community and the contact details of key officials and other support groups..
- Identify and inform community based organisations working with children and families about the work of the VCDC and involve their participation in raising awareness.
- Agree with the CRPO/CRPA on reporting procedures about child protection concerns.

## 3.8. Accountability

Accountability is about being responsible for one's actions to those for whom and with whom one works. The VCDC is accountable to the children, the community and the government. All committee members must observe the code of ethics when carrying out the work of the VCDC.

*A VCDC developed a simple leaflet informing children and community members about how to make a complaint to the CRPO if there was any dissatisfaction about its work. A poster was also developed with relevant contact numbers and displayed in a community meeting hall where people regularly met.*

### **Accountability in practice**

- Complete agreed activities
- Ensure confidentiality
- Follow up on referred cases
- Close low risk cases in a timely manner
- Ensure actions do not harm the child
- Implement the annual action plan
- Maintain good relationships with government agencies and other stakeholders and share information regularly.
- Provide information about making a complaint if people are unhappy with the services provided by the VCDC.





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# SECTION 4

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## Section 4: Identifying and addressing care and protection needs

### 4.1. Children in the village and their needs

In order to respond appropriately to the care and protection needs of children in the village the VCDC has to understand the main needs of the children living in the community and then develop a work plan. The best way to do this is by involving children, members of the community, government officers through informal discussions, home visits, observations and feedback from protection, education and health care providers.

#### **4.1.1. Risk Mapping**

This means identifying all the possible issues that may pose risks to children's optimum development. These can be generally prevalent issues in the village such as child labour, early marriages, corporal punishment, or other child care and protection related concerns in the environment. Risk Mapping can be done by calling a community meeting and facilitating a discussion through activities. Another example is of involving children and facilitate them to map the village and identify possible places and people that pose a threat to them. This will help the VCDC to get a picture of the key concerns of the village from the children's perspectives – Annex 8. After the risks have been identified the VCDC should involve the community and children to prioritise these for action.

#### **4.1.2. Support Service Mapping**

Once the risks have been identified the next step is to start a support service mapping activity. Understanding the needs of the children in the village and the support services available to address them is the basis for the development of the work plan. A VCDC sub-committee can lead on this activity and complete the template in Annex 9. This list should be regularly updated.

Once all the concerns and support services have been identified, these can be linked to promotion, prevention and response activities according to the needs of the children and the identified services.



## 4.2. Promotion of children's rights and development needs

Promoting an understanding of children's rights and developmental needs can help caregivers meet their care giving responsibilities and reduce the incidence of harmful practices. It contributes to the creation of an environment in which children's needs are fully met. The VCDC can decide the best way to promote children's rights. Involving children in these activities will allow the VCDC to ensure that their perspectives are always included and their voices are heard by the whole village. Children's active participation should thus be encouraged and facilitated by the VCDC in their promotion activities.

### **4.2.1. Child Rights promotion activities**

**Below are some examples of promoting children's rights:**

- Celebrating Children's Day
- Organizing street dramas
- Organizing art competitions
- Carrying out door-to-door promotions of child rights
- Developing Information - Education - Communication materials such as posters and leaflets

## 4.3. Prevention

### **4.3.1. Identifying children at risk**

Prevention is the early detection of children at risk of harm and the early response to such concerns. The VCDC is best placed to identify children at risk of harm and to mobilise resources to address identified issues. Ideally, preventive interventions are the best. Sometimes, neglect, violence, psychological or sexual abuse may have already started and steps must then be taken to stop them. With the necessary commitment, dedication and concern for children, it is possible to significantly reduce the incidence of child abuse in the community.

Prevention activities include raising awareness of specific issues affecting a high number of children in the village such as corporal punishment, early marriage and child labour. To raise awareness about the harmful impact of these



practices on children's development the VCDC can raise awareness through - inter alia - drama, street events and posters. Children should be actively involved in these activities.

The VCDC can also identify children who are likely to be at risk of harm because of the circumstances of the child's family or because of environmental factors. Possible risk factors include single parent and child headed families, children with disabilities, domestic and alcohol abuse, dysfunctional families, children of migrant workers and unaccompanied children.

Not all children living in such circumstances are automatically at risk of possible harm. Carrying out a vulnerability assessment can help the VCDC to identify which children may be at risk. Guidance can be sought from the CRPO and / or CRPA to assist the VCDC to carry out a vulnerability assessment.

#### **4.3.2. Prevention Activities**

The VCDC work plan can include some of the following activities as relevant for preventive work:

- Village functions where the VCDC members can invite a speaker in consultation with the CRPO to speak about child protection issues.
- School functions where the VCDC members can, with the necessary permission, invite a speaker to speak to children about child protection.
- Develop posters and leaflets on child protection and display them at prominent locations in the village
- Special events on 'promoting child protection' at schools or on Children's Day.
- Organizing awareness activities with health professionals with the aim of early identification of children at risk of harm.
- A speech or drama about child abuse during special holidays and festivals where many people would congregate
- Distribution of leaflets during community events, market days and house to house distributions.



