



# THE PROMISE FOUNDATION

*For mental health, education and potential realisation*

## SAFETY IN FIELDWORK POLICY

### 1. Introduction

This policy covers the safe management of fieldwork activities. It also sets out The Promise Foundation's legal responsibilities towards its employees, contractors, students engaged in research, and others that may be affected by The Promise Foundation's activities. For the purpose of this policy The Promise Foundation will be referred to as the Foundation.

#### 1 (a) Applicability of the policy

Fieldwork is defined as practical work carried out by Foundation staff, or students for the purpose of research, testing and implementation of the interventions arising from the research. This policy applies where Fieldwork is carried out in places that are not under the Foundation's control, but where the Foundation is responsible for the safety of its staff, students and others exposed to their activities. It excludes voluntary and leisure activities along with work experience placements and activities controlled by other employers.

The policy applies to work carried out both in India and overseas and much of it is aimed at "traditional" fieldwork, such as carrying out surveys through face to face group and one-to-one interviews, paper surveys, data gathering, video recording, audio recording; by students or professionals contracted by the Foundation, and by its employees.

#### 1 (b) Legal background

The Foundation has a number of important duties towards its employees, contractors and students engaged in fieldwork:

- (i) It is the Foundation's duty to provide safe systems of work for all employees and to ensure that no person is harmed by carrying out activities on behalf of the Foundation or under the control of the Foundation.

The Foundation complies with the Factories Act 1948 which requires an occupier of an establishment to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all workers while they are at work.

The Foundation complies with the Occupational Safety Health and Working Conditions Code 2020, referred to as the OHS Code 2020. This Bill was tabled in Parliament in Sept 2020 and will repeal the Factories Act 1948.

- (ii) The Foundation has a contractual duty to staff, via the Terms of Service, to provide for their safety all undertaking pertaining to their employment.

- (iii) There is likely to be a contractual relationship between the Foundation and its employees and it is likely that a court would regard reasonable safety provision as an implied term in this contract.

The duties imposed by Chapter III, Section 6(1) of the OHS Code 2020 must be achieved as far as reasonably practicable and it will not always be either necessary or possible to eliminate all risk in order to discharge this duty.

These duties and those imposed by other regulations require the risks associated with fieldwork to be assessed and managed in the same way as any other Foundation activity.

### **1 (c) Overseas fieldwork**

It is the Foundation's policy that the standard of care required under the OHS Code 2020 to be the minimum standard of safety followed for work outside India. Where the standards adopted outside India are higher, those higher standards will be applied in compliance with Section 1, Chapter 2, Para 8(iii)(B) of the OHS Code 2020.

### **1 (d) Planning, risk assessment, and the management of fieldwork**

The Director of The Foundation is responsible for ensuring that adequate fieldwork planning is carried out, including assessments of the risks that need to be managed during fieldwork, and for ensuring that safe working procedures have been established for all staff and students.

He/she should ensure that:

- (i) There will be adequate supervision over the fieldwork activities
- (ii) Supervisors are competent under the circumstances likely to be encountered and have adequate first aid and other relevant training, if risk assessments identified a need for it.
- (iii) All field workers are adequately prepared
- (iv) Suitable lines of communication with fieldworkers are available and accidents are reported and investigated.

The Director may delegate responsibility for planning and risk assessment to the person who is organising the fieldwork. If this is the case, then the Director must be satisfied that the organiser is competent to do this and has sufficient awareness of their legal obligations to the participants.

The aim of risk assessment is first to identify all the hazards associated with the work and then to assess the risk that these hazards present under the circumstances of the work. This should identify areas where action can be taken to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

It is helpful to consider three types of risk when planning fieldwork:

- (i) universal risks applicable to all fieldwork (e.g. general travel-related risks)
- (ii) generic risks, applicable to all field work of that type (e.g. child safety, breach of privacy, corruption)

(iii) specific risks that apply to particular locations (e.g. reflecting the presence of local danger at a fieldwork site, or travel-related risks applying to a particular country).

Besides these external factors, risk assessments should consider the knowledge, experience, and skills of the participants, and whether they have any special needs or vulnerabilities.

The amount of time spent on planning and the degree of detail recorded in the risk assessment needs to be proportionate to the inherent danger present in the fieldwork. For instance, it is sensible to make simple generic assessments for routine, well-supervised visits to low risk areas. But more extensive planning and assessment would be required for a group planning for work in areas where there may be a risk to personal safety because of criminal or political activity. Past experience of the worker in his/her proposed activity will have a major bearing on the perceived level of risk and the composition of the risk assessment should reflect this.

