

A note for Teachers/Parents/Caregivers

Project Definition: As per the United Nations Convention for Child Rights (UNCRC-1989), a child is a person below 18 years. Project **CACA**, **Children Against Child Abuse**, is a research-based safety programme for our children with a focus on the need of the hour - child sexual abuse prevention. It is implemented as a school's safety policy to keep our children happy, healthy and safe. It follows a child-centric and holistic approach. The 10 class-wise CACA Safety Workbooks for our children from classes UKG to 9 are the core instrument of the project. The other instruments are academic, legal and psychological sensitisation and capacity building webinars for parents, teachers and non-teaching staff of the school, various companion resource booklets (**Pink/Blue/Green/Red**) in **English, Hindi** and various **regional languages** and **PSYCH-ED**, a **national psychology quiz** for school students, etc.

The elephant in the room: Children live in a world governed and regulated by us. We condition them on various matters and impart values to them directly or indirectly. We are responsible for their safety and welfare; after all, we brought them into this world. The Survey of 2007 (Ministry of Women and Child Development; Govt. of India) showed that the cases of child sexual abuse (**CSA**) in our country are of epidemic proportions. Almost half of our children were victims of sexual abuse. The myth, 'boys are not sexually abused', was also broken. A similar survey in 2017 re-established the status of child sexual abuse. Unfortunately, nothing had changed. The abuse is not specific to any particular sex or age group of children. In most cases, an abuser is not a stranger but a person the child already knew. News of child sexual abuse in schools is not rare, but that does not mean that schools are the places where abuses are likely to happen. The fact is that child abuse in schools is easy to notice and report. In contrast, the abuses that occur outside schools in a child's family - extended family, domestic and neighbourhood environment and family and religious functions do not get reported.

The conspicuous silence: Most children do not tell about the abuse to anyone. There are many reasons for not telling. Fear is the most common. Children fear the abuser, as the abuser might be threatening to harm them or their loved ones if they tell anyone. The fear of being blamed for the abuse or punished or scolded by the parents is another reason. Moreover, the parents do not want to report abuse because of the social stigma. The gender stereotype understanding of 'boys are supposed to be brave and protect girls, so how come they can be abused' also discourages the boys from speaking up against the abuse. Because of all this, the abuser goes unpunished and gets prompted to become a repeat offender.

The way forward: Human evolution clearly shows that most people care for children. Our children are born half-baked and could not have survived without our support or if the world was full of abusers. Then how come we have such a large number of child victims? The abusers are repeat offenders. An abuser does not limit themselves to one child. People who are sexually attracted to children are called paedophiles. The good news is that child sexual abuse is very much preventable. It can be curtailed to a great extent as abusers are a few, and child sexual abuse is not a crime that happens because of poverty, any cultural practice, or social-class divide. We cannot be with our children all the time, so the way forward is to empower them against abuse.

Be the change you want to see: The CACA safety workbooks promulgate many behaviour changes for the parents/caregivers/teachers that are crucial for preventing child abuse. Here are a few examples: **Changing clothes:** Parents should not change their clothes in front of children because the young children start to perceive this action as normal behaviour, and the abuser uses it to groom the child. Moreover, children should also change clothes in private.

Corporal punishment: Corporal punishment is not only cruel but a criminal offence. When children go through corporal punishment, they get conditioned for such measures. The abusers take advantage of this conditioning as the children cannot oppose any forced action. Remember, corporal punishment, bullying, ragging and domestic violence are all co-related. **Attitude towards Police:** Parents often create a negative image of the police. Smaller children are told that the police will take them away if they do not do this or that. The negative image of police is not a good practice because this makes the police unapproachable to the child. Moreover, when a case of abuse is reported, the child comes in contact with the police. **Games children play:** Our children aged 3 to 8 years, psychologically speaking, are curious about private parts. They often play games like 'Hide and Seek', 'Doctor-Patient-Nurse' and 'House-Husband-Wife', and while playing these games, they try to explore each other's private parts. We should not correlate this behaviour to shame because this will lead to guilt. Of course, we must discourage our children if they try to explore each other's private parts. We can say that it is a bad habit, unhygienic and unsafe. Remember, abusers often use games like these to condition our children as they rely upon children's guilt to keep them silent about the abuse. We must ensure that our children play these games in their age group.

Democratic Processes: Age-appropriate, progressive, and in Indian ethos, the workbooks result from a democratic chain of processes like opinion polls/surveys, focus group discussions, conventions, consensus-building discussions, and a pilot programme held across India. The workbooks continuously evolve under a project committee through quantitative and qualitative assessments and peer reviews.