## 4.4. Response

Even when a VCDC has been conducting awareness-raising and prevention activities, children in the village may still experience harm and thus be in need of protection. A child rights concern is when the VCDC identifies a child whose rights and entitlements have been violated or are at risk of being violated. The VCDC may come to know about child rights concerns when a member of the committee observes something adverse which has happened to a child or when somebody from the community (neighbour, relative, religious leader, a health or education worker) makes a report. This section guides the VCDC on the principles applicable to managing child rights concerns and actions that should be taken in relation to children who need protection.

### **4.4.1. Responding to child rights concerns**

When the VCDC identifies a concern about a child at risk of harm they should immediately inform the CRPO/CRPA who will help to carry out a risk assessment.

Before assessing levels of a child's risk it is essential to have an understanding of child abuse. The definitions for child abuse and the five main categories of abuse – physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and exploitation - along with some examples of indicators for each, are included in Annex 10.

Equally, an understanding of the definitions and indicators that may point to the possibility of harm towards a child is essential in helping VCDC members to identify children who may be at risk within their community.

A flowchart explaining the procedures for referral and reporting is included in Annex 11.

Once the VCDC is formed the CRPO - in collaboration with child protection actors - will facilitate a training and capacity building programme for committee members. This will include modules on both the administrative and technical aspects of the VCDC work.



## 4.5. Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is how the CRPO and Probation Officers find out the likelihood of harm to a child from their caregivers, or other people in the community.

**Carrying out a risk assessment involves:**

- The identification of factors that are most likely to cause harm to the child
- The analysis of present strengths and resources that might reduce the harm.

This is how the CRPO/CRPA identifies the level of risk and what degree of protection is needed.

A VCDC can help the CRPOs/CRPAs identify children at risk in their village; equally, an adult or child can report a concern to them. When the VCDC receives information about a child who has experienced or is likely to experience harm, they should immediately report this to the CRPO/ CRPA. The latter may request the VCDC's support when carrying out the risk assessment, which will enable them to define whether the level of risk towards a child is high or low.

The following guidelines can be used to identify high and low risk cases. However, they are not exhaustive and the CRPO/CRPA will support the VCDC to consider each case as unique, pay attention to the specific situation of each child and take action that is in their best interests.

## 4.6. High Risk Case Indicators

Any child who is at risk of immediate harm is considered to be a high risk case. The examples below are not exhaustive and there may be other situations that may arise in the course of the assessment.

- A child with physical injuries (e.g. cuts or burns) with explanations that do not match the injuries.
- A child who needs immediate medical attention to which the caregiver does not agree.
- A victim of child labour (e.g. forced to engage in harmful activities against the child's own will).
- A sexually abused child.
- A psychologically abused child.
- An abandoned child.
- A child whose parents have passed away due to accidents/ natural disasters/ non-communicable diseases.



- A child who is out of the control and guidance of his parents
- Juvenile offenders posing risk of harm to the community.
- Parental alcohol/drug abuse leading to direct abuse to children.
- Drug abusers.
- Victims of domestic violence.
- Child parents/adolescent pregnancies.

**Remember that each situation should be assessed separately. All cases with high risk indicators should be promptly notified using the case management process in Annex 12 and referral form in Annex 13 to the CRPO/CRPA or reported to the NCPA, Police or Probation Officer/ Department of Probation and Child Care Services.**

## **4.7. Low Risk Case Indicators**

Situations with the indicators below can be assessed as low risk, and therefore managed by the VCDC with the support from CRPO/CRPA if necessary.

- Children who do not attend school regularly.
- Children who are neglected by parents/guardians (Eg: Parents neglect the child's food and nutritional needs, or do not seek appropriate medical attention when necessary).
- Economically vulnerable families (direct impact on children, lack of food, poor clothing and hygiene impacting on the child's development).
- Children of migrant workers with poor care arrangements
- Children from broken families

**The VCDC can take action using a case management approach for low risk cases with guidance from the CRPO/ CRPA. The case management process is described in the next section.**

**However, at the end of the case management process, if the VCDC is unable to resolve the matter, such cases should be referred to the DCDC through the CRPO/ CRPA.**

A flowchart explaining the procedures for referral and reporting is included in Annex 11.



## 4.8. Case Management

### **Introduction**

Where a situation about a child has been assessed as low risk, then a case management approach should be used to manage the case -Annex 12. If necessary, the CRPO/CRPA could be consulted for this purpose.

Case management means taking a systematic approach in a timely manner to respond to the needs of an individual child and his/her family through direct support and/or the mobilisation of services through referrals.

The VCDC should only manage **low risk cases** using this approach.

