



Institutional directives

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**Code of Conduct:**  
**Integrity, Prevention of abuses and Safeguarding People.**

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Risks and Audits Division

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<b>Initial Version 2018</b>	The Board of Trustees
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This **Institutional Directive** has been drawn up in conjunction with HI's policies: IP02 Child Safeguarding Policy, IP03 Protection of beneficiaries from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and IP04 Anti-fraud and anti-corruption (refer to next page Foreword for the links). In order to understand the issues and principles outlined in this directive, **please start by reading our Institutional Policies.**

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# 1. Foreword

## Purpose of the Code of Conduct

In its mission to support disabled people and vulnerable populations by meeting their essential needs, improving their living conditions, and promoting respect for their dignity and fundamental rights, HI is guided by the values of humanity, commitment, inclusion, and integrity.

These values and ambitions are translated into concrete institutional policies and guidelines.

- [Policy for Protection of beneficiaries against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment IP 03](#)
- [Child Safeguarding Policy IP 02](#)
- [Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy. IP 04](#)

These policies are supplemented by this Code of Conduct, which summarises their key principles.

## The founding principles

The founding principles on which these policies and this Code of Conduct are based are:

- Respect for fundamental human rights<sup>1</sup>,
- Zero tolerance by the organisation of violations of these rights by its HI employees or other collaborators at any time,
- Risk management, including the creation of a safe environment,
- The duty to support victims of abuse by HI staff or other humanitarian actors,
- The duty to report any incident, doubt or suspicion of abuse, even in the absence of evidence.

This code sets out the collective and individual practices and behaviours expected of HI employees and other staff members. Respect and dignity for all people — the beneficiaries of our actions, the communities in the countries where we work, and HI members and staff — lie at the heart of our organisation's commitments. By publishing this Code of Conduct, HI commits to upholding its principles both internally and in its relationships with partner organisations and service providers.

This Code is a vital part of implementing safeguarding and integrity policies, which outline the principles for safeguarding the resources entrusted to HI and protecting those involved

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<sup>1</sup> Including the rights of the child, the rights of people with disabilities and International Humanitarian Law

in our activities, particularly our beneficiaries, who are most at risk of abuse of power, discrimination, sexism, harassment, exploitation and sexual abuse.

The Code aims to protect all direct and indirect beneficiaries of HI's activities, as well as individuals in communities who interact with our projects. This includes children, women, people with disabilities, older people and anyone in a vulnerable situation.

The existence of the code, and our commitment to applying it, helps to ensure that our actions are consistent, and that our organisation is credible and has a good reputation. HI's reputation largely depends on the conduct of its employees and other staff members, both during and outside working hours. Indeed, our association's credibility, reputation and legal position could be seriously affected by behaviour that is morally reprehensible, contrary to public opinion or the law, or in breach of our internal rules.

For this reason, while the principles set out in this Code of Conduct include recommendations and encouragement, they also prohibit certain acts, practices and behaviours that are contrary to the objectives and values of our organisation. These elements constitute minimum standards for the organisation, ensuring that relations with beneficiaries and between HI staff comply with our ethics (our safeguarding policies also protect our staff and their families). Where necessary, our organisation reserves the right to apply sanctions commensurate with the seriousness of the offence.

### **To whom does this code of conduct apply?**

The Code therefore applies to all people who work on behalf of HI, whether as part of a project or activity undertaken with HI, named in this document as “HI employees or other collaborators”, whether recruited internationally or nationally, even on a one-off basis anywhere in the world:

- People who have a temporary or permanent contract of employment with HI,
- Members of the organisation's Board of Trustees,
- Family members accompanying international staff,
- Consultants, experts or visitors to HI activities,
- Trainees or work-study students,
- International, community volunteers and other forms of volunteering, including unpaid work,
- Suppliers or service providers providing staff to work with HI,
- Contractors or/and Partner organisations as part of their collaboration with HI.

Everyone is informed of the Code of Conduct. They must not only apply its provisions, but also encourage, defend and promote the Code and its values, reporting violations through the appropriate channels.

HI board members, directors and managers in particular are responsible for disseminating the Code, setting an example for their teams and guaranteeing a working environment conducive to adopting and applying these principles.

As a reference document associated with our association's employment contracts and internal regulations, the Code of Conduct and its provisions apply to all individuals who have chosen to commit themselves professionally or voluntarily to our association:

- regardless of their contractual status – national or international staff.
- regardless of the cultural or regulatory environment of the countries where HI is present and works.
- in all countries and in all contexts of intervention.
- during working hours and outside working hours.

