

Dorcas Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct must be signed by all staff members, volunteers and interns before representing Stichting Dorcas Aid International.

Dorcas deems all forms of abuse – including harassment, violence and exploitation - towards vulnerable individuals to be unacceptable, and recognises our duty to protect those we work with and serve. Our **Code of Conduct** defines acceptable standards of behaviour and promotes good practice. We also set out what members of staff or volunteers must do if there is a breach of conduct.

Our **Child Safeguarding Policy** is incorporated in this document. We adhere strictly to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) – which applies to any person under the age of 18. The abuse or exploitation of children - in any form - is considered a direct violation of this treaty.

It is a Dorcas duty to protect children throughout the scope of our work, as stipulated in Article 19: **Parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.**

It is a requirement that all staff (paid employees, volunteers and interns), full or part time, agree to abide by the Child Safeguarding Policy – and specifically agree to work in accordance with this Code of Conduct which makes clear the responsibilities for safeguarding children and expected behaviour of staff. This is a mandatory requirement.

It is imperative that representatives of partner organisations and beneficiaries are informed of, and have access to, the Dorcas Code of Conduct – in their native language or one they understand. Any form of unacceptable behaviour which breaches the Code of Conduct must be reported. Dorcas induction procedures require new staff members, volunteers and interns to read this document in full, and sign to confirm they have understood the content and consent to conducting themselves accordingly.

Our HR department undertakes training sessions for staff to raise awareness, and discuss the meaning and purpose of the Code of Conduct. HR monitors this document in practice via a range of programme, country and sector evaluations.

¹ Source: Terre des Hommes – Lausanne (CH). Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Policy – Child Safeguarding Policy

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By signing the Code of Conduct I explicitly agree that:

I will always:

- **Respect the race, religion or nationality** of the recipients, without adverse distinction of any kind, when providing aid.
- Respect different social and cultural values and traditions. I will not offend local customs or practice.
- **Contribute to the greater independence of beneficiaries** and, under no circumstances, further the economic, political, or socio-cultural dependencies of the beneficiaries. I will attempt to build local capacities and contribute to strong, inclusive and dynamic community structures.
- **Hold myself accountable** both to those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources. I will attempt to collaborate with - and advocate for - social change, with civil society actors, as well as with governmental and intergovernmental organisations.
- **Accept my place in the Dorcas hierarchy** and accept the authority of employees placed above me.
- Maintain **appropriate confidentiality** concerning sensitive information about Dorcas, its partners and other Dorcas employees.
- Carry out my activities **in conformity with the objectives, policies and priorities** stipulated in the project plans and work towards the achievement of these goals. I will only carry out activities which conform to my role description. If the workload of a colleague is too much, I am willing to assist.
- Carry out my activities - as far as possible - in **compliance with the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#)** in the programme(s) or work assignment I am responsible for.
- **Discuss about conflicts with parties involved** if they arise. I will document the problems and agreements reached. I will not discuss relational conflicts behind the back of the other party, but try to resolve the problem together - if necessary involving a third party.
- Establish and maintain **open and transparent channels of communication** with partners and colleagues - and inform them, as fully as possible, about my activities when requested or relevant.
- Maintain an **environment which promotes the implementation of this Code of Conduct** and Child Safeguarding Policy and prevents sexual exploitation and abuse. The implementation of the Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Policy is the responsibility of all Managers at all levels - as well as the Dorcas Integrity Focal Points in the Dorcas Country Offices and in the International Office in the Netherlands. They have a special responsibility to ensure staff are informed about, receive, understand and sign the Code of Conduct. It is also their responsibility to ensure staff receive training on the Code of Conduct during annual inductions and/or during performance appraisals.
- **Raise any concerns and queries** concerning the Code of Conduct with my Manager/Supervisor or the Dorcas Integrity Focal Point (contact details at the bottom of this document).
- Immediately **report any suspicions or allegations** of behaviour which goes against the principles of the Code of Conduct to the Dorcas Integrity Focal Point, including any form of

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(sexual) exploitation and abuse – even if the information or allegation is vague. I will report regardless of whether the suspicions or allegations concern a colleague, partner organisation staff or third party. I will report via e-mail, telephone or in person.

