



Annex 1

Code of Conduct

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Help a Child Code of Conduct

The Help a Child Code of Conduct constitutes Annex 1 of the Help a Child Integrity Policy. The Code of Conduct is derived from the protection principles as mentioned in the Integrity Policy, and covers the following components:

- Expected behavior and prohibited misconduct;
- Minimum standards for protection against sexual abuse and exploitation;
- An explanation of the duty to report and the use of reporting mechanisms;
- Consequences of a breach of the Help a Child Code of Conduct;
- Procedures on the review of the Help a Child Code of Conduct.



1. Expected behavior and prohibited misconduct

This section sets out general categories of expected behavior and specifies prohibited acts.

1.1 Expected behavior and prohibited misconduct – general

We treat everybody equally and with dignity:

- Our representatives will not discriminate based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political convictions, religion, or for any other reason, in any way. Common forms of discrimination may include making employment or programming decisions based on family status, race, gender, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, birth, sexual orientation, age, disability or political conviction.
- Our representatives stay away from behavior and actions that show a lack of respect for the dignity of others, e.g. bullying, verbal or physical harassment¹, exploitation, intimidation and victimization.

We are well-clothed and show respect for religious and culturally sensitive issues. Our representatives:

- maintain a representative and well-groomed appearance.
- will treat religious and culturally sensitive issues with respect and tact.
- will be dressed representatively, fitting the cultural setting, which means at least keeping the norms and codes set by our local office².
- will not engage in situations that our local office³ does not consider fitting.

We avoid conflict of interest. Our representatives:

- act in full compliance with all applicable laws and observe the highest standards of honesty and integrity by not abusing their position for personal gain. This means that Help a Child condemns all forms of fraud, bribery, corruption and theft.
- Help a Child representatives should not make any contributions to political organizations or individuals as a means of obtaining an advantage.
- should conduct themselves in a manner that avoids suspicion of such behavior.
- should avoid situations in which their personal interest may conflict, or appear to conflict, with the interests of Help a Child or its project participants.

¹ Harassment is any act or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material, if the action or conduct is unwelcome to the recipient and could reasonably be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidating.

² In case the country has no Help a Child office, the International office determines this norm/code on the basis of consultations with partner organizations. The norm will be shared with travelers during their travel briefing

³ Idem.



- are committed to implement and enforce effective systems to counter bribery and corruption.

We use the property of Help a Child with care:

- Our representatives will handle the property of Help a Child, such as mobile phones, computers, laptops, tablets, presentation equipment and printers, with care and attention. This also means that such equipment cannot be left unattended in a vehicle. After work, laptops and tablets are taken home or stored in a cabinet. The users of equipment and keys that are property of Help a Child must sign a loan form.

We stay away from alcohol and drugs:

- On duty and/or whilst on Help a Child premises our representatives will not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs not medically prescribed.
- Our representatives will also not be in the possession of alcohol or drugs not medically prescribed.

We stay away from use of fire arms:

- Our representatives do not use or have in their possession fire arms at any time.

We use internet (incl. email) properly and do not use illegal software. Our representatives:

- will not visit pornographic, racist, discriminating, or abusive internet sites and/or chat rooms or download offensive material or visit sites of which the content is against the law, unethical or threatening.
- are not permitted to install software from Help a Child illegally on their own computer or computers of third parties.
- will handle business email messages correctly regardless of whether they are sent from the office, home or another place: emails should not be offensive or controversial, not contain information too sensitive for this medium and should be used for business only.

We behave properly when it comes to personal use of social media: our representatives will not harm Help a Child's efforts to position itself as a professional organization off as well as online. Representatives should adhere to the following rules to protect the organization and all its representatives against negative consequences of social media behavior.

- Respect privacy. Do not place pictures or texts with a reference to a person without his/her consent (or parent consent) and keep (full) names and addresses confidential.
- When making public statements – whether on personal or professional title – consider critically whether these messages are in line with the identity and values of Help a Child.
- Use a disclaimer when expressing an opinion about work-related topics.