For the management for **low risk cases** to be effective and handled well it is necessary for the VCDC to identify a suitable member(s) of the committee e to manage such cases. It is ideal to identify two or three committee members to take the responsibility for case management. Two of these individuals can be described as case workers with an individual case load, and one of them, usually the most senior and experienced person can be referred to as the case manager. Together these three individuals can be permanent case workers and case manager for the VCDC. This will enable the VCDC to appoint experienced members for case work for low risk cases. The role of the case manager is to assign cases to the case workers, ensuring that the case workers have the necessary support to manage the cases..

VCDC case workers will be supported by the case manager, chairperson, secretary and CRPO/CRPA as necessary when undertaking case work responsibilities for low risk cases.

The case management process has six specific steps. Detailed explanation for each step can be found in Annex 12 with supporting forms in subsequent annexes.

**Step 1: Identification and registration**

**Step 2: Assessment**

**Step 3: Case Planning**

**Step 4: Implementing the Case Plan**

**Step 5: Follow up and Review**

**Step 6: Case Closure**



## 4.9. Principles of Case Management

The key principles of case management is working in partnership with the children, families, CRPOs and service providers, timely intervention, good communication, regular reviews and amendment of case plans as necessary. Alongside this it is important that the principles explained in Section 3 of this manual are always applied when using a case management approach.

## 4.10. Advocacy

Advocacy aims to ensure that vulnerable groups, in this case children, are able to have their voices heard and have their rights safeguarded and defended by duty bearers. The objective of advocacy is to influence sustainable change.

Through its promotion work the VCDC is already advocating for an enabling environment for children's optimal growth and development.

The VCDC will continue to advocate for timely and appropriate action in the course of following up work on cases that have been referred to government duty bearers, to ensure that appropriate action is taken to ensure the child's needs are met and issues resolved





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# ANNEXES

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# Annex 2 – Mandate for setting up a VCDC - DPCC Circular

Name of Divisional secretariat : \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of GS Division : \_\_\_\_\_

1. This committee \_\_\_\_\_ name is Rural child rights monitoring committee
2. Authorized area \_\_\_\_\_ Divisional Secretariat Division ..... GS division, in the certain village people who can work with children with a dedicated mind. Posts of President, secretary. 5-18years children can get membership in this committee.

**Administration:** Who lived in a certain GS division, can select the position of committee President and Secretary for committee.

### **Appointed and Elected Members**

In the village GS / Samurdhi officer

1. Officer of agriculture researcher
2. Public Health Officer
3. Religious lead
4. School Principal
5. Head of the Samurdhi
6. Funeral parlour worker
7. Pre-school supporters
8. Children: all children between ages 5-18 can be members. There should be 10 members as management members, particularly from both sexes as equal.

The group management should have 15 members including President, Secretary and Treasurer according to the rules and regulations above mentioned. The high rank officers who retired and the high rank officers who are working for children (only 03 persons) can be appointing as advisor or patron if the group management wish to join them.

### **Objectives:**

- To consult the activities mentioned in the children right ordinance and also implement them.
- To take the children between age 5 – 18 and to coordinate them in such a way to show their skill and to improve them.
- To hold awareness programme seminars to the parent's and to teachers through the respective officers to improve the children skill.
- To collect the information of abuses or misuse of children and to take necessary action on them.
- To prepare a programme to celebrate World Children's Day.



## **Committee's Responsibilities**

1. Make opportunities to develop children's knowledge & their activities.
2. Maintain good relationships between children and the community.
3. Respond to reports of child abuse or neglect in the community and give correct advice and suggest the correct action (make referral to government officer and follow up)
4. Awareness to parents, children & elders about the child rights.
5. To take care for the children's health.

### **Committee:**

Committee has 10 members there are President, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President, Vice Secretary and members. This committee is children rights monitoring committee. Responsibility of Committee members.

### **President:**

who is leader of all committee meetings and authority of children's matters. He gives information to the secretary to arrange the children's meetings.

### **Secretary:**

To maintain the records and notices and arrange the meeting when requested by the president.

### **Treasurer:**

Open an account for the committee at government bank and maintain it. Committee decide a programme for the children through village if need some money, to get permission to the divisional secretary and collect the money to the village people, at the time treasurer maintain the expenditure and account statements and treasure submit the accounts statement at the committee meeting.

### **Vice President:**

V.P support to the president, if some time president not in there he is the responsibility of the president's duties.

### **Vice Secretary:**

V.S support to the secretary and if some time secretary not in there V.S acting to secretary. Meetings.

### **Yearly General meeting:**

Every year general meeting will be held in January. This meeting will plan for future programme, to appoint the new administration. In the meeting committee responsible to submit the last year budget & activities report.

If any procedural changes are needed these will be approved at the yearly general meeting.



**Monthly meeting:**

In the meeting we give opportunity for children creative and their activities and discuss protection cases follow up?

