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Government of Goa,
Directorate of Education,
Porvorim-Goa.

Dated: 15/05/2015.

To,
The Manager/Chairman,

Subject: Guidelines on safety and security of children

Sir/Madam,

All the schools in the state of Goa are under the jurisdiction of Directorate of Education. All these schools are expected to provide the very best, not only in terms of academic excellence but also with regard to overall development of every child, while ensuring their safety and security.

A large number of families of the society with diverse socio-economic, educational and cultural background are sending their children to these institutions under proper care and management. Therefore, greater responsibility is thrust on the management of these institutions to protect the young children, and in particular the growing up girls, to bring them up in a disciplined and dedicated pursuit of excellence.

1. Background:

a. Children require a healthy and supportive environment to grow and develop. All children have a right to live in dignity, and have an access to education in an environment that is safe, protective and conducive to growth and development. The school environment is associated with overall growth and development, cognitive behaviour, safety and security of a child.

b. The country has succeeded in bringing children to schools and achieving near universal enrolment among children at the primary level. Efforts made for enrolment need to be further supported by interventions to ensure safety and overall well-being of students. Schools need to protect their children from risk of natural disasters, health hazards, abuse, violence and accidents.

c. Laws provide, for instituting mechanisms for safety and security of children and also for monitoring of the same by specified agencies. The State Government has taken a holistic view for planning and monitoring to ensure that, schools provide the safe and child friendly environment, as mandated by various laws enumerated in the succeeding paragraphs.
Suggested Guidelines for affirmative action

The safety and security of children may be looked at, in multiple dimensions.

2.1 Physical:

2.1.1 Location:

Schools located near the highway, busy main roads, unmanned railway crossings or water bodies/canals/seasonal rivers etc. are hazardous for the children, as most of the children come to school and return unattended by parents/guardians. Also during playtime, children may wander off to unsafe surroundings, including under construction civil works, within the campus and places where materials are stored. Schools located in commercial areas and having tobacco selling shops nearby the school, pose a different type of threat, where children’s health and safety may be affected insidiously. Eve teasing is another problem which the older girls may face at certain locations on the way to schools and this may ultimately lead to school avoidance by girl students.

The schools may consider following points in mind on top priority:

a) Boundary wall or double fencing with plantation, with provision of a gate which can be located.

b) Removal of sale points of objectionable materials through special drive, to be repeated at regular intervals. Community policing for sale of tobacco/drugs etc. could also be taken up.

c) Ensuring the safety of the approach to schools, may require permanent civil work solutions, like building of approach roads/bridges etc. or behavioural changes like traffic management and escort duty to facilitate children’s safety.

d) Training of children and teachers to negotiate the specific hazards enroute to the school.

e) Community awareness needs to be generated to impact parental choice, so that they select schools within the neighbourhood, instead of making children commute long distances every day.

f) The schools need to check the background of the drivers and helpers engaged in the school buses/vehicles therein, which should be categorically verified by the local police. School managements may also be encouraged to hire women helpers on the vehicles, as an additional safety feature for girls.
2.1.2 **Building:**

The buildings should be physically sound, all-weather structures with the following facilities and structural parameters:

a) Drinking water sources and toilets to have clean and septic draining/soak-pits/waste disposal, etc.

b) Secure and separate kitchen shed within the school premises, equipped with storage facilities and a cooking area which can be maintained free of insects, rodents etc.

c) The buildings should be resistant to earthquakes, fire, safe from floods and other calamities, as the children are more vulnerable to be harmed and less likely to be able to react effectively in case any calamity strikes.

d) The buildings should be kept free from inflammable and toxic materials. If storage of some inflammable material (e.g. fuel for cooking mid-day meal) is inevitable, they should be stored safely.

e) The schools should have adequate emergency exits.

f) There should be an adequate supply of water and sand for firefighting purposes.

g) These essentially means a ‘building safety audit’ be done for each and every school, with the specific points of emergency outlets, school steps/ramps, buildings to be free from inflammable materials, storage of construction materials and other structural issues.

h) Reducing structural vulnerability of existing school buildings, which is often the root cause of death and injury of school children, is a resource intensive solution and would require time. Therefore, as a risk reduction effort, a Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans at individual school levels should be prepared to ensure that the children are in a better position to respond effectively or to tackle any emergency within the school environment. The School Disaster Management Plans may further be supported with constitution of disaster management teams, training of the disaster management teams on basic life supporting skills and development of a school level emergency kit. Existence of such kits at the school level will be of great help during any post disaster search and rescue operation within the school premises or in the nearby area. Many states had taken up this initiative with the support from National Disaster Management Authority and the existing manuals may be used as a starting point till each school is verified for safety requirements.

i) In the longer term, preparation of retrofitting guidelines would be needed to strengthen the schools found vulnerable. This will necessitate preparation of phase-wise execution plan for carrying out the retrofitting of school buildings. Along with the strengthening work, a sensitization programme for the students,
teachers and surrounding community people on the importance of structural and non-structural retrofitting will also be required.