Values - Life Skills - EVS - Civic Nationalism, UNSDG (2030): The workbooks follow an interdisciplinary/integrated approach as per the new **National Education Policy - 2020**, thus require collaborative effort from all the subject teachers. They are value education and life skills books and also cover environmental science (EVS) and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Many chapters of the workbooks easily blend with the existing timetable periods of English language, physical education, EVS, social science, science, and computer science. The value-education is derived from the Constitution of India (preamble and fundamental rights and duties) and focuses on civic nationalism, scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform. They follow a pattern based on the ethics syllabus of the Union Public Service Commission Examinations for the recruitment of IAS, IPS, IFS, and other allied services. The values also include 21st-century values like gender equality, water preservation, carbon footprint reduction, gender as a spectrum, blood/organ donation, etc. The life skills (LS) are based on the 10 universal **#life skills (LS)** prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), these **LS** are blending with the livelihood skills of the 21st century.

Life Skills (LS): The 10 WHO **LS** form a core set of skills that are at the heart of skills-based initiatives to promote the health and wellbeing of our children. They are **LS1 - Self-awareness, LS2 - Empathy, LS3 - Critical thinking, LS4 - Creative thinking, LS5 - Decision-making, LS6 - Problem Solving, LS7 - Effective communication, LS8 - Interpersonal relationship, LS9 - Coping with stress and LS10 - Coping with emotions.** They are at times interlinked with each other. For example, whether to take help from strangers or help them in an emergency would require **LS2, LS3 and LS7.** The 10 **LS** can be grouped as **THINKING SKILLS (LS1-LS6-LS9); SOCIAL SKILLS (LS4-LS5-LS8); EMOTIONAL SKILLS (LS2-LS7-LS10).** They are mapped with the syllabus material of Project CACA.

Syllabus: The safety workbooks (syllabus) stems out from a curriculum-matrix of 7 Core Principles, i.e., CP1 - Mental Health/Well-Being CP2 - Emotional Intelligence/Quotient CP3 - Safety CP4 - Gender Equality/Equity/Parity CP5 - Child Rights CP6 - Health & Hygiene CP7 - Moral/Values/Ethics.

The core principles and their derivatives are at times interlinked. Each core principle has derivatives. For example, 'CP3 - Safety' has derivatives on safety-related matters on infrastructure, transportation, personal, social and emotional, cyber, emergency and disaster. The workbooks also sensitise children about various medical conditions that include physical and mental/cognitive conditions that a child may go through. The multiple characters in the workbooks form a diverse but inclusive world, thus inculcating empathy. The curriculum matrix, derivatives and learning areas/key messages unfold in the workbooks class after class. Like a safety drill, they are to be practised repeatedly by our children year after year, just like each time you board an aeroplane or drive a car, you tie a seat belt.

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

Dialogue: The workbooks are written from the point of view of our children. They empower our children against tricks played by abusers. Young readers are prompted to express their feelings, opinions, behaviours, and relationships through various questions. Such questions are helpful to parents, teachers and caregivers. Answers to such questions allow them to have dialogues with children on sensitive issues that are otherwise difficult to talk about. The workbooks are to be regularly discussed in the parents- teachers meetings.

Child Rights - Related Laws & Policies: The workbooks share essential information about various laws related to children's safety and wellbeing like POCSO Act, JJ Act, etc., child helpline number (1098)/e-portals and related government schemes. Senior students will soon be adults and go to colleges/universities or start working part-time to support their education/families. They are made aware of laws on ragging, sexual harassment of women at the workplace (POSH Act) and driving (MVA).

Main Characters: The workbooks revolve around three musketeers - a girl Sana, a boy Arpit and a tiger Pokso. The tiger acts as a confidant to children and personifies the law. He introduces and familiarises children from an early age with various good habits, rules and laws as a safety net. The various characters in the workbooks break gender and skin colour stereotypes prevalent in Indian society. In the stories, it is not just boys who protect girls; it also works the other way around. The overall content follows an inclusive approach towards religion, gender, disabilities, and race.

Prevention is better than cure: In the workbooks, one of the characters intervenes before a situation takes an ugly turn. The intervention builds confidence in children to achieve the same. Pokso, the tiger, acts as a guiding figure telling children right from wrong and helping them make the right decisions. The young readers share their feelings and various difficult situations with Pokso. He is a medium that helps children establish a dialogue with their loved and trusted ones and the community.