There should always be a contingency plan for reasonably foreseeable emergencies, taking into account the likely hazards of the environment and the type of work undertaken. As part of this plan, The Foundation should retain a record of:

- (i) the work involved
- (ii) the workers involved
- (iii) their itinerary and return times
- (iv) their contact details

For overseas work, in particular, it is prudent for the Foundation to retain passport and visa details, and the names and addresses of next of kin.

### **1 (e) Provision of information**

Employees undertaking fieldwork must be fully informed of the nature of the work, the associated hazards, and their control measures. This is a legal requirement but it also has other functions, e.g. it allows them to identify any medical problems that might affect their ability to carry out certain types of fieldwork.

The extent of the information that needs to be provided will depend on the pre-existing knowledge, experience, and skills of the participants. The Director, must be satisfied that those providing this information are competent to do so and might wish to consider how best to assess and monitor this competency.

### **1 (f) Provision of training**

Besides being adequately informed, fieldworkers must have the relevant training to undertaking the field activities assigned to them. The relevant training required will be dealt with through the hiring and selection process.

### **1 (g) Duties of employees**

The Foundation complies with the OHS Code 2020 by:

- (a) Ensuring that the workplace is free from hazards which cause or are likely to cause injury or occupational disease to the employee;

(b) comply with the occupational safety and health standards declared under section 18 or the rules, regulations, bye-laws or orders made under the OHS Code where applicable;

(c) provide annual health examination or tests free of costs to employees as may be prescribed by the appropriate Government;

(d) provide and maintain, as far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to the health of the employees;

(e) ensure that no charge is levied on any employee, in respect of anything done or provided for maintenance of safety and health at workplace, including conduct of medical examination and investigation for the purpose of detecting occupational diseases;

### **1 (h) Duties of employees**

Employees have a responsibility under (Chapter III, Section 13 of the OHS Code 2020) to:

- (a) take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at the workplace;
- (b) Comply with the safety and health requirements specified in the standards;
- (c) Employees participating in fieldwork, but not supervising, must co-operate with the Foundation by following the safety instructions and control measures put in place to meet its statutory obligations under the OHS Code.

### **1 (i) Insurance**

The Foundation holds legal liability insurance policies relevant to fieldwork activities, Employer's Liability, which covers employees acting in the course of their employment (in respect of any death or injury they might suffer for which the Foundation is liable at law) and Public Liability, which covers others. These policies will indemnify the Foundation, and those acting on its behalf, against any third party claim for damages arising from death, personal injury, or third party property damage where there is a liability at law.

Travel Insurance will be provided to employees travelling abroad for the Foundation. Travel Insurance will be taken at the time of travel.

### **1 (j) Dealing with the public and the press**

Fieldworkers will be seen as representatives of the Foundation. It is important to ensure that the academic purpose of their work is accurately represented and this is best done through a senior representative. Therefore, queries should be referred to the Director, The Promise Foundation for comment. Questions from the media should be referred to the Director, The Promise Foundation for comment.

## **2. Supervision and training**

### **2 (a) Responsibility for safety in fieldwork**

Responsibility for the health and safety of participants in fieldwork lies ultimately with the Director, The Promise Foundation. He/she must ensure that fieldwork supervisors are adequately trained in basic work techniques, possess any necessary skills including first-aid training if required, are capable and competent in leading a team in the field and appreciate the hazards and risks involved in the undertaking. Following a risk assessment, the Director should devise, discuss, and agree written working procedures with his/her appointed representative. These documents should be provided to each field worker and the Director should satisfy him/herself that the individual appreciates the significant points, e.g. by using individual or group briefings.

### **2 (b) Fieldwork supervision**

The responsibility for ensuring that adequate safety arrangements exist and that fieldworkers observe them lies with the Director. Where appropriate, the Director may appoint one or more field leaders to act on their behalf in the field. Field leaders need not necessarily be Foundation employees (e.g. they may be specialists from a partner organization or a contracted third party) and because there can be confusion in such cases the identity of the designated leader should always be made clear, e.g. in written instructions or safety briefings. For the duration of the fieldwork, the designated field leader is responsible for ensuring all safety precautions are observed. Individuals must understand that they must observe any instruction given to them by the field leader and bring any safety issues to their attention.

