

Minimum standard for the libraries in orphanages and child protection centres

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Sri Lanka Professional Centre
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Prepared by the Special Committee on Library Services for Children in Institutions of SLLA

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Convener's Note

The special committee on library services for children in institutions decided to prepare the Minimum Standard Guidelines for the Libraries in orphanages and child protection centres under the Sri Lanka Library Association in its strategic plan for 2016 - 2022. There are various types of libraries available in Sri Lanka, and they are functioning with their guidelines/policies or managing with their parental institutions. Child protection centres in Sri



Lanka are gradually increasing, and the registrations of children are also growing in these institutions. There is no proper mechanism to manage the Library, or very few opportunities are available to improve the children's reading habits in these institutions. Several studies and publications have been found on school libraries, University libraries, public libraries but children in the institution are very limited. Education is the fundamental right of any citizen in the country. Therefore, improving the library facilities of these institutions is essential to support the educational needs of the children. There is no library guideline or a manual to operate the library service for these disadvantaged (orphan) children in institutions in Sri Lanka. This proposal is mainly concerned with children libraries in the institutions to provide a path to create the child-friendly library service for the vulnerable children at the child centres.

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Table of contents

Convener's Note	3
Table of contents.....	4
1) Introduction	5
2. Aims and Objectives	5
3. Responsibility of the children library.....	6
4. Definition of Target Group (Disadvantaged Children):.....	6
5. Guide Lines for managing of the Library.....	7
5.1. Library Building	7
5.2. Library staff.....	7
5. 3. Library Committee.....	8
5.4. Materials.....	8
5. 5. Lighting	9
5.6. Ventilation.....	9
5. 7. Circulation Services.....	9
5. 8. Library Opening hours	10
5. 9. Active Programmes.....	10
5. 10. Budget	12
5. 11. Evaluation of a library's performance	13
References.....	13

1. Introduction

Orphan children and the child protection centres in Sri Lanka are gradually increasing. As orphan children have an equal right to live in society, it is essential to give prior attention to protect them and educate and provide modern library facilities for their educational needs. These children also have the right to access libraries and information facilities which will help them become valuable citizens in the country. Though there are thousands of children in these institutions, providing them with quality libraries and information service is still a distant dream. The following reasons may be effected to their ignorance of reading habits.

- Poor reading facilities in these centres
- Less or no culture of reading
- Non-availability of relevant books or other library facilities
- No proper guiding for children
- Lack of resources in local language
- Limited space.

At the same time, some of the child centres have very few supplementary reading books for learning, and most of them are outdated. The lack of sufficient funds also results in a lack of the necessary library facilities, such as buildings, Furniture and equipment. As such hindrance, the Special Committee on Library Services for Children in Institutions planned to formulate guidelines for a quality library and information services for disadvantaged children. There is no proper library guideline or a manual to operate the library service for disadvantaged/orphan children in institutions in Sri Lanka. This guideline may be a valuable source to manage the above libraries. Mainly this work was based in part on the guideline for library services to children Libraries published by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) available at <https://archive.ifla.org/VII/s10/pubs/ChildrensGuidelines.pdf>

2. Aims and Objectives

A children's Library is a place where there are library materials, children and committed and enthusiastic staff to assist the children in developing their reading skills. The main objective of this guideline is to provide a path to create the child-friendly library service and manage the existing Library for the use of vulnerable (disadvantaged/orphan) children at the child centres. To achieve this, specific objectives include:

- To use this library guideline as a model to offer library services for Libraries in disadvantaged children in Sri Lanka institutions.
- To improve the existing library facilities with the essential resources as a learner-centred environment.
- To guide to organise of library resources.
- Fosters the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of the children.
- To support holistic development and empowerment of vulnerable children.

3. Responsibility of the children library

According to the IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for development, "The special responsibility of the children's Library is to meet the reading needs of children. Suppose children can be inspired at an early age by the excitement of finding knowledge and by works of the imagination. In that case, they are likely to benefit from these vital elements of personal development throughout their lives, both enriching themselves and enhancing their contribution to society. Children can also encourage parents and other adults to make use of the Library. It is also important that young people who experience difficulty in learning to read should have access to a library to provide them with appropriate material" (The Public Library Service – IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for development, 2001).