- Be transparent when discussing work-related information and experiences and at the same time keep internal agreements on confidentiality and safety. Add value and refrain from comments on the work of colleagues within this or other organizations.
- Feel free to respond to critical comments of others on Help a Child or its work but stay with the facts and react in a respectful way.⁴
- Be open about a mistake. Correct it visibly and, if needed, explain what went wrong.
- When receiving a message from Help a Child to remove a picture or message about our work, then the organization expects our representatives to do this as soon as possible.
- Do not discuss sensitive information or details on your residence if this could lead to security issues for yourself or others. Do not give burglars a chance and do not tell them when you are travelling or when a certain place is unmanned.

1.2 Expected behavior and prohibited misconduct – vulnerable groups

We protect vulnerable groups: our representatives will do their utmost best to protect all vulnerable groups against harassment, exploitation, and sexual abuse or threat of abuse. We stay away from and strongly reject any abuse of power:

- Any form of violence including, but not limited to: bullying, verbal, physical or sexual-harassment⁵, rape, exploitation, intimidation, and victimization;
- Behavior that shows a lack of respect for the dignity of others including breaching of confidentiality;
- Behaving in a manner which leads to, or could potentially lead to health or security problems for the person themselves or for other people;
- Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading, compromising or exploitative behavior.
- Withholding goods that are due to Help a Child's program participants to obtain gifts, payment or sex – including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading, compromising or exploitative behavior – from program participants.

Being a child-focused organization we consider it especially important to safeguard the well-being of children. The remainder of section 1.2 sets out general categories of expected behavior and specifies prohibited acts regarding **child safeguarding**.

⁴ In many cases it is wise to respond via the organization's own social media channels, so always inform Help a Child's Communication Team when reading messages about the organization on social media

⁵ Sexual harassment is defined as any: act of physical intimacy; request for sexual favors; other act or conduct including spoken words, gestures, or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material that is unwelcome and could reasonably be regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating.

We uphold a safe and open environment for children. Our representatives:

- are committed to creating a culture of openness and mutual accountability at workplaces to enable all child protection issues to be raised and discussed.
- contribute to creating and/or upholding an environment where children are listened to and respected as individuals and what is safe, positive, and encouraging to them.

We pay special attention to the needs of children and our behavior towards children: We treat all children with respect and we:

- Take notice of their reactions to our tone of voice and manner.
- Ensure when making images of children (photos, video etc.) that they are respectful, that the children are adequately clothed and that sexually suggestive poses are avoided.
- Follow the “two-adult” rule; at all times, two or more adults are present and supervise activities where minors or children are involved.

We refrain from any behavior that might have a negative impact on the well-being of children: We acknowledge that our behavior might have (unintended) negative impact on the well-being of children. Therefore, we remain from potential harmful behavior. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Hold, fondle, kiss, cuddle or touch children or other vulnerable persons including caregivers in inappropriate and/or culturally insensitive way.
- Engage in activities involving close body contact with children or vulnerable persons beyond what is required professionally.
- Spend time alone with a child, away from others in a secluded area.
- Use language, make suggestions, or offer advice that is inappropriate, offensive, or abusive.
- Make sexually suggestive comments or actions to a child, even as a joke.
- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children or vulnerable persons. All disciplinary measures are non-violent and do not humiliate.
- Act in a way intended to shame, humiliate, or belittle children or other vulnerable persons, or otherwise perpetuate any form of emotional abuse.
- Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favors certain children or other vulnerable persons to the exclusion of others.
- Develop relationships with children or other vulnerable persons that could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Condone, or participate in behavior with children or other vulnerable persons that is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
- Actively or passively engage children in child labor activities, nor will we condone this in our direct environment.
- Conduct or be part of harmful traditional practices, spiritual or ritualistic abuse.



We refrain from misusing our power/position: We refrain from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, or favoritism. We will never abuse the power and influence that we have by virtue of our position over the lives and well-being of any child, or any other vulnerable person.

1.3 Minimum standards for protection against sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA)

We acknowledge that sexual abuse and exploitation is a serious breach of our Code of Conduct. Any proven instances of any forms of harassment or sexual threat or abuse will result in appropriate disciplinary action being taken, up to and including dismissal.

