

Interns, Volunteers & Researchers Engagement Policy of Shishu Sarothi

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1. Introduction:

Shishu Sarothi's work in the area of education, health, livelihood, access, advocacy, legal aid and awareness creation of rights of persons with disabilities, brings it in touch with interns, volunteers and researchers who come for different lengths of time for knowledge gathering, exposure, work experience, voluntary work, data collation and research on various aspects of disability.

Shishu Sarothi can provide a platform for rich learning experience and exposure for interns, volunteers and researchers committed to human rights and social equity. With the Organization's myriad programs and activities, there is scope for learning and gaining experience / exposure in a multitude of settings that can cater to the diverse background of the interns, volunteers and researchers and their varied interests, skills and knowledge.

Shishu Sarothi welcomes interns, volunteers and researchers to participate and contribute to its work and deeply appreciates their involvement and inputs that have the potential of adding value to its work. Shishu Sarothi firmly believes that its mission to uphold and advocate for the rights of children and persons with disabilities, and ensure equal opportunities and promote inclusion and active participation for all persons with disabilities in a non-discriminatory, accessible environment, positively contributes towards instilling values of respect and equality for the human diversity amongst the interns, volunteers and researchers, in addition to the experience gained during their engagement.

This **Interns, Volunteers & Researchers Engagement Policy** of Shishu Sarothi (hereinafter referred to as the 'Policy'), is hereby revised in January, 2023 and will be effective from February 1, 2023. The Policy is a statement of intent to productively and positively engage with external stakeholders like Interns, Volunteers & Researchers towards supporting their quest for learning and knowing about different aspects of disability and offering an opportunity for contributing towards the Organization and the disability sector at large, while ensuring that such engagements are in line with the broad mission, vision, rules and regulations and other policies guiding the work and modus operandi of the Organization and the overarching rights framework of people with disabilities.

2. Policy Statement & Scope:

- 2.1. Shishu Sarothi is committed to encouraging the engagement of interns, volunteers and researchers in its work and to supporting them to undertake a variety of work experience and volunteering opportunities through the Organization's activities and programs. The Policy is thus aimed at sharing know-how on myriad aspects of disability that the Organization works in, in a structured, ethical manner that aligns with its ethos and the rights of people with disabilities. The scope of the Policy is to offer opportunities for students, volunteers and researchers to gain experience and knowledge on disability issues and aspects for career development purposes or for those who wish to invest their time and effort to extend appropriate assistance to the Organization in various ways with philanthropic and altruistic intent.
- 2.2. The Policy shall apply to all interns, volunteers and researchers, regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or religion and which unit(s) / program(s) / setting(s) within the registered premise or outside of Shishu Sarothi premises, that the interns, volunteers and researchers may be engaged in, such as outreach programs / field work for their internship, volunteering opportunities or research work, as applicable.

3. Purpose of the Policy:

The purpose of the Interns, Volunteers & Researchers Engagement Policy is to ensure that:

- 3.1. internships, volunteering opportunities and research work are clearly defined;
- 3.2. all engagement of interns, volunteers and researchers are managed appropriately and in line with best practices.

4. How does the Interns, Volunteers & Researchers Engagement Policy help:

- 4.1. **Interests of Interns, Volunteers and Researchers are protected.** The Policy envisages to set forth herein certain guidelines and framework that will help and aid interns, volunteers, researchers to learn, access information, gain knowledge on disability and / or to contribute with time and effort for philanthropic purpose, by setting out the roles and responsibilities that interns, volunteers and researchers can be held accountable for.
- 4.2. **The Organization, staff and associates are protected.** Implementation of these standards will ensure that the Organization's ethos of work are upheld and that the responsibility of staff towards extending assistance, supervision and sharing of disability know-how to interns, volunteers and researchers are well-defined and clear.
- 4.3. **The rights of persons with disabilities are protected.** By implementing these standards, the Organization makes clear its commitment to ensuring that rights of people with disabilities are safe. These standards help the Organization to move towards best practice in this area.