The Director, The Promise Foundation should always be aware of fieldworkers' activities. A plan of work, which includes the proposed itinerary and timetable, should be held by the Director and updated as necessary.

Supervision levels for field trips will vary. While fieldwork cannot usually be as closely supervised as other activities, the level of supervision must be adequate for a given situation.

### **2 (c) Training**

It is important that personnel are adequately trained in the skills required for their fieldwork, either beforehand or as part of the work. The training of field leaders is particularly important and for some activities it may be appropriate to seek formal qualifications (e.g. specialist in speech therapy, language specialists) beyond those directly connected with the work itself.

First Aid training should be considered for at least one member where groups work in remote locations if the risk assessment deems it necessary having taken into consideration due the medical facilities available and proximity of medical facilities.

## **3. Conduct of fieldwork**

### **3 (a) Fieldwork trips on foot**

As fieldwork will be carried out in locations which have road access, in the event of a requirement to walk distances to reach villages or within a village, appropriate and

comfortable foot ware should be worn. Protection from the sun and rain by carrying an umbrella and clothing appropriate for the weather conditions and that is culturally sensitive should be worn.

While we do not anticipate fieldwork would require employees to walk distances on roads, in the event of this need, walkers on roads should face the traffic and wear items of fluorescent clothing by day and reflective clothing at night.

### **3 (b) Use of transport**

Transport may include bicycle, motorcycle, scooter, car, bus or train to reach field locations. Risk assessments should take into account the suitability of the chosen method of transport, the prevention of driver/operator fatigue, and the provision of adequate rest periods.

Transport must be properly maintained in compliance with relevant traffic regulations.

Drivers must possess appropriate licences, and be in a fit state to drive. Local traffic rules must be observed and seat belts used if available.

### **3 (c) Equipment**

Equipment must be suitable for the conditions of use and should be properly maintained. Employees must comply with the Foundations Use of Equipment policy.

### **3 (d) Protective clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE)**

All participants must wear adequate and appropriate protective clothing. PPE should comply with appropriate local and International Standards where practicable. It should be checked regularly, maintained in good condition, and worn correctly.

The following types of clothing and PPE should be considered:

- Masks,
- Face shields and or eye protection
- Gloves
- Sanitizers
- Sun protective clothing
- Warm/weatherproof clothing (for cold/wet conditions)
- Appropriate footwear

### **3 (e) Local conditions**

With the increase in incidents of heavy rainfall, high temperatures and flooding, weather conditions should be considered during field trips.

A wide range of factors that are only apparent on site may require reassessment of risks or changes to control measures, for example:

- extremes of weather
- unstable soil particularly during road works
- overhead or buried power lines

- traffic
- venomous, frisky or aggressive animals.

It may be necessary to consider additional precautions, e.g.

- appropriate protective clothing
- provision of shade or shelter
- provision of maps, compasses, GPS
- first aid and medical equipment
- increased level of supervision
- mobile or other communication systems

Field workers should take care not to become so engrossed in their tasks that they fail to notice changing conditions, such as weather or tide. They should also be told how to report hazards they believe have not been properly considered.

### **3 (f) Personal safety and security**

Theft, vandalism, and violent crime can be a problem in both remote and urban areas. Hazards to field workers, particularly those working alone and those judged to be particularly vulnerable, should be considered carefully, as should the risk of theft of (or vandalism to) essential equipment. Local crime rates, social and political factors will need to be considered and police or other local sources consulted for advice if necessary. Risk assessments should consider the following control measures:

- pre-visit checks
- working in pairs or with a companion in earshot
- security locks on vehicles, buildings, stores
- anti-theft devices and alarms
- personal alarms
- mobile phones (fully charged, with spare charged batteries available where appropriate; emergency contact numbers should be readily available, e.g. stored in mobile phones)
- training in dealing with aggression
- monitoring and reporting systems

### **3 (g) Leisure time**

Accidents are especially likely to occur during leisure time for a variety of reasons. For instance, under the influence of drink or drugs they may become unfit to drive or carry out their fieldwork tasks, they may engage in dangerous pranks, they may become aggressive, or they may provoke the aggressive attention of others.

Members of fieldwork groups should be made aware that they will be regarded as representatives of the Foundation and that any dangerous, unsociable or offensive behaviour will reflect badly on it. Supervising staff should note that they will not be held responsible for accidents or incidents occurring during unsupervised leisure time, provided warnings about bad behaviour or dangerous activities are given and recorded.