**The Code of Conduct supplements, but does not replace, the documents that define the framework for HI's work. In particular, it supplements:**

- HI's Ethical Charter and the organisation's statutes,
- the internal regulations in each country of operation, which may define moral and sexual harassment in particular,
- the general and specific terms and conditions of employment for international staff or staff with national status,
- the employment contract, service contract or any other formalisation of the professional relationship specific to each person or situation, which refers to all applicable rules.

## **Partner organisations, companies and service providers that make employees available for HI interventions**

HI informs these organisations of the importance of its Code of Conduct and the rules applicable to HI employees and collaborators. Commitment to complying with the provisions of the HI Code of Conduct, or equivalent or compatible rules, is a prerequisite for establishing a partnership and long-term collaboration. Consequently, any breach or violation of these principles may be invoked by HI as a legitimate reason for terminating the contractual relationship.

## **Application of the Code of Conduct in diverse cultural and legal environments**

HI respects the richness and diversity of the cultures, traditions and practices of the communities in which it works. However, we consider international law<sup>2</sup> and comply with national legislation in each country in which we operate, unless this infringes human rights.

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<sup>2</sup> Human rights, humanitarian law and disability rights.

In terms of safeguarding, protection and integrity, our policies and procedures may appear more demanding or more specific than national laws and regulations. In such cases, the provisions of the Code of Conduct shall prevail over any other legal obligations regarding professional conduct. Therefore, no HI employee or other collaborator may use customs, provisions or loopholes in the law to avoid their obligations under the Code of Conduct.

In countries where local regulations offer strong protection against abuse, the Code of Conduct retains its status as an internal reference framework that can be combined with legal obligations regarding professional conduct.

## **2. Code of Conduct**

**In all contexts, regardless of the emergency of the situation, as an HI employee or other collaborator, I undertake to respect the following rules:**

### **2.1 I promote a safe and respectful environment for beneficiaries and their communities**

- 2.1.1** I systematically ensure that beneficiaries (including children), partners and their communities are treated with respect, dignity and equality, regardless of age, gender identity or expression, physical or mental condition, disability, language, religion, opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, status, class, caste, sexuality or any other personal characteristic.
- 2.1.2** I systematically promote a non-violent and positive attitude when interacting with beneficiaries and their communities (including suppliers or authorities).
- 2.1.3** I do not participate in or encourage corrupt or fraudulent activities that harm beneficiaries, their communities and/or the organisation. I do not solicit or accept any commission, consideration or gift in exchange for my decisions or actions.
- 2.1.4** Under no circumstances will I touch the beneficiaries and their relatives or caregivers in a way that is inappropriate to their cultural environment.
- 2.1.5** Under no circumstances will I use language, images or suggestions intended to provoke, harass or humiliate, or knowingly disregard traditional or cultural practices.
- 2.1.6** I do not under any circumstances humiliate beneficiaries or those accompanying them, and I do not engage in sexist, degrading or abusive behaviour, whether physical, verbal, psychological or of any other nature, with any beneficiary, partner or member of the communities.
- 2.1.7** I systematically inform beneficiaries (especially children) and communities of their right to report any worrying situation, especially intimate or sexual issues, and how to do so.
- 2.1.8** I systematically try to take into account the beneficiaries' ability to participate, respecting their opinions, their choices and their autonomy, and I

don't carry out actions that they cannot carry out themselves (for example: washing up, changing clothes, etc.).

- 2.1.9** I systematically pay special attention to people who have barriers or difficulties in communicating or expressing themselves fully (due to disability, mobility, gender or any other reason) by providing safe and appropriate communication facilities.
- 2.1.10** When I am in contact with some beneficiaries (especially children, women and men with disabilities), I will always ensure that I'm visible to another adult.
- 2.1.11** Under no circumstances will I invite a beneficiary (especially a child) to my home, offer them a lift or maintain personal contact (telephone, media and social networks) with them without a professional reason and clear authorisation from my manager. If I must sleep in the same place as beneficiaries, I will not sleep with unaccompanied children (including adolescents) or invite them to sleep near me, unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify it.<sup>3</sup>.

## **2.2 I behave professionally and respectfully towards my colleagues**

- 2.2.1** I always show respect to all staff, partners and community volunteers.
- 2.2.2** I am aware of the situations of trust and power in relation to the communities concerned which arise from my position as an employee of a humanitarian and development organisation and which can be explained by the economic and symbolic differences between myself (as an employee or collaborator) and the beneficiaries. Understanding these situations and respecting HI's values commits me to act responsibly and respect the organisation's codes and ethics.
- 2.2.3** Under no circumstances will I tolerate or participate in any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation or favouritism in the workplace, whether sexist or racist, sexual or psychological harassment or abuse of power. I respect the rules that apply to me (in particular the internal rules) on these matters.
- 2.2.4** I always behave in a professional manner with my colleagues, avoid spreading false rumours and allegations and refrain from making comments based on gender, sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic that could be considered harassment.
- 2.2.5** I systematically assess the risk of all types of harm that could occur during the implementation of the organisation's projects. I take care to avoid any risk associated with my behaviour in the context of the organisation's

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<sup>3</sup> Example of exceptional circumstances: massive bombardments in progress on the site, makeshift shelters in the event of a natural disaster in progress, child in mortal danger if unsupervised while sleeping.



activities. As example, I shall refrain from consuming alcohol or illegal substances that impair my abilities and professional behaviour.