4. Definition of Target Group (Disadvantaged Children):

Children in institutions (Disadvantaged Children/Orphans children) are defined as children between 0 and 18 years who have lost one or both parents and/or whose primary caregiver has died or who need care and protection. (Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare, 2004:1). The Department of Probation and Child Care Services provides alternative care for children without adequate parental care and protection due to various reasons and children in

conflict with the law. This includes providing institutional care as an alternative means of providing the necessary protection. UNICEF and global partners define an orphan as a child under 18 years of age who has lost one or both parents to any cause as an orphan.

5. Guide Lines for managing the Library

5.1. Library Building

Library buildings, where services for all age groups in the child centre are housed, children should get an appropriate proportion of the whole library space. Children are not a homogeneous target group; they have very different skills and needs (depending on their age), which must be considered in the space planning process and furnishing of the Library. As target groups in the children's Library cover, a wide range of ages and abilities (from babies to adults) both the Furniture and design space should suit their demands. Library building must blend with the surrounding construction of the child centre, and it must also be clearly identifiable as "the Library". The following is a checklist of basic needs for consideration when commencing the planning of space in children library:

- 1).Service area,
- 2). Office area,
- 3). Book Shelving area,
- 4). Leisure reading area,
- 5). Toilet .

5.2. Library staff

The management board of the child centre should support to train a person to manage the Library. There may be a small library consists of a room with a few shelves with books, a few desks for studying and boxes with unshelved books. In other words, there may be a lack of good administrative support. A library's success is solely dependent on its staff members who are working together, derive pleasure from their work and, more importantly, like interacting with children. The staff members must work cooperatively; their roles need to blend in harmony for the numerous tasks of the Library to be accomplished. Everyone should be

encouraged to take ownership of having an organised, well-attended, attractive library and surrounding compound.

5.3. Library Committee

- Essential to establish a library committee to manage and a long run of the Library. The library committee should provide ongoing support and advice to the library development.

Responsibilities of the committee:

- Advising on the day-to-day running of the Library, including subscribing of books and maintenance of library environment.
- Monitoring and improving quality of the Library (Consultation can be obtained from the SLLA, NLSDB, NILIS).
- Planning of fundraising programmes to improve the Library facilities.
- Committee membership should include a member from the governing board, Matron, Library staff member, a preschool teacher of the child centre, probation officer, Public librarian in the relevant area.

5.4. Materials

As the child grows in a child centre, the Library becomes essential for interacting with other children. The students are willing to use the Library materials, which help to build the linguistic skills needed for evolving competencies in telling, imagining, understanding, reading, and being a social person. Accessible texts for early reading, adapted for the child for their level of development, are of significant importance. Children in the early stages of school, from first to third grade, enjoy playing and learning. Libraries, which provide both experiences, are essential for children and creating a friendly and welcoming atmosphere is also very important.

5.4.1. Books

There is always a temptation to gather as many books as possible for a library. It is much better to have a good selection of well-written and colourful books that the children might enjoy versus large numbers of inappropriate, drab-looking books. Essential to keep all the

books in good order and free from dust and clean them regularly. Other library materials, e.g., newspapers, magazines, Digital walls, AV materials, etc., can also be included. There should have an accession register / suitable database to maintain the collection.

5.4.2. Furniture

- If the Library is in a temporary structure, mats can be used instead of chairs and desks.
- For a permanent facility, the Furniture should include desks, small tables, chairs or stools for the children and mats for storytime.
- If Furniture is too big, a child will most likely feel awkward and/or inadequate. This can affect how they feel about themselves and their confidence or lack of confidence in their ability to read or attempt new tasks.
- If literacy classes are being held for adults, larger tables and chairs should be included (Standards for Furniture can be varied from each Library and requirements of the library activities. Instructions can be obtained from the National Library Services Board or qualified librarian).

5.5. Lighting

It is essential to ensure adequate lighting, either ample natural daylight or good overhead electric lighting. Good natural lighting is far superior to overhead lighting for reading. Walls that are painted in white or light colours are more suited to libraries because they reflect light. Note: For ease of cleaning can be used high-gloss paint for the first five feet from the floor.

5.6. Ventilation

If the Library is to be accommodated in a room or building, careful attention should be paid to ventilation. When air does not circulate properly, a room can easily become hot, humid and stuffy. These types of conditions make reading and learning very difficult.