2.1.3 Campus:

One of the serious hazards for children in schools is uncovered, exposed, loose electricity cables and wires. Out of curiosity or in playful mood or accidently, there is a possibility of touching or pulling the live wires causing fatal hazard to life. The school play-ground should be levelled to avoid falling down of children. Sites of digging of wells, bore wells etc. should be cordoned off securely to prevent children from falling in. Schools having secluded rooms/corners within the campus, have the possibility of anti-social activities which can prove to be hazardous for children, particularly for girls. Also construction of additional class rooms/toilets etc may pose potential danger to children due to exposed construction materials/building under construction and these should be made out of bounds for children. Review of safety within the campus must be taken up by the head teacher and teachers continuously.

2.1.4 Classroom:

The classrooms should be white washed at periodic intervals and dusted regularly to maintain the classroom hygiene. The windows should be secure and there should be no broken glass panes or fittings hanging loose. Black board in the class room may be hung, placed on a three legged stand or kept on a chair. Blackboards are also hung on to the walls of the classroom. In case of loosely placed blackboard in the classroom, there is a possibility of accidents, both minor and major, to the children while moving around in the class room. While constructing school building, provision of adequate ventilators and windows in the classroom should be considered. Air flowing through the ventilators keeps the classroom airy and fresh and the children also feel fresh and energetic to get involved in the teaching-learning process. Classroom floor should not be broken or uneven and needs to be repaired/maintained annually.

2.1.5 Teachers and staff:

a) The schools must verify the antecedents of not only all the teachers but also other contractual or subordinate staff deployed in schools with the help of local police.

b) There should be a conscious attempt to have at least one female teacher in every school. Head teachers and principals must be asked to supervise the other teachers and ensure that no child is abused in any manner by the staff or even by elder students.

c) In the event of a teacher or employee being in a drunken/intoxicated state, the environment of the school is vitiated in addition to the risk posed to the children. Head teachers must initiate action against such incidents.

d) Continuous education of teachers on the principles of child rights and the drills for safety and security in the event of disasters and accidents needs to be systematically planned, beyond the ambit of the in-service academic training of teachers.
2.1.6 *Excursions and trips*:

Whenever schools organize excursions and trips, for any reason whatsoever, the onus of safety and security of the children is totally upon the school authorities. The transportation used must be verified, for road worthiness and the driver, for antecedents and experience. Sufficient number of male and female teachers must be deployed, so that boys and girls are adequately supervised. Arrangements for board and lodging should be made, keeping in view the security and safety of the children.

2.2 *Health and hygiene*:

2.2.1 *Drinking water*:

Source of drinking water is important as availability of potable water or treatment required for making the water potable depends on the source. Most of the water-borne diseases spread due to ignorance of the quality of drinking water. In case of schools, care is to be taken by the school authorities to ensure that water is safe. Covered water storage and purification, through chlorine tablets/use of filters etc. can also be provided in convergence with the Public Health Engineering and Health Departments in case regular piped supply or quality bore wells are not present.

2.2.2 *Toilets*:

There should be separate toilets for girls and boys. For hygienic maintenance of toilets, availability of water is of prime importance. Although the facility of running water is necessary for keeping the toilets clean, yet few schools may not have the provision of running water in toilets. In such cases, alternative methods of transportation and storage of water should be put in place to ensure that the toilets remain functional. For maintenance and cleaning, the annual school grants should be used by the school authorities.

2.2.3 *Hygiene*:

Teachers need to be trained to regularly monitor and ensure the general hygiene factors in the school premises and also of the children. Other than the basic hygiene factor, teachers can be sensitized to the local and specific issues, for example, the preventive and curative steps in areas with prevalence of Japanese Encephalitis, Filariais, Iodine Deficiency etc. There are also reports of substance and drug abuse at a very early age. Teachers should also be alerted on the signs and symptoms to watch out for children, especially as some of these are also linked to absence from schools, where a collaborative approach between teachers and parents would be required.