- 2.2.6** I organise and plan activities in such a way as to minimise such harm, considering the disability, state of health, age or other vulnerable situation of my colleagues (trainees, cleaning staff, etc.) and beneficiaries.

## **2.3 I fight against sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation <sup>4</sup>**

- 2.3.1** I will not have sexual or intimate relations with anyone under the age of 18, regardless of the age of sexual consent set by law or local custom. Mistaking the age of a child is not a defence.
- 2.3.2** I will not engage in any form of intimate or sexual relationship or exchange of favours for money, gifts of any kind, work or humanitarian aid, even if offered or expected. This rule applies in all circumstances, even if these people are sex workers or are recommended as such by a third party.
- 2.3.3** I will not, under any circumstances, directly or indirectly, use an adult or child to provide sexual services to a third party or to support, permit or participate in any form of prostitution or sexual exploitation.
- 2.3.4** Under no circumstances will I sexually exploit a beneficiary or HI staff member or make a child work (including domestic work) in exchange for help or any form of benefit.
- 2.3.5** I will maintain a strictly professional relationship with beneficiaries, being alert to situations of fraternisation that would imply partiality, favouritism or inappropriate use of a position, including public disclosure of intimate relationships. Similarly, I will not engage in intimate or sexual relationships with members of the host communities that are based on an imbalance of power, as they risk undermining the credibility and integrity of HI's work.

## **2.4 I fight against fraud and corruption**

- 2.4.1** I protect the organisation's material and financial resources against any form of waste, loss, theft or misappropriation.
- 2.4.2** I ensure that the aid intended for the beneficiaries of our activities reaches them in the quantity and quality planned.
- 2.4.3** Both internally and in my dealings with the authorities, partner organisations, suppliers and service providers, I uphold the principles, policies and procedures that ensure fraud-free operations and cooperation.

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<sup>4</sup> More specifically, this chapter complies with the principles of the institutional policies on the Protection of Beneficiaries against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) and the Child Protection Policy.

## **To this end,**

I will neither seek nor accept any commission, consideration or gift in exchange for my decisions or actions.

- 2.4.4** I reject the practice of facilitation payments (baksheesh), which are intended to speed up procedures by circumventing the rules.
- 2.4.5** I will inform my organisation of all invitations and gifts received or offered. I refuse all invitations and gifts that result in a loss of objectivity and impartiality, whether real or perceived.
- 2.4.6** I make objective decisions in the interests of the organisation, without seeking advantage, favour or gain for myself, my family or my friends.
- 2.4.7** I inform my organisation of potential conflicts of interest and, where appropriate, I do not participate in decisions that could be perceived as biased or self-serving.
- 2.4.8** I will carry out my duties without abusing the authority or responsibility entrusted to me for personal gain.
- 2.4.9** I will participate in awareness raising and internal control initiatives and encourage colleagues to do the same.

## **But also:**

**2.4.10** I participate in awareness-raising and internal control initiatives and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

**2.4.11** I report any suspected or proven acts of fraud in a responsible and confidential manner, either through the management chain or via [the link to EthicsPoint](#), which is HI secure professional alert system.

## **2.5 I'm careful not to do any harm with the communication I am doing**

- 2.5.1** I will obtain the prior written consent of the person concerned or their legal representative (minors or persons under guardianship) for the collection of evidence, the taking of photographs or the making of videos; consent must be informed, not subject to pressure or quid pro quo, and not linked to the assistance provided to the beneficiary.
- 2.5.2** When producing content (text, photo or video), I will systematically ensure, with appropriate prior consent, that the person is not portrayed in a degrading or sexually suggestive manner. I also ensure that beneficiaries and/or children are not naked or dressed inappropriately for the situation in which they are depicted.
- 2.5.3** I will always use respectful language and refer to people by name when addressing them or talking about them to others.
- 2.5.4** Under no circumstances will I view, publish, produce or share

pornographic material involving persons less than 18 years old and/or show such material to children.