5.7. Circulation Services

Circulation records, Library cards, lending periods, fines, borrowing periods, etc. should be planned as a team and the requirement of the Library.

5. 8. Library Opening hours

It is necessary to assess the needs of the potential library members before setting out the Library's hours of operation. Staff should arrive punctually and welcome the children according to the posted hours of operation. If the Library is closed, a notification should be posted. Regular activities including story times should also be carried out punctually. Opening hours should be convenient for the children in the centre.

5. 9. Active Programmes

5. 9.1. Storytimes

Storytimes should be considered part of a daily library routine. By reading aloud from books or telling stories, librarians can build up the vocabulary of library members and improve their listening, comprehension and observational skills. Good listening skills provide a foundation for reading later on and are, therefore, very important. If a child has never heard a particular word before, it is unlikely that the same word in print will have any meaning. A library can play an important role here. Storytimes may include the following activities:

i). Telling a story in Sinhala, Tamil or English language

ii). Discussions on stories

First, introduce the story by giving the title, author and illustrator and set the stage by telling a little of what the story is about. Asking questions and leading a discussion of the story, thereby testing their understanding of the plot, the kind of characters, where the story takes place, etc.

iii). Performing fingerplays and singing action songs

iv). Hearing and reciting poetry and nursery rhymes.

v). Providing opportunities for quiz competitions.

The types of activities will depend on the age and needs of the library members. There should also be opportunities for library members to take turns reading stories aloud. This will promote confidence in their ability to read and will encourage others to do so.

5.9.2. Toys for the Library

Playing with toys and games helps children of all ages build relationships, be creative, use language, think and solve problems. It also helps children learn essential mathematical, literacy and scientific skills playfully.

If there are funds in the budget, the purchase of toys, puzzles and quiet games for in-library use add a great deal. Children certainly enjoy the challenge of completing puzzles; puzzles help with memory skills and understanding spatial relationships. Games also encourage co-operation among others and promote social skills.

5.9.3. Drama

Libraries are wonderful places where drama can be enjoyed. Stories, both from books and the imagination, can be acted out for other library members. Simple costumes and props add a great deal to the performance.

5.9.4. Guest speakers

Libraries can organise various types of programmes to motivate the children. It offers countless opportunities to engage others from the community to share information. This can be in the form of talking about careers, news items and health issues. Guest speakers are invited depending on the area, issues relevant to the area.

5.9.5. Miscellaneous activities

There are no limits to the sorts of activities that can be offered through libraries. The types of programs depend on the resources available and the talents and interests of library staff. Example: an exploration club, Music club, a choir, stamp collectors, reading club etc.

5.9.6. Mentoring:

Addresses the psychosocial support and life skills training needs of vulnerable youth by teaching values and offering counselling and guidance at the Libraries, including counselling sessions.

5.9.7). Co-operation with other institutions/ Libraries, Guide on training sessions for librarians

A good network with other organisations and institutions in the local community is key to the effectiveness of the children's Library. The children's librarian can keep the community informed about programmes and events in the Library.

Schools are one of the most important partners for the children's librarian. Co-operative planning between school libraries, schools library services, and the children's Library can better meet the needs and interests of users. While the school library and schools library services provide information support for the educational process, the children's Library deals more with self-education and leisure reading. The children's librarian should offer various special programmes for the benefit of schools such as:

- Library visits, library orientation programmes
- Reading promotion, lending services,
- Cultural programmes,
- Author/storyteller visits Advocacy programme include how to do advocacy on Library.

5. 10. Budget

- Sponsorship – local or international Non-Government organisations, business companies are often interested in sponsoring specific events.
- Government grants
- Publishers – children's publishers will often provide their own authors or illustrators free of charge for library events, plus free promotional materials.

The best way of achieving a successful budget proposal for the children's Library is to prepare an annual report on what is required. This requires the preparation of evidence and

generally speaking the more detail that can be included, the more likely the budget is to be accepted. For an annual rolling programme of purchasing, the following questions should be addressed:

- what areas of stock do you wish to target?
- how many books and other resources do you wish to purchase?
- how much will they cost?

5. 11. Evaluation of a library's performance

It is important to have written records of the Library's performance also allows one to assess the Library's development and progress on a monthly and annual basis. Maintaining statistical may concern keeping the records, and they will be more helpful to evaluate the library progress. Information regarding expenses could be included to provide an easy reference for annual costs.

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