

PROLOGUE for CACA Safety Workbooks (UKG-9)

Project CACA, **C**hildren **A**gainst **C**hild **A**buse, is a safety programme for children and is implemented as a safety policy of the school. It follows a “child-centric” holistic approach. The CACA Safety Workbook series for children is the core instrument of the project. The other components are legal and psychological awareness cum sensitization workshops for parents, teachers and non-teaching/support staff of the school, various companion resource booklets for them and PSYCH-ED, a national psychology quiz for school students.

The workbooks cover personal safety with a focus on prevention of child abuse and child sexual abuse in particular. Age appropriate, progressive and in Indian ethos, the workbooks are a result of a four-year-long democratic chain of processes like *opinion polls, focus group discussions, conventions, consensus building discussions and a pilot programme* held across India. They continuously evolve under a project committee through quantitative and qualitative assessments and peer review.

The workbooks are *moral/value education and life skills* books (co-scholastic). They follow an interdisciplinary approach like EVS and thus will involve teachers from various subjects. The moral/value education is derived from the Constitution of India. The workbooks are designed in conjunction with the fundamental duty i.e., *to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform*. They teach certain core principles and their derivatives like *safety, mental health, emotional intelligence, child rights, gender equality and equity, bullying (real/ virtual)*, etc., which are mapped with the 10 life skills prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to keep our children happy, healthy and safe. The principles, their derivatives and key messages/learning outcomes co-relate with adolescence issues, moral values, goal setting, personality development, effective communication, critical thinking and abuse prevention. Like a safety drill, they are to be practised repeatedly by our children year after year.

The workbooks are based on various day-to-day situations that children face, have faced or will face in and outside their schools. They prompt children, parents, grandparents, teachers and non-teaching/support staff to adopt behavioural changes that are necessary to prevent child abuse. The workbooks disseminate the content through stories, poems, role plays, essays, letters, cartoon strips, what if situations, debates, diagrams, algorithmic steps, pledges and activities. Some of the reference stories are based on Panchatantra, Jataka and Aesop's tales.

The workbooks empower our children against tricks played by abusers. They prompt its young readers to express their feelings, opinions, behaviours, and relationship through various open-ended and close-ended activities/ questions. A look at their answers will be helpful for parents, teachers and caregivers and provide them with an opportunity to have a dialogue with the child on sensitive issues which are otherwise difficult to talk about.

The workbooks also share essential information about various laws related to child protection like Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO Act), Juvenile Justice Act (JJA), etc., child helpline numbers (1098) / e-portals and related government organisations. For senior students who will soon be adults and go to colleges/universities or may start working part-time to support their education/family, the workbooks introduce laws on prevention of

ragging in colleges, sexual harassment of women at the workplace (POSH Act), Motor Vehicle Act, etc.

The workbooks revolve around three musketeers: a girl Sana, a boy Arpit and a tiger Pocso. The tiger acts as a confidant and is a personification of the law. He introduces and familiarises children about various laws and rules as a safety net from an early age itself. The three friends along with other characters break gender stereotypes prevalent in the Indian society. Sana loves football and wants to become a football player. Arpit's passion is dance and he wants to become a dancer. In the stories, it is not just boys who protect girls; it also works the other way around. Various stories and images depict women in uniform, working mothers, fathers doing household chores, and children playing with toys and games/ sports that challenge orthodox gender roles. The overall content in the workbooks follows an inclusive approach towards religion, gender, persons with disabilities and race.

It is important to note that the workbooks do not show any abuse occurring in real time. One of the characters usually intervenes before the situation takes an ugly turn. The intervention builds confidence in children to achieve the same. Pocso, the tiger, acts as a guiding figure telling children right from wrong, rules, laws and good habits and helping them take the right decisions to stay happy, healthy and safe.

The workbooks will prompt children to ask difficult questions on morals, feelings and relationships to which most people would struggle to find answers. Hence, evaluation for these workbooks cannot follow the standard practices. But when children ask these questions to their teachers in a classroom-based peer-to-peer learning environment, it builds confidence in them because now they can be guided in a way that is academically, psychologically and legally correct. Moreover, most of the teachers are also parents and some are on their way to becoming grandparents. They are, thus, in a position of responsibility, trust and authority.

We are grateful to parents, teachers, non-teaching/support staff, counsellors, judges, lawyers and various government and voluntary organisations like Commissions for Protection of Child Rights, National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, State Legal Service Authorities, Child Welfare Committees, Counsel to Secure Justice, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur (Project Umbrella) amongst others for their support, contribution and active participation in shaping and implementing Project CACA across India.



Project CACA



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