

	<b>Hoffnungszeichen   Sign of Hope e.V.</b>  <b>Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Child Protection</b>	Revision: 03.00 Valid after: 01.07.2018 Review: 01.07.2020 Page: 1 of 5
---	--	--

### 1. Introduction

Hoffnungszeichen | Sign of Hope e.V. (SoH) is an interdenominational human rights, relief and development organisation. Helping those in distress is the focus of our work across the world. Sign of Hope campaigns where human rights are being abused or threatened. Sign of Hope provides humanitarian aid in the form of disaster relief and emergency aid and is also involved in sustainable development cooperation based on the principle of ‘Help People to Help Themselves’.

With a background of the Christian faith as a shared set of values and basic motivating factors, Sign of Hope is guided by the core values of empathy, charity and solidarity. The following quotation from Matthew 25, verse 40 illustrates the common core: ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

The contexts of our work bring us into contact with vulnerable people. As NGO workers, we may have access to goods and services that put us in a position of power vis à vis the target communities. Unfortunately, a minority of people who are working in this context misuse this power disparity to exploit and abuse vulnerable members of the community. Vulnerable adults and children are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

This policy defines SoH’s commitment to the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)<sup>1</sup> of vulnerable people, involving SoH Employees and Related Personnel. In recognition of the special vulnerability of children, this policy also affirms SoH’s commitment to the welfare and protection from sexual exploitation and all forms of abuse of children.

SoH has zero tolerance for any sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse. SoH takes seriously all concerns and complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse involving SoH Employees and Related Personnel. SoH initiates rigorous investigation of complaints that indicate a possible violation of this policy and takes appropriate disciplinary action, as warranted.

### 2. Scope of Application



This policy applies to all SoH Employees and Related Personnel. Related Personnel is defined as SoH members, affiliates, board, volunteers, interns, and international and local consultants, in addition to individual and corporate contractors of these entities and related personnel. This includes non-SoH entities and their employees and individuals who have entered into partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements with SoH.

### 3. Definition

#### 3.1 Children and vulnerable adults

A child is any individual under the age of 18, irrespective of local country definitions of when a child reaches adulthood. Vulnerable adults are defined as:

<sup>1</sup> Use of the term “Sexual exploitation and abuse” throughout this policy refers to children as well as vulnerable adults.

	Compiled by	Reviewed & Approved
Name	M. Kipping / F. Stahl	R. Reubelt / K. Stieglitz
Date	20.06.2018	20th June 2018
Signature		

 <p>hoffnungszeichen sign of hope</p>	<p><b>Hoffnungszeichen   Sign of Hope e.V.</b></p> <p><b>Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Child Protection</b></p>	<p>Revision: 03.00 Valid after: 01.07.2018 Review: 01.07.2020 Page: 2 of 5</p>
--	---	--

- those aged over 18 years and who identify themselves as unable to take care of themselves/ protect themselves from harm or exploitation; or
- those who, due to their gender, mental or physical health, disability, ethnicity, religious identity, sexual orientation, economic or social status, or as a result of disasters and conflicts, are deemed to be at risk.

### 3.2 Sexual Exploitation

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.

### 3.3 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

### 3.4 Child Exploitation and Abuse

Child Exploitation and Abuse involves one or more of the following:

#### a) Physical abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or a minor. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing. The injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns or fractures.

#### b) Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts toward a child or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Such acts have a high probability of damaging a child's self-esteem or social competence.

#### c) Neglect

Neglect is the failure to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and well-being.

#### d) Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that s/he does not fully comprehend, give informed consent to, or for which s/he is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. It is evidenced by an activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. It may include, but is not limited to, the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other lawful sexual practices or the exploitative use of pornographic performances and materials.

	Compiled by	Reviewed & Approved
Name	M. Kipping / F. Stahl	R. Reubelt / K. Stieglitz
Date		
Signature		

e) Grooming

Grooming generally refers to behaviour that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity. It often involves the act of building the trust of children and/or their careers to gain access to children in order to sexually abuse them. For example, grooming includes encouraging romantic feelings or exposing the child to sexual concepts through pornography.

f) Online grooming

Online grooming is the act of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient who the sender believes to be less than 18 years of age, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including but not necessarily the sender

**4. Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by SoH employees constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore reason for the termination of employment.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the local age of majority or age of consent. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.
- Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
- Sexual relationships between SoH employees and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of SoH and the very principles of our relief and development work.
- Where a SoH worker 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 agency reporting mechanisms.
- SoH employees are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the respect of the code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment. No SoH staff or volunteer should be alone in a room with a child.