### 3 (h) Catering and sanitation

Where food is provided during field work, organizers should aim to provide a wholesome, balanced, and varied diet, taking into account special dietary needs.

Local foods should be selected carefully and high risk foods avoided.

An adequate supply of potable water must be available. If necessary, water should be purified by boiling, ultra-filtration, or the use of chemical treatments.

## 4. Health and basic fitness

Organisers of fieldwork must give careful consideration to the maintenance of the health of participants.

Participants should be required to complete the **Fieldwork Medical Information form** and declare whether they knowingly suffer from any disability or any medical condition (e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, heart disease, mental health conditions, vertigo, or the taking of certain drugs) that could compromise their health and safety, or that of others. The personal information in the Fieldwork Medical Information form is protected under the Foundation's Confidentiality Policy.

When on field trips, it may be useful for individuals with pre-existing conditions to carry with them written details of their condition, treatment, and medical contacts.

The risk assessment should consider the activities to be undertaken, the work environment, the nature of the medical condition (e.g. its severity, degree of control and functional impact), and the remoteness of the fieldwork activity (including access to medical assistance). Ideally, an individual's treating practitioner is best placed to provide guidance on their medical condition or disability, but they may not be fully aware of the demands of the fieldwork.

Every effort should be made to enable those with specified medical conditions or disabilities to participate fully in fieldwork, but it may sometimes be necessary to make exclusions to ensure the health and safety of the participant.

### 4 (a) Health education

Participants should receive adequate instruction on the likely health hazards associated with the fieldwork, and particular attention should be given to:

- environmental hazards (e.g. dehydration, sunburn)
- avoidance of gastro-intestinal disorders and food poisoning
- microbiological hazards
- insect, animal, and plant hazards
- basic personal hygiene and care of the feet
- use of insect repellents.

#### **4 (b) Immunisation**

Advice should be sought if the fieldwork could result in exposure to certain pathogenic organisms (e.g. cholera, typhoid, dengue, malaria, COVID 19). For COVID 19 immunization, participants be required to comply with local government requirements to register at <http://www.cowin.gov.in> and schedule an appointment to receive the vaccination at a hospital nearby. Appropriate letter confirming that the participant is involved in front-line work will be provided by the Foundation.

Medical advice on the immunisation requirements for overseas travel for employees and individuals may be obtained from your local doctor.

The cost of immunization arising as a result of performing duties relating to fieldwork will be paid for by the Foundation.

#### **4 (c) Injury and illness in the field**

In the field, relatively trivial injuries or conditions may become serious if not treated and field leaders should be alert for signs of illness, injury, or fatigue in the team. Prompt medical attention must be sought and fieldworkers should be aware of the location of their nearest healthcare facilities. Participants on trips abroad should be advised of the need to obtain adequate medical insurance. If there is any doubt about the standard of health care in the country or area concerned, sufficient sterile packs should be carried to ensure that clean needles, sutures, etc are always available.

### **5. Emergency action**

#### **5 (a) First aid coverage**

The risk assessment should consider whether an appropriate level of first aid cover should be provided for fieldwork. Where it is considered necessary that a member of the group should be first aid trained, appropriate training through the Red Cross <https://redcrosskarnataka.org/first-aid-training/> will be organized.

#### **5 (b) Accident and emergency procedures**

The fieldwork leader is responsible for organising emergency procedures and ensuring that all members of the group are aware of them.

There should be a clear action plan to deal with a serious accident, which should include the following points:

- Attend to the injured person
- Keep only the minimum number of persons to help and withdraw the remainder to a safe place if conditions are dangerous or may deteriorate.
- Send for help if necessary, and ensure that the emergency services are given the exact location (e.g. by GPS coordinates or location)
- Warn others of dangers, if these exist (e.g. flooding)
- Inform the Director, as soon as possible.
- Do not discuss the situation with anyone except the emergency services and the Director, The Promise Foundation.

## **5 (c) Accident Reporting**

All accidents, incidents, or work-related illnesses must be reported as soon as possible to the Director.

## **6. Monitoring and review**

A fully effective system for safely managing fieldwork requires regular review of procedures, so that lessons can be learned from experience and working practices improved. The following should be considered:

- (a) Were adequate advance plans and preparations made for the work?
- (b) Were all hazards anticipated and were adequate precautions taken to control any risks that arose?
- (c) Do any changes need to be made to improve the safety of similar projects in the future?

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