

Guidelines and procedures for Child Sponsorship Programmes

Rationale

Many agencies have been involved in implementing child sponsorship programmes in Sri Lanka for many years. Since the tsunami of December 2005, the number of organisations and individuals coming forward to support children and their families through sponsorship programmes has increased rapidly. It is therefore important that the child sponsorship programmes are coordinated and managed in ways that the protection, interests and needs of children are met. It is also important that child sponsorship programmes do not inadvertently deepen inequalities and conflicts within families and communities.

Therefore, the Department of Probation and Child Care services, in consultation with other relevant state and non state agencies have developed the following guidelines for agencies already implementing or are interested in implementing child sponsorship programmes.

Child sponsorship

Child sponsorship refers to activities that provide support in cash or kind to individual children or families, through donations received by local and foreign sponsors who are linked to a particular child or family by the implementing agency.

Guidelines and procedures

Protection for children is increased when communities and families are strengthened to take care of children's needs. Therefore, sustainable programmes that aim at improving families livelihood security and access to quality services should be important considerations for agencies involved in working with children.

A. Identification of children

1. Child sponsorship programmes should ensure that discrimination is reduced as far as possible within families and communities by ensuring that all children benefit from sponsorship programmes. Thus, while an individual child may be selected for sponsorship, all the children in the family should benefit from the programme.
2. Selection of children for sponsorship programmes which provide individual or family financial benefits should be done based on recommendations made by Child Rights Promotion Officers (CRPOs) attached to Divisional Secretariats.
3. Agencies willing to sponsor children should contact CRPOs at Divisional Secretariat level. The CRPO will provide the agency with the details and

information of the children according to the number of children the agency is able to support. Additional information of other children should not be released.

B. Contact with sponsor

4. All communication between sponsor and child must go through the facilitating agency. This communication must be screened and supervised by the agency to prevent possible exploitation and abuse.
5. Photographs of children should not be used in the selection process. Once the child is selected, a sponsor may receive a photograph of the child, but the agency must ensure that the photograph is respectful to the child. For example, the child must be appropriately dressed.
6. Sponsors should not receive details of the address of the child being sponsored. The child must not exchange his/her address with his/her sponsor.
7. Visits by the sponsor to the child must be planned in advance and take place in a neutral place. The relevant CRPO/PO should be kept informed of the meeting.
8. All files maintained by the agency regarding the child should be confidential.
9. Sponsorship should not in any way be a precursor to adoption.

C. Benefits

10. No political or religious conditions should be placed on the child for receiving benefits.
11. Sponsorship benefits should ensure that age appropriate needs of the children are met in terms of nutrition, education and health.
12. Where cash benefits are provided, they should range from between Rs 1000.00 to Rs 2000.00 per child. In addition, material assistance can be provided.

D. Monitoring

13. A sponsorship programme should be for a minimum period of two years and be subject to reassessment based on the changing circumstances of the children's families.
14. The child and family should be assessed every three months during the period of sponsorship by the agency. Any concerns should be communicated immediately to the provincial Department of Probation and Child Care or the District Child

Protection Committee. The relevant PO/CRPO should be kept informed as to the progress of the child or family.

Registration of agencies

15. Agencies willing to sponsor children should apply for accreditation with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services. Only agencies registered with the Ministry of Social Services will be allowed to apply for accreditation. Individuals interested in sponsorship should link with an accredited agency.
16. It will be the responsibility of the National Department of Probation and Child Care services to inform all Provincial Departments of Probation and Child Care as well as Divisional Secretariats of accredited agencies.
17. Provincial Departments of Probation and Child Care and the District Child Monitoring Committees will ensure that all relevant agencies at the provincial and district level are made aware of the guidelines and procedures for child sponsorship and for monitoring their adherence to them.

Prepared by the National Department of Probation and Child Care
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