5. Definitions:

The following definitions can be used as a guide:

- 5.1. An **intern** is a student or trainee from any academic or professional institution, from school to post graduate level and beyond, who is engaged for a specific duration of time in any work with any specific unit / program of the Organization or generally involved with the Organization with the intent to gain work experience or satisfy requirements for a qualification.
- 5.2. A **researcher** is a person who carries out academic or scientific research or who is involved in discovering or verifying information in an organized and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject or specific aspect / issue in order to discover new information or understand better or revise facts, theories, applications based on such formal gathering of data, information and facts, for the advancement of knowledge. A researcher will include any person who is conducting research under any academic pursuit or institution or is independently undertaking the research for his or her professional work or for formal research study on behalf of an institution / program / project and other related funded initiatives.
- 5.3. A **volunteer** is a person who freely offers to take part in any program/activity of the Organization or undertake a task for the Organization without being paid and shall include parents, volunteers and professionals who offer their services on a pro-bono basis.
- 5.4. **Organization** shall mean Shishu Sarothi unless specifically stated otherwise.

6. Interns:

- 6.1. **Recruitment:** Intern recruitment shall be mainly done on application basis. Applicants interested in undertaking an internship programme, may please send application forms addressed to the Executive Director of the Organization, duly accompanied by a Reference / Forwarding letter from the applicant's education institution, if associated with one, with the option of specifying any core work area of the Organization where the applicant is required to intern in and a Curriculum Vitae of the applicant to shishusarothi@gmail.com and internship@shishusarothi.org with a title in the subject line of the email: 'Request for Internship at Shishu Sarothi: (mention time period)'. Applicants may also personally visit the Organization to submit their applications along with the aforesaid documents.

On receipt of the application and above documents and review of the same, the applicant will be intimated if internship is available during the period for which it is requested. Once internship placement is confirmed, the intern may, within the first week of placement, chose the unit / program with which he / she would like to intern with, if the same is not already specified in the

Reference / Forwarding letter from the applicant's education institution or alternately the staff in charge of Interns/Volunteers/Researchers engagement from Shishu Sarothi may place the Intern with a Unit / Program as deemed fit. Notwithstanding the aforesaid options of choosing the area of work for internship, the Organization may place an intern with specific work / unit over and above the chosen area of the intern.

- 6.2. **Duration of Internship:** An internship should ideally be for a minimum of 4 weeks with at least five working days in a week, excluding holidays and other 'bandhs.' However exceptional situations may be considered at the discretion of the management of the organization. Interns have the option of coming for internship placement on certain days of the week, if required to do so by their educational institution, and not do a continuous placement, as long as the minimum number of days required for internship are fulfilled.
- 6.3. **Timings for interns:** Timing for Interns working at Shishu Sarothi shall be from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm and / or depending on the usual timings of the unit in which they are placed.
- 6.4. **Field visits and travel:** Interns may have to go for field visits for different work. In case, there is a requirement for travel outside Guwahati, they shall be duly accompanied by at least one staff (female staff if there are female interns involved) of the Organization. The interns shall be duly reimbursed for travel and incidental expenses incurred or involved for such field work.
- 6.5. **Report / Presentation by interns:** Interns are required to make a formal presentation and / or submit a report on the work they have been involved in, during their internship and the learnings and experience gained from the same in the last week of their internship placement. The reporting / presentation content may be discussed and undertaken with due supervision of the unit head of the respective unit / program that the interns are working in and a copy of the same shall be retained in the Organization's record. If the intern submits an article / formal piece of writing by way of report submission, the Organization may use it in its blog, social media or publish in newspapers / magazines with the intern's name as the author with due acknowledgment.
- 6.6. **Fee for Internship:** A basic fee for pursuing an internship at the Organization shall be charged from applicant students to be deposited before commencing the internship. The fee structure stipulated herein below for one month is based on the academic level of the student applicant:

Interns upto Class XII	: INR 500.00
Interns pursuing Graduation	: INR 1,000.00
Interns pursuing Post-Graduation / Professional courses	: INR 1,500.00

7. Volunteers:

- 7.1. **Recruitment:** Volunteer recruitment shall be on application basis. However, the Organization may, from time to time, call for Volunteers through other means like social media campaigns, media announcements, on ground public events, word of mouth, and other communication materials;
- 7.2. **Eligibility criteria:** Shishu Sarothi welcomes the involvement of volunteers, irrespective of age, educational and other qualifications, without any discrimination based on gender, caste, creed, disability and so on. The Organization encourages the involvement of persons with disabilities including their family members.

8. Researchers:

- 8.1. **Permission for research:** Prior to commencing research work at the Organization, a formal request letter for the same, addressed to the Executive Director of the Organization, must be given, duly accompanied by an introductory / forwarding letter from the concerned Research Guide of the university / other academic institution under whose aegis the research is being undertaken. If the

research is being independently undertaken by a professional or academician or is being conducted under any study supported or funded by any government / non-government agency, the permission letter has to establish the credentials of the researcher and adequately reflect the relevance and scope of the said research.

- 8.2. **Scope of research:** Shishu Sarothi reserves the right to accept research requests based on the alignment of the research topic with its own vision, mission and values and the overarching rights framework of disability. The Organization shall not be associated with and / or encourage any research activity to be undertaken by any person / institution / funder, which stereotypes disability, focuses on the welfare and charity approach to disability, and / or otherwise are in contravention of the fundamental principles for promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities as envisaged in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- 8.3. **Guidelines for conducting research:** All work undertaken for research must ensure that methodology involved is ethical, necessary consent has been taken from concerned stakeholders, no photographs of children disclosing their identity and / or photographs bringing out a demeaning projection of disability are used. The Organization reserves the right to disallow certain questions to be asked, photographs to be taken or aspects of disability to be highlighted, in a way which might hurt the inherent dignity of the person with disability and / or persons with disabilities in general.
- 8.4. **Sharing of research document /findings:** It shall be obligatory on the part of the researcher to share the entire research document / findings of the study undertaken, irrespective of whether the entire or a part of the research ground work was undertaken in association with the Organization.
- 8.5. **Acknowledgement:** Due acknowledgement has to be given in the research paper / document reflecting the contributions of the Organization in conducting the research.
- 8.6. **Copy Right:** If the research utilizes data, information or other resource material, care has to be taken to ensure that copy right is respected, where ever applicable.
- 8.7. **Fee for Researchers:** A basic fee for conducting field work for research at the Organization shall be charged from researchers. The fee structure stipulated herein below is for one month and longer research studies will require payment on a prorata basis:

Independent Researchers including professionals:	INR 1,500.00
Research undertaken by M.Phil / Ph.D Scholars and for institution / program / project and other related funded initiatives:	INR 2,500.00

9. Orientation, Supervision and Certification of Interns / Volunteers / Researchers:

- 9.1. **Orientation / Induction:** It is mandatory that all interns, volunteers and researchers associated with the Organization undergo an orientation / induction at the beginning of internship, volunteering and / or research work. The same will be conducted by staff / unit in charge, with a view to enable better understanding of the concept of disability and the areas of work / units of the Organization. Orientation sessions provide an opportunity to an individual or group, to understand the internship / volunteering program in detail, clarify queries, choose options of which unit of the Organization one may intern / volunteer in / study and to acquaint to the do's and don'ts to be followed and adhered to during the volunteership / internship / research period.

A Volunteer can also choose to be a Virtual volunteer and contribute in online campaigns undertaken by the Organization and / or assist in other work in their neighbourhood/corporate/residential association or among their professional network in collaboration with a staff member of the Organisation. In either type of volunteering that is chosen, volunteers are expected to commit a reasonable amount of time and perform the task whole heartedly.

