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Introduction

Hoffnungszeichen | Sign of Hope is a Christian motivated organisation for human rights, humanitarian aid and development cooperation. From its base in Constance, Germany, Sign of Hope is committed to helping those in distress and exploited people worldwide. Sign of Hope campaigns where human rights are being abused or threatened. Sign of Hope provides humanitarian assistance 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’. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all of SoH’s work is conducted in an honest and ethical manner. SoH takes a zero-tolerance approach to bribery and corruption and is committed to acting in an honest and ethical manner.

Scope

The Code of Conduct applies to all staff who work on behalf of SoH, regardless of location and type of contract. In this context, ‘staff’ includes employees both in Germany and abroad, members of executive board and supervisory board, project partners, committee members, consultants executing short- or long-term assignments, trainees and volunteers. The Code applies to all officials and staff, during their official working hours and for the whole duration of their official assignment irrespective of the location. By following the CoC, it is intended that signatories of the CoC will contribute to strengthening the professionalism and impact of the work of SoH and have a shared understanding of who we are and how we behave. The Code is designed for your guidance and protection and applies to all, regardless of their location.

Whilst recognising that local laws and cultures differ considerably from one country to another, SoH is a German based NGO, and therefore the Code of Conduct is based on European and International Legal standards. The Code of Conduct reflects the organisation’s fundamental values and principles (as outlined below). Further to the rules stipulated in this CoC all Sign of Hope CoC signatories are obliged to comply with the locally applicable law. Where the CoC establishes a stricter standard than local laws, the standards of the CoC will prevail.

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Status

The CoC is not only a moral code that serves as an illustrative guide for all signatories to make decisions in their professional lives, and at times in their private lives as long as it affects the reputation of Sign of Hope. It is also an integral part of their conditions of employment. The CoC is therefore an appendix to all individual employment, consultancy contracts or partnership agreements.

All signatories are responsible for encouraging, advocating and promoting the execution of the CoC. They also have a role in implementing, monitoring and enforcing its standards. Staff is also urged to encourage partners to adhere to these standards and to join SoH in upholding them. Managers at all levels have a special responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.


All signatories are obliged to report any concerns or suspicions to managers or to Head Office regarding criminal or ethical activities that are in conflict with this CoC and which may compromise SoH.

Core values and guiding principles

Everyone who works for SoH regardless of their faith position, shares the commitment to the values of humanity, charity and solidarity. All SoH staff members aspire to uphold these values and principles in their internal and external work.

Accountability

We are accountable for how we use the resources entrusted to us, ensuring that our decision-making is open and transparent. We measure our impact and are always striving to improve our performance.

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Cooperation & Partnership

SoH believes that every single person is created by God and loved by God. SoH sees itself as a bridge of love developing a relationship between those who give and those who receive. This relationship is built on empathy, on charity and on solidarity. SoH helps people in need, supports sustainable development and makes it possible for those who want to help, to do so. SoH is keenly aware of its responsibility towards those receiving aid, towards all those taking part in its projects, towards donors and deals with these groups with the highest levels of respect, esteem and tolerance. SoH will not tolerate the harassment of staff, contractors, partner organisations, beneficiaries or anybody else and all employees have a duty to report inappropriate behaviour.

SoH staff members are encouraged to treat others with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. In doing so, critical issues should be addressed in a clear and open manner. The readiness for mutual forgiveness forms a central basic value in human cooperation within SoH.

These values define the identity of the organisation and the way we work. They are essential for the strong relationships and partnerships we seek to build.


Commitment

As an official or staff of SoH, I commit myself to the following:

- 1. Use SoH information, funds and resources entrusted to me in a responsible and cost effective manner and to be accountable for all money and property, following the appropriate policy and procedural requirements.**

Resources and property include among others

- Money and other financial resources entrusted to SoH
- SoH assets like vehicles, computers, telephones
- Information that is confidential or restricted concerning SoH and individuals
- SoH information and the use of the SoH name, logo and brand.
- Hoffnungszeichen | Sign of Hope e.V. premises (including SoH housing)


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2. Facilitate the safety, health and welfare of all SoH employees, project partners, volunteers and contractors through my own behaviour.

- 2.1. I will adhere to all legal and organisational health and safety requirements in force at the location of my work.
- 2.2. I will comply with all security guidelines, including those of local offices, and be pro-active in informing management of any necessary changes to such guidelines.
- 2.3. I will behave in such a way as to avoid any unnecessary risk to the safety, health and welfare of myself and others, including partner organisations and beneficiaries.