Definitions:

For the purposes of the present policy the term **‘sexual exploitation’** means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term **‘sexual abuse’** means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

All staff and others acting on behalf of Help a Child must adhere to the following [IASC core principles](#) to prevent any form of sexual abuse and exploitation from happening:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by our representatives constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for contract termination.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief of the age of a child is not a defense.
- Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited; this includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
- Any sexual relationship between staff and beneficiaries is prohibited, since such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of our work and often involve improper use of rank or position.
- Where staff develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established reporting mechanisms; the Integrity Focal Point or Integrity Coordinator.
- Our representatives are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of this Code of Conduct. Managers at all levels have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

Any proven instances of harassment, exploitation, abuse or threat of abuse will be treated as gross misconduct and, as such, will result in appropriate disciplinary action being taken, up to and including dismissal and legal action.



Help a Child is committed to collaborate and coordinate with humanitarian partners in reporting and investigating cases of (possible) sexual abuse or misconduct.

We differentiate our prevention activities from response activities in this regard:

Prevention:

Vetting: Help a Child systematically vets all prospective job candidates in accordance with established screening procedures.

Training: Help a Child holds mandatory induction and refresher trainings for all employees and related personnel on the Organization's Code of Conduct, including our SEA policy and procedures.

Response:

Reporting: Help a Child has safe, confidential and accessible mechanisms and procedures for personnel, beneficiaries and communities, including children, to report SEA allegations that and ensures that beneficiaries are aware of these.

Investigation: Help a Child has a process for investigation of SEA allegations in place and shall properly and without delay conduct an investigation of SEA by its employees or related personnel or refer to the proper investigative body if the perpetrator is affiliated with another entity.

Referral to National Authorities: If, after proper investigation, there is evidence to support allegations of SEA, these cases may be referred to national authorities for criminal prosecution.

Victim assistance: Help a Child has a system to promptly refer SEA survivors to available services, based on their needs and consent.

Cooperative arrangements:

- All Help a Child's contracts and partnership agreements include a standard clause requiring contractors, suppliers, consultants and sub-partners to commit to a zero-tolerance policy on SEA and to take measures to prevent and respond to SEA.
- The failure of those entities or individuals to take preventive measures against SEA, to investigate allegations thereof, or to take corrective action when SEA has occurred, shall constitute grounds for termination of any cooperative arrangement.

2. Duty to Report and Reporting Mechanism

2.1 Duty to Report

It is the duty of all Help a Child representatives who become aware of any breaches of the Help a Child Code of Conduct to report this immediately to a line manager or a relevant Integrity Focal Person or the Integrity Coordinator, either through the established reporting mechanism or, if not appropriate, to another senior member of staff.

Management must ensure that all information about breaches of this Code is handled with the utmost discretion. Any concerns or suspicions about a suspected incident of exploitation, harassment or bullying of program participants or colleagues, whether major or minor, should always be discussed with an Integrity Focal Person, line manager or other senior member of staff.

Failure to report concerns of (sexual) abuse and exploitation will constitute misconduct and be considered grounds for disciplinary measures. No action will be taken against a person reporting concerns in good faith, and the person will be protected against retaliation. Any of our representatives purposely making false accusations of any action by another representative of Help a Child, which is in breach of the Code of Conduct, will be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of the employer.

2.2 Reporting Mechanism

Breaches or any suspicion of a breach to this Code of Conduct should be reported using the Help a Child complaints procedure⁶. The suspected breach will be investigated in accordance to the same complaints procedure.

⁶ See Annex 4 of the Integrity Policy for the Feedback, Complaints and Whistle Blowing Procedure of Help a Child, which can also be found online at <https://www.helpachild.org/documents> and on SharePoint.

3. Consequence of Breach of Code of the Code of Conduct

Help a Child recognizes the pressure and stress working in relief projects and fragile environments and acknowledges the organizational responsibility when it comes to staff care. Therefore, it supports staff with the staff care measures as mentioned in section 3.5 of the Integrity Policy to minimize stress.

However, Help a Child expects that, when signing an employment contract with Help a Child, our representatives acknowledge their own responsibility towards their behavior and actions. Any proven breach of the Help a Child Code of Conduct and any proven misconduct will result in disciplinary action. Depending on the severity appropriate action might include a written warning, probation or termination of contract and legal action if required, as described in the employment conditions manual.

Furthermore, disciplinary measures will be taken against our representatives

- for retaliating against a colleague who reports concerns or otherwise cooperates with an investigation;
- for maliciously and falsely reporting misconduct; and
- for not cooperating with an investigation.

If the claim is deemed unfounded the representative's record will be cleared.



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