**Exceptional meetings :**

when needed, the president can be asked to call for "exceptional meeting" example if any emergency of cases of protection need immediate action

- The minimum amount of people to conduct the meeting: - 1/3 committee members is the minimum amount for the monthly meeting. 2/3 people in the village should participate in the yearly general meeting.
- Information to conduct the meeting:- Yearly meeting or monthly meeting dates should be inform for all the members. And inform the certain divisional secretariat child rights promoting officer.
- Minutes:- the minutes of each committee meeting should be handed over to the CRPO.
- Signet (seal): Each rural child rights monitoring committee should select a seal and get approval from the DS through the CRPO.
- Rubber stamp: all the child rights committees will prepare a rubber stamp which will be used for all official documents.
- Records: Committee member's name, minutes, meeting attendance, cash book details& important matters will keep in records.
- Register the children's committee: all the child rights monitoring committees should be registered as in the certain divisional secretariat. Organize the children committee; within the one month inform the certain divisional secretariat child rights promoting officer then will take the action for registration.
- Dissolution :-Any committee member whose activities do not follow VCRMC procedure or his attitudes are not suitable for the children or any bad habits like these, the Chair should inform the child rights promoting officer. If the complaint is proved the CRPO should inform the DS, and the DS confirms this matter the member will be dismiss or DS can totally dissolve the committee,



## Annex 3 – Village Child Development Committee – Sample Code of Ethics

<b>All members of the committee should always:</b>	<b>VCDC committee members should never:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work together and support each other to promote children's rights in the village.</li><li>• Work with parents and caregivers to increase their capacity to care appropriately for their children.</li><li>• Listen to children and respect their wishes and feelings.</li><li>• Treat all children with fairness and without discrimination.</li><li>• Empower children so they are active in their own protection.</li><li>• Display positive behaviour and be a good role model for children, villagers and colleagues.</li><li>• Maintain confidentiality of all information regarding concerns about children's care, sharing it only with those who need to know.</li><li>• Inform the CRPO/CRPA immediately of protection concerns about a child.</li><li>• Complete agreed tasks and request support if necessary.</li><li>• Maintain a team spirit in the committee.</li><li>• Obtain prior approval of the CRPO/DS before giving information to the media.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invite a child to their home on their own or spend time alone with them.</li><li>• Ask a child for money or sexual favours in return for helping them.</li><li>• Hit, ridicule, ill-treat or inflict physical violence on a child at any time.</li><li>• Use inappropriate language or say anything to provoke a negative reaction from a child, his/her caregivers or colleagues.</li><li>• Exploit a child in any way whatsoever.</li><li>• Show favouritism towards a particular child or group of children.</li><li>• Be under the influence of drugs or alcohol whilst working with children.</li><li>• Engage in any behaviour that places a child, a colleagues or members of the village at risk or which might bring the VCDC member or the committee as a whole into disrepute.</li></ul>



# Annex 4 – Name and contact details of VCDC members

Name of VCDC: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name	Designation in village and role in VCDC	Date appointed/ selected	Contact – address & phone number
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			



# Annex 5 – Code of Ethics Pledge - DPCCS will draft a pledge and send ASAP

**Name of VCDC:**

**Name of Committee member:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ declare that I have read and understood the VCDC Code of Ethics. I agree to abide by this code of ethics in all the work that I undertake on behalf of the VCDC.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Annex 6 – Sample work plan template

Name of VCDC : _____					Period for work plan : _____					
Category	Objective	Activity	Resources needed	Responsible VCDC member	Milestones				Number of community members attended	Outcome
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Promotion										
Prevention										

I certify that this plan was approved by the VCDC.

.....  
Signature of Chairperson/ Secretary

.....  
Date



# Annex 7 – Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes should be kept simple and easy to understand. The following format can be used to record the minutes.

<b>1. Date</b>			
<b>2. Name / Objective of the meeting</b>			
<b>3. Participants</b> <i>(insert names of people who attended)</i>			
<b>4. Apologies</b> <i>(insert names of those who informed their inability to attend)</i>			
<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Main issues</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible VCDC member</b>
<b>6. Date for next meeting</b>			
<b>7. Signature of minutes taker</b>			