- 9.2. Interns, volunteers and researchers will be extended **supportive supervision**, to guide them through the planning and execution of the activities entrusted to / undertaken by them. However, volunteers / interns / researchers are expected to take ownership of the activities on a proactive basis and diligently work on the same complying with deadlines set, if any.
- 9.3. All efforts and **contributions of volunteers / interns/ researchers** are respected and valued at Shishu Sarothi and the Organization extends due acknowledgment with various formal and informal methods of recognition.
- 9.4. **Letter or Certificate of Internship / Volunteering** are provided only on successful completion of the internship project and at the end of the committed internship period, not less than a month as aforesaid, or after an active volunteering period of at least three months, where volunteer has actively participated in planning and execution of assigned work, taken up responsibilities and been consistent and regular. Shishu Sarothi does not encourage and acknowledge interns and volunteers who drop out or discontinue midway during their committed period of engagement.
- 9.5. **Incomplete internship / volunteering:** A Volunteer / Intern may opt to leave the Volunteering / Internship Program midway, in which case, they shall not be eligible to a letter of acknowledgement / appreciation or certificate of internship / volunteering. However, a volunteer is free to stipulate the requirement for taking short breaks and / or remaining inactive for certain periods of time and as long as they otherwise actively contribute as volunteers, they would be duly entitled to be issued a Certificate indicating their engagement.
- 9.6. Shishu Sarothi does not provide any **stipend or remuneration** to interns / volunteers. However, they may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in making field visits, carrying out assigned activities and campaigns which involve travel upon submission of receipts and other supporting documents. This does not include the local conveyance that an intern / volunteer may incur to travel to the Shishu Sarothi office during the period of his/her internship. Outstation Interns are expected to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements. Interns / Volunteers are also directed to find out details of available funds from the assigned Supervisor, for permissible expenditure heads, if any, prior to incurring any expenditure.
- 9.7. Shishu Sarothi shall **not entertain and tolerate behaviour or attitudes that display sexism, racism, casteism, homophobia, or any form of discrimination** based on disability, age, gender, community or religion. Interns / volunteers / researchers will be treated in accordance with this code and in turn are expected to follow it while on placement with the Organization.
- 9.8. Shishu Sarothi reserves the **right to terminate an internship / volunteership / research work** at any time, prior to completion of the decided duration / work, in case of any incidents of serious misconduct, non-performance or indiscipline.

10. Code of Conduct (Behaviour Protocols):

10.1. DO's:

- 10.1.1. Volunteers/Interns/researchers make a commitment and are **accountable** to the Organization and **must respect the Mission, Vision and Values of Shishu Sarothi**.
- 10.1.2. All interns, volunteers and researchers should **abide by all policies of Shishu Sarothi**, including but not limited to the Child & Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy and Gender Equality Policy.
- 10.1.3. Volunteers/Interns must abide by their commitment and **perform all allotted tasks to the best of their ability**.