- I understand that no actions will be taken against me when I – as required – report concerns in good faith and that disciplinary measures will be taken against staff:
 - for retaliating against a colleague who reports concerns or cooperates with an investigation
 - for maliciously and falsely reporting misconduct; and
 - for not cooperating with an investigation.¹
- **Treat children with respect and equally**, regardless of their age, sex, language, religion, opinion or nationality, ethnic or social origin, status, class, caste, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristics.
- **Help children to take part in decisions** which concern them according to their age and their level of maturity.
- **Maintain a culture of communication** and create trust with the children and their families, communities, other staff and volunteers and representatives of partner organisations so that concerns may be shared and discussed.
- Use non-violent, positive behaviour and positive disciplining methods when supervising children.
- Encourage children and communities to **speak openly about their interactions** with adults and with each other.
- **Inform** children and communities of their right and responsibility to report any worrying situations and how they can raise a concern.
- **Empower children** so that they are in a position to better protect themselves.
- Make sure that another adult is present or **try to be visible** when I am in contact with a child.
- Try to **preserve the child's autonomy** and make sure that I do not do things that a child can do for herself/himself.
- **Plan activities** and organise the workplace in such a way so as to minimise the risk of harm, taking into account the age and development of the child.
- Ensure that information concerning children, families and communities **remains confidential**.
- Behave in a way that sets a **good example** (avoid smoking, showing disrespect towards colleagues, etc.).
- **Obtain permission** from the child and their parents/caretakers before taking a photograph, recording or using the child's image, what they have said or their history. This includes explaining to children and their parents how the photos or messages will be used.
- Ensure that the child does **not pose in a degrading manner** or in a way that may be interpreted by others as having sexual connotations.
- Raise any **concerns and queries** concerning the Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Policy & Child Protection Policy with my manager/supervisor.
- Immediately **report any suspicions or allegations** of behaviour which goes against the principles of the Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct to the Child Safeguarding

¹ See for more information the Dorcas whistleblowing policy.

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Focal Point. This includes any form of child abuse – even if the information or allegation is vague.

I will never:

- Accept **payment, excessive gifts or other advantages** to or from representatives of counterparts, public officials or any other party that is meant to influence my activities. An excessive gift is considered anything over a value of USD 25.
- **Enter into obligations** (social, political or economic) that will jeopardise the independent execution of my assignments. Aid will not be used to enforce a particular political or religious standpoint.
- **Ask (sexual) favours or money** in return for aid provided. I understand that (sexual) exploitative behaviour and/or abuse constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including immediate termination of employment.
- Engage in any form of **sexual activity with children** (persons under the age of 18) regardless of the age of majority or local age of consent. Mistaken beliefs regarding the age of a child is not a defence.
- **Exchange** money, employment, goods, services or humanitarian aid **for sex**, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour.
- Engage in any form of **sexual activity** with beneficiaries, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian and development aid work.
- Be under the influence of **drugs or alcohol** while performing my duties.
- Engage in other types of sexually exploitive or sexually abusive behaviour.
- Close my eyes to, ignore or **fail to report** any concern, suspected violation or violation of the Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Policy to the Dorcas Integrity Focal Point.
- **Engage in any form of sexual relations** with anyone under 18 years old, regardless of the age set by the sexual majority, the law or local customs. Mistaking a child's age is not a defence.
- Exchange money, jobs, goods, services or humanitarian aid for sexual favours or subject the child to any other kind of humiliating, degrading or abusive behaviour.
- Touch children, use language or make suggestions in an inappropriate manner, to provoke, harass or degrade the child or show disrespect for cultural practices. This includes acting in a manner which is likely to have a negative impact on the child's confidence and feelings of self-worth.
- **Exploit a child** for labour (for example through domestic work).
- **Discriminate** against or treat children unequally or unfairly for example via favouritism or excluding others.
- Invite a child or their relatives to **my home** or develop a relationship with a child and/or their family which may be considered outside normal professional boundaries.
- **Work with or transport a child alone** without the prior authorisation of my manager, unless absolutely necessary and the child is in danger.
- Be under the influence of **drugs or alcohol** while working with children.
- Take photos or videos of beneficiaries for **use that is not strictly professional** unless the Country Delegation gives permission.