- 2.5.5** I will systematically ensure that any audio, written or visual communication respects the dignity and human rights of the person represented (including anonymity where necessary, which is mandatory for children in highly vulnerable situations) and does not expose them to any risk of reprisal or abuse of any kind.
- 2.5.6** Under no circumstances will I show the faces of beneficiaries and/or children who are sexually exploited, victims of trafficking or abuse, in conflict with the law, associated with armed groups, or easily identifiable even if their identity has been changed.
- 2.5.7** When I use communication content (texts, photos, videos), I systematically ensure that I can use information about beneficiaries, children, families and communities in accordance with the consents signed, the rights of use defined and the laws on the protection of personal data in force in the relevant environment.

## **2.6 I respect the rules of data protection**

- 2.6.1** In accordance with the framework of [HI's general policy on the protection of personal data](#) – I will ensure that any processing of personal data is based on informed consent, the performance of a contract, compliance with legal obligations, the protection of vital interests, the public interest or legitimate interest.
- 2.6.2** I guarantee full transparency by informing the data subjects (beneficiaries, employees, partners) in a clear and comprehensible manner about the use of their data in the context of my duties.
- 2.6.3** I undertake to respect the confidentiality of information to which I have access in the course of my duties.
- 2.6.4** I will carry out my professional duties conscientiously and will not divulge confidential information about beneficiaries and people supported by HI, other members of the team and other professional partners.
- 2.6.5** This duty of confidentiality applies both during and after my employment with HI. Any breach of this rule may result in a claim for compensation and/or prosecution.

## **2.7 I am reporting a suspicion or a situation of abuse**

- 2.7.1** I understand that it is my duty and obligation to report any concerns or observed abuse in violation of this Code of Conduct, the Policy on Protection of Beneficiaries from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, the Child Protection Policy or the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy to my line manager or anyone else in my hierarchy, to a designated contact person (Focal Point, Employee Representative) or directly through the mechanism

listed below.

**2.7.2** I must report these concerns or abuses directly or with the assistance of others to the organisation's reporting platform - EthicsPoint - even if the information or allegations are vague and without having investigated them myself.

- [Internal link to EthicsPoint \(HI members and staff\):](#)
- [External link to EthicsPoint for people outside HI \(beneficiaries, partners, suppliers, others\)](#)

**2.7.3** I undertake to inform HI of any allegation or previous conviction of an HI employee or partner in relation to child abuse or sexual violences.

**2.7.4** I will take care to protect the person who has been abused by not disclosing the situation to all my work colleagues or external parties (within the limits of whistleblowing rights). I apply the principles of confidentiality and security in my reporting, taking care not to allow a situation of abuse and impunity to continue.

**2.7.5** I will never deliberately make false accusations or spread false rumours about a colleague or any other person in connection with a breach of this Code of Conduct.

**2.7.6** I agree to cooperate confidentially and impartially with any internal investigation decided upon by my organisation, if asked to do so.

## **2.8 I am aware of my obligations and of the disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed if I fail to comply with these rules**

**2.8.1** I understand that if I am implicated on any credible report of suspected sexual harassment, abuse or exploitation, or child abuse and exploitation, it will result in my immediate suspension pending an impartial internal investigation<sup>5</sup> of the allegations and appropriate action. In cases where suspension is not possible because of local legislation, HI will, as a minimum, deny me access to the organisation's premises, materials and activities while it investigates and takes appropriate action.

**2.8.2** I acknowledge that any breach of the provisions of this Code of Conduct or the PSEAH, Child Protection and Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption policies will result in disciplinary action, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct and the applicable legal and internal procedures.

**2.8.3** I am aware that disciplinary action may range from a formal verbal warning to dismissal for gross misconduct, which will be recorded in my personnel file.

**2.8.4** I also understand that any malicious or offensive comments made about any person holding a contract of employment with HI (temporary or permanent),

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<sup>5</sup> In accordance with the [HI Internal Investigation Guideline](#) (internal link), 2021.(restricted access)

accompanying family members of international staff, members of HI's Board of Directors, consultants, interns, volunteers or trainees, may be investigated and result in appropriate action, including disciplinary action.



## **Code of Conduct:**

### **Integrity, Prevention of abuses and Safeguarding People**

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As an international solidarity organisation committed to respecting the dignity and fundamental rights of people with disabilities and the most vulnerable populations, HI is keen to ensure the protection not only of its beneficiaries, but also all those who come into contact with its actions.

Each HI member represents the organisation and is responsible for its image. Any failure to respect its values therefore tarnishes the reputation of HI as a whole and can compromise the legitimacy of its actions.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to set out the behaviour and practices expected of everyone involved in protecting our beneficiaries from abuses. It also sets out the actions to be avoided in order to guarantee that the relationships that are created within our teams, with our beneficiaries and with all the people in contact with our organisation, are respectful the ethics developed within HI, and more generally, of the values that it intends to uphold.

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