2.2.4 *Mid-day meal*:

In case of any untoward incident occurring after consumption of the MDM/other food materials by children, the school teachers and SMC members should be well acquainted with the standard operating procedures to be followed. The relevant extract on ‘Quality and Safety Aspects’ in the guidelines issued by this Ministry on Mid Day Meal in September, 2006 Guidelines with regard to MDM safety dated 22\textsuperscript{nd} July, 2013.
2.3 Psychosocial:

2.3.1 Punishment:

Verbal, physical or mental abuse of children has negative impact on young minds and such children gradually develop fear-psychosis. They are unable to speak up, break down emotionally and mentally and ultimately loose the enthusiasm to come to school. Physical punishment inflicted on children in school could lead to minor or major injury or damage to physical health, for example twisting of the ears may damage internal parts of ears leading to deafness. Canning or beating the children could also cause minor or major injury. The repeated and intensive training of teachers is a step to eliminate corporal punishment.

2.3.2 Eve teasing/sexual abuse:

These are becoming serious issues as incidents get reported from schools and nearby places.

Children should be taught early to differentiate between ‘good touch/bad touch’ and encouraged to speak out at the first instance. It vests totally with the teachers to ensure that the schools are safe in this regard. The Head Teacher/Principal and teachers must ensure that all parts of the school are accessible to everyone and there are no secluded/isolated areas. Also the teachers should be sensitized to deject such an occurrence if the child displays any sign, which may include investigating sudden absence or unusual behaviour.

2.3.3 School environment:

a) The School environment should be such that, each child should feel that help would be available to him/her, if she approached them: The SMC members may facilitate this process by regularly visiting the schools and interacting with students. Children may find it easier to report incidents at the initial stage itself, if the school environment is conducive.

b) Training of teachers to ensure safety and security of children itself will cover a wide spectrum from drills for safety, first aid, gender sensitization, principles of no corporal punishment. While training on physical aspects of safety, drills may be staggered to cover a specified number of teachers every year, till coverage is complete, however training on gender and other mindset issues will have to cover all teachers every year.

c) As far as possible, every school must have at least one female teacher.
3. **Bullying Prevention Programs:**

Bullying programs seek to increase awareness of the problem, to achieve active involvement on the part of teachers and parents, to develop clear rules against bullying behavior, and to provide support and protection for the victims of bullying. Key elements include conflict resolution training for staff members, social skills building for victims, positive leadership skills training for bullies, intervention techniques for bystanders, and the presence of parental support. Intervention models can be used on a school-wide classroom, or at the individual level.

4. **Drug free Programs:**

Our children make major health decisions at a very young age: whether to smoke, to drink or to use drugs. Drug education in schools is essential, and all teachers, not just science teachers, should reinforce this information. Information on drugs and alcohol must be communicated early and effectively, through knowledgeable teachers who understand the gateway that leads from experimentation to dependency.

Anti-drug campaigns such as “Just Say No” may be attempted, aimed at educating the students on the effects of drugs which can help to reduce the use of drugs by students/teenagers. No Drugs Signs or installing signs such as “No Alcohol or Drugs Permitted in School Campus” can help shield children from addictive drugs and prevent the vicious cycle before it even starts and will likewise increase public awareness in schools.

5. **Monitoring by SMCs:**

The School Management Committee, in the overall monitoring of the school should necessarily dwell upon the following aspects:

a) The SMCs should be made familiar with basic guidelines and standard operating procedure in case of natural calamities, accidents, abuse of children by others, food poisoning in case of MDM etc. This is a wide spectrum for orientation, as the SMCs are the most effective local monitoring mechanisms and their capacity building is critical.

b) The SMCs have a focal role in ensuring that no eve teasing happens on the way to school or in the locality, as this can lead to girls dropping out. Community awareness and pressure on culprits can be brought about effectively by the SMCs.

c) The role of SMCs is critical as an oversight that, the school and teachers are providing a safe and child friendly environment. The presence of SMC members during school hours should be encouraged. They may also devise local systems, so that, at time of dispersal, when children return home at the end of the school hours, supervision of the SMC is there, on rotation to ensure that all the children leave safely.

d) As far as practicable, SMC members, especially women, may accompany school tours and excursions.
e) As prevalence of substance abuse is now reported even at early ages, the SMCs must be entrusted with the task of ensuring that the school premises and area around it is not accessible to vendors of tobacco and other such materials.