**5. Management Standards**

Procedure	PSEA measures
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job adverts include PSEA commitments</li> <li>• Gaps in employment history checked during interview</li> <li>• Questions related to PSEA asked during interview</li> <li>• References are checked where possible</li> <li>• An extended clearance certificate (criminal records) needs to be provided</li> <li>• New employees sign PSEA and the organisation's code of conduct together with their contract.</li> </ul>
Induction/training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction includes at least a briefing on PSEA</li> <li>• All staff receive a half day training on PSEA – recognizing and responding to risks and concerns</li> </ul>

	Compiled by	Reviewed & Approved
Name	M. Kipping / F. Stahl	R. Reubelt / K. Stieglitz
Date		
Signature		

 <p>hoffnungszeichen sign of hope</p>	<p><b>Hoffnungszeichen   Sign of Hope e.V.</b></p> <p><b>Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Child Protection</b></p>	<p>Revision: 03.00 Valid after: 01.07.2018 Review: 01.07.2020 Page: 4 of 5</p>
--	---	--

Performance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual refresher training opportunities provided</li> <li>• Performance management discussions include understanding of PSEA and an opportunity to raise concerns</li> <li>• Where performance management includes working to values or competencies, these include PSEA</li> </ul>
Whistleblowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A policy or procedure which encourages people to report on concerns without fear of reprisals is in place</li> </ul>
Discipline and grievance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEA is explicitly stated as grounds for a disciplinary procedure. If found guilty, this will lead to the termination of the concerned employees contract</li> </ul>
Programming guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programming guidelines include sections on the identification and mitigation of SEA risks in programmes to make them safer</li> </ul>
Partnership arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All contracts with suppliers/partners/contractors include clauses on PSEA</li> <li>• Capacity Building for partners includes training on implementing PSEA measures</li> <li>• Partner monitoring includes PSEA measures and SEA reports</li> </ul>
Complaints/ reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A focal point for PSEA is appointed at HQ and in each country office. Focal points receive regular training.</li> <li>• Complaints mechanism developed for each target group to receive and respond to reports of PSEA</li> </ul>

## 6. Prevention

In order to strengthen the prevention of SEA, all employees are advised to

- Never invite a child or their relatives to your home or develop a relationship with a child and/or their family which may be considered outside normal professional boundaries.
- Never work with or transport a child during working hours alone without the prior authorisation of the line manager, unless absolutely necessary for the safety of the child.
- Never be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while working.
- Never maintain contact with children of target groups and their families via social networks, unless a specific Sign of Hope project requires you to do so and you have been given explicit permission.
- Never touch people especially children or use language or make suggestions in an inappropriate manner, to provoke, harass or degrade the person or show disrespect for cultural practices. This includes acting in a manner which is likely to have a negative impact on the person's - especially child's - confidence and self-esteem.
- Be aware of possible indications of SEA: observe events, patterns or trends that could indicate abuse. Physical and behavioral evidence or signs that someone is possibly being sexually abused include, but are not limited to:

	Compiled by	Reviewed & Approved
Name	M. Kipping / F. Stahl	R. Reubelt / K. Stieglitz
Date		
Signature		

- Difficulty in walking
- Torn, stained or bloody clothing
- Pain
- Bruises or bleeding in the genitalia
- Reluctance to be left alone with a particular person
- Wearing lots of clothing
- Nightmares or fear of night

### 7. Complaints & Investigation

- SoH will take all allegations of sexual abuse seriously and will promptly and thoroughly investigate whether sexual abuse has taken place.
- The focal point for PSEA is the one to report any suspected abuse to. In circumstances of mistrust or fear the ombudsperson can be contacted: [ombudsperson@sign-of-hope.org](mailto:ombudsperson@sign-of-hope.org) (cf. Complaints policy)
- All employees and volunteers receive information on the focal points and how to contact them, and understand that a person placing a complaint of sexual abuse in good faith is protected against any retaliatory measures.
- It is SoH's objective to conduct investigations in a fair and impartial manner
- If during the investigation the focal point learns of facts which s/he considers might relate to criminal law, s/he shall immediately notify the competent national authorities.
- SoH will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or other regulatory agencies.
- All victims and complainants will be protected from harm during and upon completion of the investigation.
- Every reasonable effort will be made to treat allegations in a confidential manner, while still allowing for a prompt and thorough investigation.
- Analysis of the occurrences will be conducted to determine what changes to policies and procedures are needed, if any, to prevent further occurrences.

➤ For detailed information see [Complaints & Whistleblowing Policy](#)

### 8. Associated Policies

This policy is complementary to the sets of standards of behavior that all SoH employees are required to adhere to as stipulated in the SoH Code of Conduct as well as in the anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy. These policies go hand in hand with the Complaints & Whistleblowing policy.

The policy on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and child protection shall be reviewed biannually.

	Compiled by	Reviewed & Approved
Name	M. Kipping / F. Stahl	R. Reubelt / K. Stieglitz
Date		
Signature		