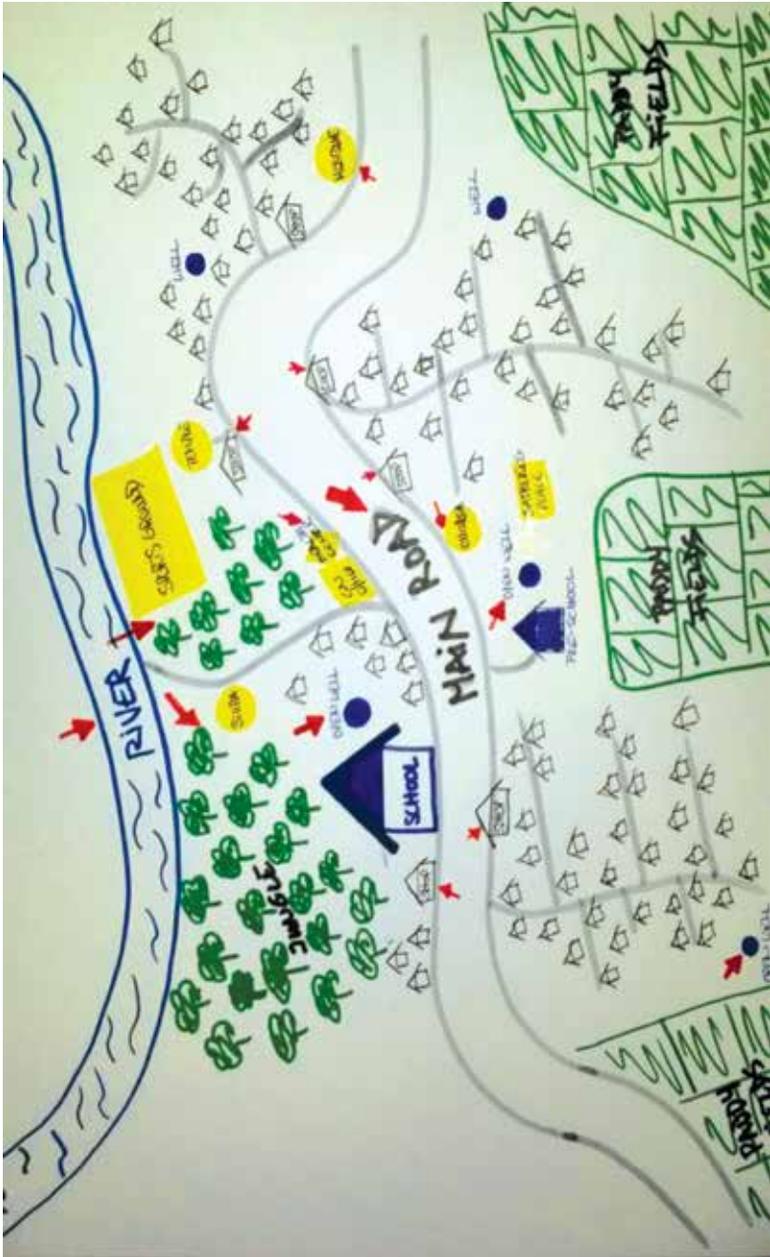
I certify that this plan was approved by the VCDC.