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- 10.1.4. **Compliance with timeframe** (10.00am to 4.00pm from Mondays to Fridays) is a must and on weekends, whenever necessary.
- 10.1.5. Report for work in **decent and formal work attire**.
- 10.1.6. **Prior information** should be given to the concerned supervisor / staff **in case of absence**.
- 10.1.7. Volunteers/Interns/researchers are expected to **act with integrity, respect and to respond** to others, be **courteous, friendly** and **cooperative** with all staff, fellow volunteers/interns/researchers, community members and children without any discrimination whatsoever.
- 10.1.8. **Daily / weekly activity report**, as appropriate, has to be submitted to the concerned supervisor / assigned staff **and a final report** at the end of the internship period, along with handing over of the undertaken work to their supervisor.
- 10.1.9. Intern / volunteer has to **honour any responsibility** entrusted to them, and in case, the same is not feasible, intern /volunteer has to intimate concerned staff well ahead of time, stating valid reasons for not accomplishing the task assigned.
- 10.1.10. Interns are expected to **commit to the structure and program of internship** which is decided in consultation with the supervisor / head of the unit they are interning with, at the beginning of the internship.
- 10.1.11. **For interns / volunteers / researchers who shall be directly working / interacting with children as a part of their assigned task, there should be strict adherence of all the below stated norms** for interacting with children.
- 10.1.11.1. Treat every child with due respect, dignity and integrity.
- 10.1.11.2. Teacher of the concerned child's classroom and / or the child's parents / legal guardian should be informed of any activity or event that interns / volunteers plan to conduct with children.
- 10.1.11.3. Never take the children out of the Organization premises for any activity without the approval from Shishu Sarothi supervisor / assigned staff and a written consent from the Parents/ guardian.
- 10.1.11.4. Under no circumstance should a volunteer / intern abuse children in any form (sexual, verbal and physical) or misuse children.
- 10.1.11.5. Volunteers / interns should be very sensitive while approaching and dealing with children.
- 10.1.11.6. Make sure children are briefed and are comfortable with the format of any event / activity and if the child still says 'No', then it should not be forcibly thrust upon him/her and such activity should be stopped / discontinued.
- 10.1.11.7. Show linguistic sensitivity for the children and ensure communication is in a language they can understand – seek necessary assistance if translation is necessary.
- 10.1.11.8. The child should be allowed to participate in all activities to the best of his / her ability, even if it takes more than the time set.
- 10.1.12. All interns / volunteers / researchers should also **strictly adhere to all the below stated considerations while taking photos, videos**, interacting with the children / community:
- 10.1.12.1. Prior permission should be taken before taking pictures of the classrooms and the premises.
- 10.1.12.2. Ensure that permission of the parents / guardians / teacher of the child/children concerned is taken before taking photographs of children.

- 10.1.12.3. Ensure permission of persons (other than children) being photographed is being taken.
- 10.1.12.4. Do not upload photographs of children without specific prior permissions taken and given in writing.
- 10.1.12.5. Treat all subjects with respect and dignity and ensure that the dignity of the child and community is always upheld.
- 10.1.12.6. Clearly indicate context and background when photographing or recording subjects.
- 10.1.12.7. While editing, respect and maintain the integrity of the photographic images, content and context. Be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects.
- 10.1.12.8. Avoid stereotyping individuals and groups through photographic representations.
- 10.1.12.9. Avoid presenting one's own biases in the work.
- 10.1.12.10. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects.
- 10.1.12.11. Strive to be unobtrusive and humble in dealing with subjects.

10.2. DON'TS:

- 10.2.1. **No Misbehavior with children** will be tolerated at any count and will call for appropriate action.
 - 10.2.2. **Handheld devices** including mobile phones, tablets, integrated cameras, digital media players and so on **are strictly prohibited** inside the classrooms / work spaces, except with due prior permission of the staff supervisor / other concerned staff of the Organization.
 - 10.2.3. **Unsuitable and inappropriate clothing and / or behavior** shall not be accepted from any intern / volunteer / researcher.
 - 10.2.4. **Do not take/collect any kind of monetary resources** in the name of Shishu Sarothi from anyone, either within the premises or outside.
 - 10.2.5. **Loitering and loafing around** in the premises is not allowed during the working hours.
 - 10.2.6. **Smoking, chewing pan, gutkas** and so on is **strictly prohibited** in the premises.
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DECLARATION

I,, a student intern / volunteer / researcher, address, am interning / volunteering / undertaking research work at Shishu Sarothi for a period ofdays, from to

I do state and affirm that I have been furnished with copies of the ***Interns, Volunteers and Researchers Engagement Policy of Shishu Sarothi*** and the ***CODE OF CONDUCT: Do's and Don'ts*** and having read through and fully comprehended the same, and do hereby sincerely undertake to abide by the rules and regulations of the Organization and the Policy.

Dated:
Place:

Signature of Intern / Volunteer / Researcher