Evaluation: The workbooks are co-scholastic and fall in the affective domain of Bloom's Taxonomy. They are inclined towards the formative rather than summative side of the continuous comprehensive evaluation (CCE). As per NEP

2020, they encourage peer to peer learning and self-evaluation. They prompt children to ask difficult questions on morals, feelings, and relationships which do not have clear cut answers. Evaluation of the workbooks cannot follow the standard practices. However, when children ask such questions to their teachers, it builds confidence in them because their teachers can guide them academically, psychologically, and legally. Remember, most teachers are also parents, some are on their way to becoming grandparents, and some even have children who study in the same school where they teach. They are, thus, in a position of responsibility, trust and authority.

Key learning areas for child abuse prevention: This note covers 11 derivatives from a set of dozens of derivatives that fall under the 7 core principles of the curriculum matrix. These derivatives, for reference purposes, are numbered D1 to D11. They are covered in all the safety workbooks in an age-appropriate and progressive way. They are taught to the children in the workbooks as life skills, habits, rules and values.

D1 Vocabulary/Private Parts: Shame and guilt are associated with private parts, so nobody teaches children private parts' vocabulary. We tell children nicknames (euphemism) when we talk about private parts with them. The nicknames jeopardise smaller children because they are unable to communicate sexual abuse. The workbooks use words 'private parts' for breast and all orifices below the belt, from UKG onwards through swimsuit illustrations. The mouth is considered as a 'special private part'. **Learning Areas:** Private parts are only for us. | We keep our private parts covered for health, hygiene, dignity and safety. #Private parts are covered under the life skill self-awareness and eventually evolve into the clinical fact that sex is not a binary but a spectrum, thus resulting in gender equity. **D2 Emotions/Feelings:** Thousands of feelings are listed in the English language. Expressing feelings is tricky, especially those related to guilt, anger, embarrassment and shame. Young children do not have a proper vocabulary for feelings. The workbooks teach children about feelings, how to express them and anger management.

Learning Areas: Feelings are our friends, and we must listen to them. | Our Feelings tell us about safe-unsafe touch/look/behaviour, whether real or virtual. **D3 It is not your fault:** Parents often blame children directly or indirectly, even when they are not at fault. When children confide in us, we often confront them by asking 'WHY' questions - "Why did you not tell me before?" "Why did you even go there?" so on and so forth. This set of 'WHY' questions shift the blame onto the children, and in case of abuse, they tend to believe that the abuse is their fault, and they feel guilty about it. Children share less and less with their loved ones about abuse because of these 'WHY' questions. **Learning Areas:** Unsafe touch or behaviour is never a child's fault, and they have to keep telling about it to their loved and trusted ones. **D4 It is okay to be scared:** What would you feel or do if you suddenly come across a lion in a jungle? Scared - Run. Valour and bravery are virtues. Fear is a negative emotion psychologically speaking. However, It often helps us to be safe. The best thing for a child to do against an abuser is to run away. **Learning Areas:** It is okay to be afraid and brave to tell what and who you are afraid of. #D2/D3/D4 are covered under coping with stress and emotions. **D5 Being Assertive:** Cheek pulling is quite common in our culture, even when children resist it. When we encourage children to let someone touch them even when they resist, we blur their understanding of personal boundaries. The workbooks prompt parents/caregivers/ teachers to listen to children attentively whenever they assert themselves in the context of touches, feelings and behaviours. **Learning Areas:** Say 'No' effectively without being disrespectful and violent. | Be confident and have proper body language. #Being assertive correlates to Effective Communication and is also used in the workbooks to handle peer