.....  
Signature of Chairperson/ Secretary

.....  
Date



# Annex 8 – Sample Risk Mapping by Children





# Annex 10 – Child Abuse Definitions and Indicators

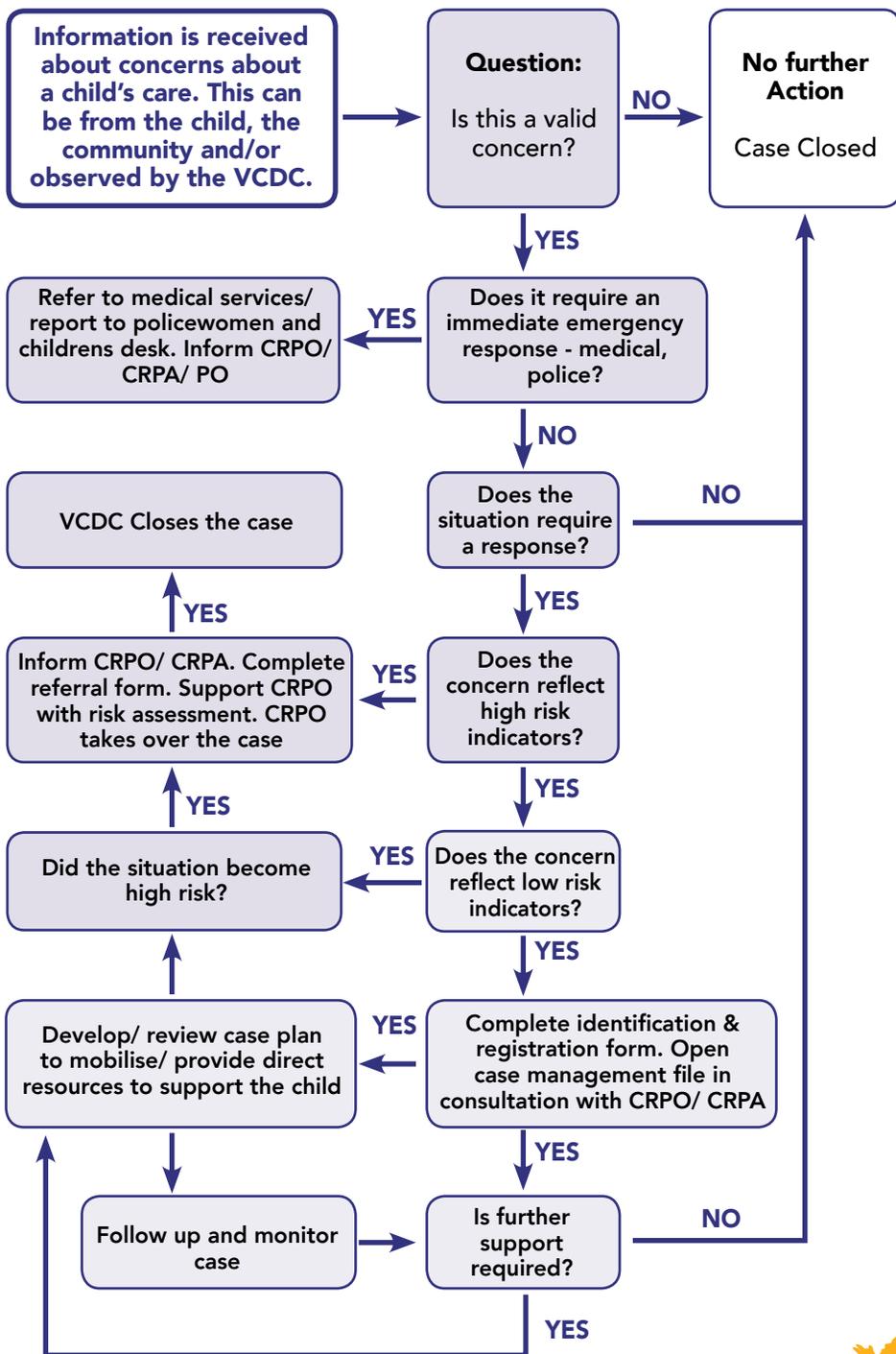
## Child Abuse

A deliberate act of ill treatment / an omission that can harm or is likely to cause harm to a child's safety, well-being, dignity and development.

Type of Abuse	Indicators
<p><b>Physical abuse</b> Involves the use of violent physical force so as to cause actual or likely physical injury or suffering, e.g. hitting, shaking, burning, torture, drowning, pinching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bite marks</li> <li>• Cigarette burns</li> <li>• Evidence of old but untreated broken bones</li> <li>• Signs of severe, long-term bruising especially to face</li> <li>• Unexplained injuries (head injury can be identified through ear injury), burns, bruises, dislocations, injuries to the head.</li> <li>• Flinching when approached. (fears that they might be hit)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual Abuse</b> Includes involving children in sexual activity. Rape (by any perpetrator), Early and forced marriage, sexual exploitation, indecent touching and exposure, using sexually explicit language towards a child, showing children pornographic material</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sudden / unexpected behaviour change, isolated from friends</li> <li>• Overly affectionate/knowledgeable in a sexual way</li> <li>• Medical problems such as stomach pain when walking or sitting</li> <li>• Chronic itching, pain, discharge, bleeding from the genitals</li> <li>• Sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy</li> <li>• Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychological abuse</b> Includes humiliating and degrading treatment, e.g. bad name calling, constant criticism, belittling, persistent shaming, solitary confinement, isolation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of confidence</li> <li>• Poor self esteem</li> <li>• Self-harm</li> <li>• Attention seeking</li> </ul>
<p><b>Neglect</b> Deliberately, or through carelessness, failing to provide for/ secure for a child, their rights to safety and development. This is sometimes called the 'passive' form of abuse as it relates to the failure to carry out some key aspect of the care and protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent hunger, stealing or hiding food, losing weight</li> <li>• Poor personal hygiene</li> <li>• Constant tiredness</li> <li>• Behavioural difficulties</li> <li>• Frequently missing school</li> <li>• Untreated medical problems</li> </ul>
<p><b>Exploitation:</b> The use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit. Also called child labour, one of the worst forms of which is sexual exploitation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has money, gifts or expensive items not given by the parents</li> <li>• Over confidence, sense of importance/ maturity</li> <li>• Very tired, sleeping in school, absenteeism</li> <li>• Physical impacts: bent back, weaker, damage to hands etc.</li> </ul>



# Annex 11 - Responding to concerns about harm to a child



# Annex 12 –Managing the Case Management Process

This section explains the case management process for low risk cases and includes forms to support the different steps involved. VCDCs will be provided with training to help them manage this responsibility.

There are 6 steps for effective case management and each is explained below.

## **Step 1: Identification and registration**

The identification process described under high and low risk indicators will help the VCDC to know which situations to report to the CRPO/CRPA and which ones should be directly dealt with by the VCDC with the support of the CRPO/CRPA or government officer on the committee. Once it has been decided that a case is low risk then action should be taken to manage this using the case management process.