3. Ensure that my personal and professional conduct is, and is seen to be, of the highest standards and in keeping with SoH's values and principles.

- 3.1. I will treat all people fairly and with respect and dignity and recognise the professional opinion of others. I will be accountable for my actions and will not use unequal power relationships for my own benefit.
- 3.2. I will work with others in an open and participative way, co-operating both within and across teams to support the delivery of organisational results.
- 3.3. When working in an international context or travelling internationally on behalf of SoH, I will observe local laws and be sensitive to local customs.
- 3.4. I will not work under the influence of alcohol as this might impair my judgement or have an adverse impact on the behaviour exhibited on SoH premises or when representing SoH in external functions.
- 3.5. I will not use, or be in possession of, illegal substances on SoH premises or when representing SoH at external functions.
- 3.6. I will seek to ensure that my personal conduct does not compromise SoH's values and does not impact or undermine my ability to fulfill the role for which I am employed.
- 3.7. I will not say or do anything that would damage the reputation of SoH or which may bring the charity into disrepute.

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3.8. In acknowledging that effective media coverage of SoH activities is pivotal to the success of our work, I will not give interviews or provide information to the media unless I have been specifically authorised to do so. I will not disclose information that is confidential or may be used to harm SoH or any individual. This does not apply to members of the board.

3.9. I will not accept gifts with a value of more than 40 EUR or any remuneration from governments, beneficiaries, partners, donors, suppliers and other persons, which have been offered to me as a result of my employment with SoH.

3.10. I will not abuse my position as a SoH employee by requesting any private service outside the legitimate scope of work or favour from others in return for any kind of assistance by SoH.

3.11. I will not enter into commercial sex transactions. For the purpose of this Code of Conduct a transaction is defined as any exchange of money, goods, services or favours with any other person.


4. Perform my official duties and conduct my private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in SoH.

4.1. My actions will be free of any consideration of personal gain, and I will resist any undue political pressure in decision-making.

4.2. I will declare to my line manager any financial, personal, family (or close intimate relationship) interest in matters of official business which may have impact on the work of SoH – e.g. contract for goods/services, employment or promotion within SoH, partner organisations, civil authorities, beneficiary groups.

4.3. I will comply with SoH policies on preventing corruption and fraud, preventing sexual abuse and exploitation and other relevant policies in the conduct of my work.


5. Avoid involvement in any criminal activities and refrain from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation or exploitation, both in and out of work.

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- 5.1. I will not engage in activities that contravene human rights or that compromise the work of SoH.
- 5.2. If I become aware of any form of illegal activity, I will make it known to the appropriate body.
- 5.3. I will not abuse or exploit children under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults in any way and will report any such behaviour of others to my line management.
- 5.4. I will not carry a weapon on SoH premises nor jeopardise the safety of myself or others by carrying a weapon when representing SoH in Germany or overseas.
- 5.5. I will never knowingly engage in any exploitive, abusive or corrupt relationships and will take appropriate action if I become aware of them.

6. Implementation

- 6.1. Copies of the Code of Conduct are provided to each staff member, members of the executive board and supervisory board and will be published on our website.
- 6.2. The Code is annexed to all contracts of employment and assignments.
- 6.3. The Code of Conduct is explained to all staff and each staff member is required to sign an acknowledgement of their intent to comply with the Code.
- 6.4. At national and regional level, the head of department, regional or country representative is responsible for ensuring the application of the provision of the Code.
- 6.5. There is a biannual review of compliance with the Code and evaluation of its impact. The Code is designed to act as a guideline, but does not cover every possible situation staff may face. Any situation in which staff members may be in doubt about issues covered under the Code is to be discussed with the head of department, regional or country representative and needs to be brought to the notice of the board at the HQ.

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Violation of the provisions of the CoC will be reported to the next line manager – should the line management itself be concerned or complicit – to the Ombudsperson (ombudsperson@sign-of-hope.org).

For more information about complaints mechanism and investigation procedures, please have a look at the complaints & whistleblowing policy:

<https://www.hoffnungszeichen.de/en/about-us/transparency/responsible-action>

7. Explicit declaration

I have read carefully and understand the SoH Code of Conduct and hereby agree to abide by its requirements and commit to upholding the standards of conduct required to support SoH’s values and principles.

Name

Date, Signature

Related SoH Policies

- Policy on Anti-Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Child Protection
- Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy
- Complaints & Whistleblowing Policy

Checked & Approved		
Name	K. Stieglitz (Chairperson)	M. Schütze (Vice Chairperson)
Date		
Signature		