

# Child Protection Policy

# ASM

What we intend to create is a space where our young ones could be safe.....protected from all sorts of exploitation.

**Articulated by:**  
***Department of Strategic Planning,  
Assembly of Social Mobilization,  
Abdul Gafoor Street, Kinniya,  
Sri Lanka***  
***Tel: + 94 26 223 6993***  
***Email: [asmkinniya@yahoo.com](mailto:asmkinniya@yahoo.com)***  
***[www.asmsrilanka.org](http://www.asmsrilanka.org)***

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## Executive Summary

This Child protection policy framework articulates and presents ASM's ZERO TOLERANCE approach to child negligence and abuse. We provide a strategic policy framework for managing risks of endangered children under conditions of extreme vulnerability caused by POVERTY, DISASTERS & severely disturbed SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

## The Challenge

Million children and their families across Sri Lanka have faced the brutality of a 30 year old civil war, calamity of a Boxing Day tsunami, and the serious consequences of displacements, camp life, poverty and social vulnerability.

The most reported child abuse during the war was the abduction or forced recruitment of children to the Para-military groups. According to reliable sources there were nearly 7000 known cases of underage recruitment in north and east as of 30th November 2009. Though most of the children are released and returned to their families, the pains and trauma caused by the trend of militarization and its counter effects are large. Many children still feel a high degree of insecurity and the integration to families and normal life is often depended on the future handling of the healing process.

Secondly, the susceptibility caused due poverty and the negative impacts of a cluttered social fabric which are also of the result of war and militarization. It was estimated that there are nearly 40,000 war widows in the eastern part of the island, whose children have lost their youthful enthusiasm due to violence and pain. Single headed families are sensing it hard to comply with the ever exaggerated stressful life of home based financial instability and the plight of the children remains unanswered and miserable.

In many parts of the eastern region of Sri Lanka, especially within the Muslim community, women often seek jobs abroad leaving their children with fathers, relatives or friends. Girl children are often faced with the burdens of living without the attention and care of the mother. Schooling becomes a serious issue with these girls and the sense of insecurity within the family and community to a great extent leads to sexual abuses by male members of the family and other men in the community.

## **The Overall goal of the policy is:**

To commit ourselves to create a safer environment for our children, where they are protected from all sorts of exploitation.

## **Guiding Principles**

### **i. Recognize and respect the interest and need for education.**

We are committed to understand the serious consequences faced by the children particularly in the most war & disaster affected zones of Sri Lanka, which trend has undermined the opportunities for streamlined education processes. Scarcity of resources, both physical and technical has deprived the early childhood education of many children in the war affected zones of Sri Lanka. At the other hand growing poverty in the rural areas has also affected schooling to a greater extent for which strategic directions to be placed tackling causes of early school dropout.

### **ii. Rights and responsibilities of the community.**

We believe in, as a key principle for enhancing children's wellbeing is largely depended on the responsibility of the community, its practices, behaviors and culture. We intend to mobilize effective community participation in order to facilitate a process where local communities increase actions that effect on the betterment of their children.

### **iii. Use of effective poverty reduction approaches.**

Tackling grass root poverty and increasing household economic standards of families will directly influence the betterment of children. It's important to contribute to the improved livelihoods of the war & disaster affected communities through effective income generation approaches.

## Implementation strategies

### **1. Strengthening institutional capacity on Child protection policy implementation**

ASM is in the process of creating a comprehensive staff capacity building tool kit on Child protection policy implementation methodologies and approaches. As part of this capacity building process, a focal person shall be appointed at field level to consolidate that the policy guidelines are stringently followed and incorporated within the organization's scope of work.

The monitoring of the implementation of the policy, including target setting, field level implementation, and evaluation will be handled by the Program Manager who's responsible will be to direct the policy guidelines accordingly with time to time analysis and recommendations presented to the Executive Director of ASM.

### **2. Increasing awareness on Child protection issues**

Under the planning and direction of the CP focal person, ASM field coordinators will implement awareness raising campaigns and village level sessions in order to increase awareness among the community and mobilize actions which will increase the enhancement of the security and well being of the children at all target locations where ASM projects are implemented.

### **3. Incorporate CP – Strategies in to the community based disaster risk reduction work.**

ASM activities at field level in the area of Disaster risk reduction will be designed that the policy level guidelines and CP strategies are effectively implemented and carried out within its scope of work. Under the CBDRR work the following key areas will see the incorporation of CP strategies at field level

- a. Tackling rural poverty and the role of women and single headed families.
- b. Managing disasters at community level and the impact on children.
- c. Education and empowerment of rural communities.

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## Incorporation of Child protection strategies in to ASM’s focal areas of work

ASM focal area of work	Considerations	Key strategies
Disaster risk reduction	Understanding the impacts of disasters (Natural & manmade) on children and their consequences. Evolving practical measures to reduce the vulnerability of children during disasters and special care mechanisms during and after the disasters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of children focal groups at village level VDMC</li> <li>• Conducting the child focus risk analysis and formulation of the risk management plan @ each target location.</li> <li>• Develop a rapid response mechanism to work with children during disasters</li> <li>• Facilitate a process of identifying key stakeholders (service providers) to children at risk and maintain a viable communication approach.</li> </ul>
Promoting household economy	Understand the serious effects for children under poverty line and the effects on education & Health. Identify the existing family income/expenditure patterns and the distribution to children. Understand trend of child labor and abuses caused during search for money by children themselves or used by elders for daily wage. Identify alternative income generation options for youth and technical training for drop out children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support families with income generation activities which are having more children and less income.</li> <li>• Organize savings at family level to support education and health care for children.</li> <li>• Promote vocational training facilities at rural level.</li> <li>• Develop home gardening activities especially targeting at food for children.</li> </ul>
Education and empowerment	Understand community traits in the field of education, especially Early childhood education. Analyze resources and better options for schooling at villages. Create an understanding among the community to take actions to promote literacy at grass root level. Realize the promotion and empowerment of rural mechanisms in decision making with increased participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate holiday learning sessions including promoting the habit of reading among children</li> <li>• Organize school – Parent – Pupil coordination circles.</li> <li>• Facilitate the process of resource mobilization for rural school and institutions.</li> </ul>