To begin with the VCDC should discuss the case with the child and his/her parents/guardians, agree on the support needed and get the parents/guardians' written consent. Information about the child should be collected only after obtaining the parents/carers' consent.

The VCDC should then make an official registration of the case by completing the form in Annex 13. This form can be used to refer a high risk case to the CRPO/CRPA, register a case for direct management by the VCDC as well as for follow up on referred cases.

In situations where parents refuse to give their consent, and where the VCDC judges that the child's situation will become worse without support, the VCDC should try and work with the parents to find a solution. If this fails they should inform the CRPO/ CRPA.

## **Step 2: Assessment**

Once the case has been registered with the agreement of the child and his/her family, the VCDC case worker should carry out a needs assessment– Annex 14. The assessment should look at the following areas: age and gender of the child, whether the child has a disability, family situation– names of parents, employment status, substance abuse, domestic violence, name of school (where relevant), risk factors and the strengths in the family. The assessment should pay particular attention on strengths and how these could be developed. Once this information has been gathered, the analysis should focus on:



1. What are the age appropriate needs of the child?
2. Is the child vulnerable or at risk of his/her rights being violated?
3. What are the risk factors?
4. Are there any cultural issues?
5. What are the strengths in the family?
6. What is the nature of support available to this child/family?
7. What further follow up is recommended? This could include:
  - No further action
  - Report to CRPO and / or CRPA
  - Provide support to the family through case management

### **Step 3: Case Planning**

After the assessment is completed, a plan should be developed for low risk cases with the support of the CRPO/CRPA. This plan should consist of details as to how the VCDC is going to assist the child, the different resources available in the community that can be mobilised and any techniques or services such as family support, counselling that can be provided etc. It should also define the timeframe during which the case should be completed. Please refer to Annex 14 for the assessment form.

### **Step 4: Implementing the Case Plan**

Once the plan is ready, it can be implemented in consultation with the CRPO/CRPA. The case worker should utilise the services in the community with which links have already been made through the resources sub-committee, make new links or the CRPO/CRPA can also advise on any new services. The VCDC can call a case conference with support from the CRPO/CRPA to help with the management of low risk cases. The most important aspect of the implementation is that the intervention is making a difference to the child's situation. The VCDC case worker should work together with the care givers and the child throughout the case implementation. During this process the case worker must keep a record of all activity with the case. This should be done in the case file. A case file includes all the information about the child and his/her family in one place. The case file should have the identification and registration, and assessment forms as well as a copy of the case plan. The case worker should also include a form for case recording. This refers to a record of all the activity undertaken by the case worker. Refer Annex 16.



## **Step 5: Follow up and Review**

At every stage of the case management process, the case management team (specified above under section 4.8) should monitor if the child is progressing as expected. If the child is not, the child's needs must be reassessed. Monitoring may be done in cooperation with health and education staff (for school aged children) and home visits, which should include time spent with the child as well as the caregivers. Where a referral is made to a local resource/ service provider, an agreement should be made about sharing information about any child care concerns with the VCDC case worker. This arrangement should be made in agreement with the family. Children should be seen both separately and with the family. If the case is not progressing as planned, the case plan should be assessed to consider what else could be done.

## **Step 6: Case Closure**

A decision to close a case should be made only when there are no more concerns about the child's care and protection. The decision should be made in discussion with the child and his/her family and confirmed by education and health workers where relevant. Once the decision has been made to close the case, the case worker should fill the case closure form (Annex 17). The case closure form should be signed by the VCDC case manager and CRPO/CRPA and the child and family should be informed.



# Annex 13 - Referral form to relevant authorities for child rights violations.

<b>VCDC Referral/Registration/ Follow Up Form Private and Confidential</b>	
Please use this form for making a referral and follow up to CRPO/PO/ NCPA/POLICE, and for registration for a LOW RISK CASE	
<b>Name of VCDC and Address</b>	
<b>Name and designation of person completing this form</b>	
<b>Phone/ Mobile/ Email</b>	
<b>1. Child's Details</b>	
<b>1.1 Child's Name</b>	
<b>1.3 Ethnicity</b>	
<b>1.5 Date of incident</b>	
<b>1.7 Who is the child with?</b>	
<b>2.Parent/Guardian/Caregiver Details</b>	
<b>2.1 Name of parent/guardian caregiver</b>	
<b>2.3 Address</b>	
<b>3. Information of the case</b>	
<b>3.1 Source of information/Name of person passing the information (only on consent).</b>	
<b>3.3 Child concern category (Physical, sexual, psychological, neglect, exploitation) and information from the child/young person reporting the incident/concern – date, time, location and circumstance of disclosure, observation. Separate fact from opinion</b>	
<b>3.4 Any witnesses</b>	