pressure, bullying and substance abuse. **D6 Touches, hugs and kisses:** Children are educated about various touches like 'safe and unsafe' touch, an 'accidental' touch, 'fix-it' touch, and 'forced' touch. **Learning Areas:** Children are encouraged to interpret touches, hugs and kisses in terms of feelings and communicate these feelings to their loved and trusted ones. **D7 Body Ownership:** Maids at home or school often change the spoiled clothes of small children despite their reluctance to do so. Unlike grownups, children are not clear about who owns their bodies. The concept of body ownership, in the workbooks, evolves into permission to touch, personal boundaries and privacy (real+virtual). The workbooks co-relate body ownership to untouchability-slavery, bonded/child labour, and organ transplant. **Learning Areas:** You are the boss of your body and its first caretaker. #The workbooks correlate body ownership with **self-awareness**. **D8. Self Esteem:** Children with low self-esteem or self-worth are an easy target for abusers and bullies. Self-esteem and body shaming or bullying are correlated. Various techniques for goal setting like SWOT, i.e., Strength-Weakness-Opportunities-Threat analysis, are used in the workbooks for building self-esteem. **Learning Areas:** Being different does not mean being unequal. | My skills and behaviour are more important than my looks, and I can always improve them with practice. | Every job from the heart is, ultimately, of equal value. #The workbooks help build self-esteem as a value under **Self-Awareness**. **D9 Secrets:** The workbooks empower our children by disclosing various tricks played by abusers. For example, secrets, like touches, can be safe or unsafe. Parents and grandparents often tell children to keep secrets. When a child sees their father smoking, the father may tell them to keep it a secret and not tell mummy. The father may even give the child a gift to keep the secret. An abuser follows the same trick. **Learning Areas:** A secret that makes you sad, guilty or ashamed is an unsafe secret. | A secret about any touch is again an unsafe secret. #The workbooks from an early age train children to handle secrets, surprises and gifts via **critical thinking** and **decision making**. **D10 Strangers:** Growing up is about taking help and helping others. In most cases, the abuser is not a stranger, but still, children have to be careful with strangers. There is no point in creating a negative image of strangers like 'STRANGER is a DANGER'. On the other hand, children should not hesitate to take strangers' help or help them in accidents or emergencies. However, there are safety rules to follow with strangers in the real and the virtual world. **Learning Areas:** Strangers should not hug or kiss you. | Never share your personal information with strangers in the real or virtual world. | Secrets with strangers are 'unsafe secrets'. **D11 Safety Circle:** The workbooks prompt children to have a safety circle comprising a set of people like parents, grandparents, and teachers to whom they can approach to share their feelings and secrets and who will listen to them and help. **Learning Areas:** At times, our loved ones may get angry with us. Nevertheless, they still do their best to keep us happy, healthy and safe. | No one can help you if you lie. When you lie, no one believes you and when no one believes you, how can anyone help you? #The safety circle is covered under **interpersonal relationship**.

The challenges for the educators: The project goes through many challenges/dilemmas. Once they are assessed, the solutions can be implemented, and the unintentional outcome can be minimised. Remember, institutions should not preserve the problems to which they are a solution. The project covers the academic, psychological and legal aspects of children's safety and wellbeing by drawing consensus and collaboration between these subject matter experts as their opinions do not always overlap. Here are a few examples to ponder. **Example 1:** A moral science teacher may take sexual curiosity (prurience) in adolescents as a moral issue. In contrast, the school

counsellor (psychologist), biology teacher, and literature teacher may think differently and delink prurience from morality. Psychologically speaking, sexual curiosity in adolescents is but natural. Moreover, Romeo and Juliet are an inherent part of the school's syllabus on literature. On the other hand, when children indulge in a physical relationship, legally speaking, they are both a victim and children in conflict with the law as their consent for a physical relationship is immaterial. It would not be judicious to link Romeo and Juliet, so to speak, with criminality. **Example 2:** A school counsellor, while dealing with a child who is going through sexual abuse, would not disclose the abuse to anyone so that the child can trust the counsellor. Trust, as we all know, is fundamental to counselling. On the other hand, not reporting child sexual abuse to the police is a criminal offence. **Example 3:** The answer to the question in the workbooks, 'Write the names of people whose hugs and kisses you do not like or whom you do not like to hug or kiss', is challenging to analyse. There can be many reasons for a child's dislike. For example, a child may not like hugs and kisses from mummy when she sweats in the kitchen and cuts vegetables. Perhaps, at that time, mummy smells terrible. What if a child answers that they do not like hugs or kisses from the school van driver? That does not necessarily mean that the van driver is an abuser, but the child's loved and trusted ones (safety circle) should talk to the driver about their behaviour change.

Promotion: The workbooks are to be promoted by the child's safety circle to the fullest. The promotion of workbooks will send a clear message to everyone, including the abuser, that the children are learning about their safety from abuse. They will not hesitate to tell their safety circle. Remember, once the children are empowered, they push the society for appropriate behaviour changes, and when they become parents, they are the change in themselves.

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Advisor, Project CACA Committee - Dr. Kiran Aggarwal

Co-Chair, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) - Committee on Children under Difficult Circumstances | Fr. President, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), Delhi; EB Member CIAP | Ex-member Child Welfare Committee, Delhi.

The workbooks' questions highlighted in **green** relate to a child's behaviour, feelings, opinions, incidents, values, relationships and medical conditions. They are to be considered as a child's personal information as far as possible. While analysing such questions, one has to avoid being judgmental. Furthermore, for teacher's cues/references, the **core principles, derivatives, and life skills** have been highlighted in respective colours on the top and right margins of the workbook's pages. The **learning areas** are highlighted as footnotes.

QR codes and web-links based resources for the stakeholders are embedded in the workbooks and available at www.projectcaca.org. They include companion booklets for teachers, parents and non-teaching staff in English, Hindi and different regional languages, teachers' manual, children's picture books (UKG to class 2), worksheets, posters, videos, etc.