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- Watch, publish, produce, or share **pornography** showing children, and/or show such material to children.
- **Show the faces** of children who are exploited sexually, victims of trafficking, victims of abuse, in conflict with the law, linked to armed groups or who can easily be located, even if their identity has been modified.
- Take and publish photos when children are entirely **naked or dressed in a manner which is not adapted** to the situation in which they are represented.
- Represent children unnecessarily as **victims** (weak, powerless, unassisted, desperate, etc.).
- Publish a story or image which may **endanger** the child, their family or community.
- Use photos which have **not been checked and approved by Dorcas** about children on personal websites or social networks (such as Facebook).
- Maintain contact with children and their families via **social networks**, unless a specific Dorcas project requires me to do so and I have been given explicit permission.
- Close my eyes to, ignore or fail to report any **concern, suspected violation or violation** of the Code of Conduct.

I understand that, in the event of suspicions or allegations made against me of my violation of the Code of Conduct, Dorcas will take any action they deem necessary, which may include, but is not limited to:

- Providing **assistance for the victim** and taking immediate steps to protect and support her/him.
- Attempting to **establish the facts** in the most objective manner possible - the presumption of innocence prevails - while protecting the reputation and confidentiality of the people involved.
- Undertake **disciplinary actions**, which may result in my suspension or termination of contract.
- Initiating **judicial proceedings and/or reporting** to the competent authorities any violation of the Code of Conduct which may breach national legislation.
- Taking **appropriate measures** in order to ensure that such incidents do not occur again, for example, informing other organisations which may apply for professional references regarding the termination of contract due to violation of the Code of Conduct (within the legislative framework applicable to the protection of information).

The Dorcas Code of Conduct is in agreement with the Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes (1995) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) in Humanitarian Crises (2002), as well as the Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (SGB).²

² United Nations Secretariat, 9 October 2003. Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation, 2003/12 (ST/SGB/2003/13).

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Declaration of Commitment

I, the undersigned,

Declare I have received, read and understood the Dorcas Code of Conduct and I commit to know and agree to work in accordance with it.

I understand that any failure to uphold the Code of Conduct may result in the termination of my engagement with Dorcas Aid International, or further disciplinary or judicial proceedings as mentioned above.

Furthermore, I declare I have no criminal records regarding an offence towards anyone (which I have not previously declared) and nor do I know of any reason why anyone would deem me unsuitable to work with beneficiaries, including children. I have never been investigated, resigned, or lost any previous position due to a breach or suspected breach of a Code of Conduct, due to sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or any other form of harassment. Or, where necessary, I have fully informed Dorcas about such an instance. I understand that by not reporting this to Dorcas, prior to signing a contract, this may result in disciplinary or judicial proceedings as mentioned above. Dorcas reserves the right to inform other institutions - which may apply for professional references of the termination of contract for a serious violation of the Code of Conduct - within the legislative framework applicable to the protection of information.

I understand that this Code of Conduct forms an integral part of my employment contract or conditions of service with Stichting Dorcas Aid International.

Signatory's name:

Date:

Organisation:

Signatory's function:

Signature:

Dorcas Integrity Focal Point

[Country Office name]		International Office	
Name		Name	Paula IJben
E-mail		E-mail	ihrm@dorcas.org
Telephone Number		Telephone Number	