<b>3.5 Name of alleged perpetrator</b>	
<b>3.6 Your evaluation of the situation (what led to the event)- what will happen if no action is taken?</b>	
<b>3.7 Risk Category</b> (Please refer to example of situations for high/low risk cases in the manual and tick as appropriate)	
<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low	
<b>3.8 Child's Views</b> (Inform the child/family about making a referral for high risk cases if it does not place the child at risk. Inform the child/family about the support available from the VCDC for low risk cases)	
<b>3.9 What has been said to the child/ young person/ adult?</b>	
<b>3.10 Action taken as result of concern</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> No Further Action <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to Emergency Services Police <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital <input type="checkbox"/> Refer to CRPO/CRPA <input type="checkbox"/> Open case file for LOW RISK CASES after consultation with CRPO/CRPA	
<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date and Time:</b>
<b>Follow Up: Action Taken by CRPO/CRPA</b>	

.....

Signature

.....

Date



# Annex 14 – Assessment Form

<b>Date case opened</b>				<b>Case number</b>			
<b>1. Child's details</b>							
<b>1.1 Child's name</b>				<b>1.2 Date of birth</b>			
<b>1.3 Gender</b>				<b>1.4 Current Age</b>			
<b>1.5 Place of birth</b>				<b>1.6 Nationality</b>			
<b>1.7 Ethnic group</b>				<b>1.8 Religion</b>			
<b>1.9 Is the child still schooling?</b>				<b>1.1 If NO to 1.9, the last Grade attended</b>			
				<b>If YES, Grade</b>			
<b>1.11 Language(s) spoken</b>				<b>1.12 Disabilities</b>			
<b>1.13 Current address</b>				<b>1.14 Permanent Address</b>			
<b>2. Family Details</b>							
<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Relationship to child</b>	<b>Last known address</b>	<b>Occupation and income</b>	<b>Comment</b>	
<b>3. What are the child's needs according to his/ her age and development?</b>							
<b>Health</b>		<b>Education</b>		<b>Emotional attachment</b>		<b>Social relationships</b>	



<b>4. Information regarding the case</b>
<b>4.1 Is the child at risk of harm? If yes what are the risks? Tick as relevant and explain the concern.</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Neglect <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Hazardous child labour <input type="checkbox"/> Corporal punishment <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):
<b>4.2 What is the main concern about the child's situation?</b>
<b>4.3 What are the family's cultural beliefs about child care practice causing concern?</b>
<b>4.4 What are the strengths in the child? In the family?</b>
<b>4.5 What are all the sources of support available to the child/ family? (School, health, extended family, neighbours, community, CBOs and NGOs, Government Services)</b>
<b>4.6 Assessment: From the information you have gathered, what do you think is the situation of this child/family? What are the reasons for your judgement?</b>
<b>4.7 What needs to change to make a difference for the child?</b>
<b>4.8 What are the child's wishes and feelings?</b>
<b>4.9 Recommendations.</b>



# Annex 15 – Sample Case Management Plan

Child Name	XXXXX	VCDC Case Number	001	Date	XXXXX	
Child Care Risk Factor	Main reasons	Strengths	What needs to change?- Goals	Resources	Actions	Who is responsible?
E.g – School absenteeism	Supporting family during planting and harvesting season	Child eager to complete school. Parents supportive but need help during planting and harvesting season	Regular school attendance by the child	Support for schooling	Visit parents Visit school	VCDC case worker

.....

Signature

.....

Date



# Annex 16 – Case Recording Form

Date	Type of contact – phone/face to face	Key points of discussion and next steps

I certify that this resource mapping document was approved by the VCDC.

.....  
Signature of Chairperson/ Secretary

.....  
Date



# Annex 17 – Case Closure Form

<b>Child's Name</b>		<b>DoB/Age:</b>	
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Date Case Opened</b>	
<b>Date of Case Closure Discussion</b>			
<b>Participants</b>	Tick all who were present <input type="checkbox"/> VCDC Case Worker: <input type="checkbox"/> Case Manager: <input type="checkbox"/> CRPO/CRPA:		
<b>Reason for opening the case</b>			
<b>Criteria for case closure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Child and family have worked well with the VCDC. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Child Protection Risks have been addressed and resolved. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. The family's social network has increased and they continue to get support from family and friends. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. The child has been seen separately and is happy for the case to be closed. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. The child and family have participated in discussions to close the case, and are in agreement. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. The child and family have been provided with information about community resources that can assist them if problems arise. <i>Criteria number 2 and 4 must always be ticked alongside the other criteria for the case to be closed.</i>		
<b>Following the Case Closure Discussion, a decision was taken to</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Close the case <input type="checkbox"/> Date of case closure: <input type="checkbox"/> Keep the case open, with a new Action Plan (Attach details of new Action Plan)		
<b>Signature of VCDC case worker</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Signature of VCDC case manager</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Reviewed &amp; accepted by CRPO/ CRPA</b>		<b>Date:</b>	







## Department of Probation and Child Care Services

in collaboration with:



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