f) The SMC members also need to be trained on signs of neglect or abuse of children, which may even manifest a frequent or long absence from school. The SMCs must be strengthened to be able to track absent children and go into the causes for the absence.

g) The SMCs themselves should conduct an annual safety audit of physical safety hazards and psychosomatic environment in the school. This should cover whether adequate steps have been taken by the school management to prevent accidents, corporal punishment, child sexual abuse, mental harassment and discrimination and also preparedness to deal with natural disasters and accidents. The exercise should be made public and accessible to the authorities, the parents and to civil society.

h) SMCs should be encouraged to devise mechanisms for children to express their grievances both in person and anonymously. Drop boxes for complaints may be placed in the school and anonymity of the children/parents maintained while sharing the details of the complaints/grievances with other agencies such as the media in order to protect their privacy/confidentiality.

i) Lastly, the SMC must ensure that whenever any untoward occurrence take place in a school, the ‘victim child’ is always protected and provided the best possible speedy care-medical and psychological.

6. Grievance Redressal:

a) For the elementary level, The State under their Goa RTE Rules 2012 have notified block/district level Grievance Redressal Mechanism. The same should be made publicly available and posted on all schools, so that any infringement of children’s safety is reported immediately.

b) The designated Local Authority/PRIIs in State shall deal with the issues related for school education, prevention of corporal punishment/abuse and ensuring that safety and security features are in place. Institutionalized public meetings by the Local Authority/PRIIs will not only help monitor, but also address individual cases which will go a long way to change deep seated beliefs on the issue from within the community.

c) The Local Authority/PRI can also provide for a system of registering grievances related to safety and security of children at both the taluka and district levels.
Other Standard safety measures

(i) The Head of the Institution should ensure that the tour undertaken is required for the benefit of students and is related to the curriculum of the course in which such students are enrolled.

(ii) The Head of the Institution should ensure issuing security i-cards to all such students and maintain a separate database of the personal details like guardian/local guardian, home address, mobile, email etc. of such students and the same is carried by the students on his person.

(iii) The Head of the Institution should ensure that written permission of one of the parents or the local guardian is submitted on behalf of every such student wanting to participate in an educational tour.

(iv) The Head of the Institution should ensure that there is a senior teacher accompanying the students on such an educational tour. Further, a senior lady teacher should accompany if there are girl students participating in the educational tour.

(v) The Head of the Institution should ensure that prior permission of the organisation is obtained in advance, as and when such educational tours are undertaken.

(vi) If the tour is undertaken to public places, dam cities, power plants, sea beaches etc., a written communication must be made to the concerned authorities.

(vii) The Head of the Institution should ensure that an undertaking is taken from every participating student that they would abide by all the rules and also that they have submitted the permission by their parents or local guardian before they participate in the educational tour.

(viii) The names and addresses of SMC members/teachers/staff/management and all members working/related/associated directly or indirectly to the schools should be maintained and updated from time to time.

(ix) The management of schools should take adequate/measures/steps to ensure that children leave school only with their parents or relatives of the parents (who have authorized Identity Cards).

(x) School should ensure that the security staff confirms that no student or any staff member is remaining in the premises after school and report to the head of the school of the school every day before leaving the school.

(xi) Arrangement to check and inspect unauthorized persons in the school premises should be made.

(xii) School Management should necessarily ensure that unauthorized persons or persons not concerned with the school do not enter or travel in the school transport vehicles.
(xiii) Care should be taken to drop off girl students and the women staff first at their place of residence on preference in the evening after school.

(xiv) Students should be advised to go in groups rather than going alone while going home after school hours.

(xv) It should be ensured that all visitors should make an entry of their names and addresses in the visitor’s log book in all the schools, hostels and residential schools.

The Headmaster/Principals should take special measures to sensitize the teachers, Staff and other employees of the schools/institutions about their duties and responsibilities towards welfare of children and bring the contents of this letter to the notice of all employees, working in the schools/institutions.

This circular shall come into force from the date of issue.

Yours faithfully,

(G.P. Bhat)
Director of Education

Copy to:-

1. The Dy. Director of Education, North/ South/ Central Educational Zone, Mapusa/ Margao/Panaji-Goa......for information and strict compliance

2. The A.D.E.I of all taluka. ......for information and strict compliance

3. All Sections of this Directorate....for information

4. The Chairman, GBSHSE, Porvorim....for information and necessary action.

5. The Director, SCERT, Porvorim....for information and necessary action.