



Guiding Principles

Hoffnungszeichen | Sign of Hope e.V.

Mission Statement

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 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'.

Sign of Hope sees itself as a **bridge of love** developing a relationship between those who give and those who receive, who take part. This relationship is built on empathy, on charity and on solidarity. Sign of Hope helps people in need, supports sustainable development and makes it possible for those who want to help, to do so.

Core values and message

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.'

Sign of Hope believes that every single person is created by God and loved by God. Those who are beneficiaries of aid should, as a result, be able to support **human dignity**. Sign of Hope makes it possible for the giver to feel that they are helping in a meaningful way. Sign of Hope 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. Sign of Hope strives to maintain a relationship of complete trust with donors, with beneficiaries and with those involved in projects. Sign of Hope directs its services on all levels towards the needs of its target groups and those groups who ask for help, paying close attention to their full involvement. The open and accessible character of the organisation is a great strength which Sign of Hope wants to foster and maintain in the future.

The organisation is committed to neutrality and impartiality in its work. Sign of Hope is not affiliated with any political party. Because the concept of '**Working at the grass-roots for the benefit of the individual**' is a central tenet of the organisation's endeavours, Sign of Hope exercises the greatest possible reserve in party politics.

In general, the substantive activities of Sign of Hope are aimed at making a contribution to achieving the United Nations' **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs).

Sign of Hope promotes the three closely related topics of peace, justice and the integrity of creation. In this context, the organisation is particularly committed to ensuring that the societies of the global North recognize their worldwide social responsibility towards the global

South and act in awareness of this responsibility. Sign of Hope focuses on those people in the global South whose human rights are being violated, especially because of exploitation by the global North. In this way, Sign of Hope wants to contribute to a just global society on the basis of a Christian view of human life. In the organisation's target countries, Sign of Hope counteracts structures that hinder development.

The focus of all Sign of Hope's work is the individual whose worth as God's creation is of central significance for the organisation's activities. Sign of Hope employees seek personal encounters with people who are at the margins of global society, in order to come into direct contact with their life situations and problems. The conduct of Sign of Hope staff is characterized by respect, due attention to dignity, solidarity and genuine love in all dealings with individual beneficiaries and project participants. **'Satisfying the basic human needs for food, drink, safety and, in particular, good health'** is a theme which underlies the scope of the organisation's work.

Sign of Hope is at its most active in Africa, focused on **Central Eastern Africa** covering **Uganda, Northern Kenya and Ethiopia** in particular. Furthermore, Sign of Hope is active in selected countries in West and South Asia.

Where it is necessary and reasonable to do so, Sign of Hope strives to carry out own-implemented programs and projects in these regions. By working in this way at local level with its own staff, the project design can be made most effective and resources used most efficiently. In line with the **Do No Harm** approach, the aim is to avoid unintended negative effects of planned or implemented measures on people and the environment.

In order to achieve its goals, Sign of Hope co-operates closely with non-governmental organisations abroad and the contact persons in charge at political, diplomatic and media level. Hoffnungszeichen meets all partners on equal terms, guided by the basic principles of mutual respect, transparency and responsibility. Hoffnungszeichen has developed a comprehensive project partnership concept for cooperation with project partners.

Human rights work

In the field of human rights, Sign of Hope assists people across the globe when their human rights are violated or threatened. Sign of Hope wants to contribute to a **just global society** in which every person can exercise his or her civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Particular attention is given to the human right to freedom of religion. Sign of Hope advocates for religious tolerance and for the rights of persecuted religious minorities. In addition, Hoffnungszeichen seeks cooperation with people whose human rights are violated due to exploitation by the global North. Hoffnungszeichen documents cases of exploitation, researches their background and offers the exploited an argumentative support for the articulation of their own interests on the way to more global social justice. Sign of Hope - which is part of the societies of the global North - reminds these societies of their global social responsibility.

Researchers identify and assemble information relevant to human rights issues. A great deal of emphasis is given to information gathered locally at first hand during the course of human rights investigative visits. By **processing the information**, Sign of Hope can then present it in scientific papers, reports or briefings for the organisation's magazine. In terms of **influence**, Sign of Hope undertakes activities which will lead to an improvement in the human rights situation in a specific country and/or which will assist the victims of human rights abuse. This is where Sign of Hope either acts publicly by holding protests and prayers or works behind the scenes to the political event itself, using diplomatic contacts for the benefit of those in distress. Over and above this Sign of Hope runs **human rights projects** in selected countries.

Humanitarian aid

In the field of **humanitarian aid**, which consists of disaster relief and emergency aid, Sign of Hope supports those in urgent need across the world. In the first instance disaster relief can be purely to help human beings to survive. When providing rapid **disaster relief** Sign of Hope can ensure humans' survival in suddenly occurring catastrophes quickly and without red tape. In cases of short and medium-term **emergency aid**, Sign of Hope responds to situations where a swift hand-over of items for basic survival is of the utmost importance. This type of aid often caters for groups who have been affected by prolonged crises, such as war, other forms of conflict, and even devastating environmental pollution and climate change.

In addition to providing the affected population with **basic supplies** of drinking water and food, shelter and health facilities, humanitarian aid also includes measures to facilitate the return to a normal livelihood. These include reconstruction and disaster preparedness activities that can be followed by long-term development cooperation projects in the sense of linking relief, rehabilitation and development (**LRRD approach**).

Sign of Hope's humanitarian aid activities are guided by the **humanitarian principles** of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence and are based on the **international minimum standards** for improving humanitarian aid. These include in particular the "Basic Principles of Humanitarian Aid", as set out by the Coordinating Committee on Humanitarian Aid of the German Federal Government, as well as the internationally recognised references of the "SPHERE Standard" and the "Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability".

Development Cooperation

In the field of development cooperation, Signs of Hope is focused on the establishment of long-term, positive structures for the sustained improvement of the living conditions of the people in the project regions. This is done primarily in the areas of food security, health, water and hygiene, education and poverty reduction. Special attention is given to the cross-cutting issues of social justice, gender equality or the promotion of resilience.

Through local capacity building on the one hand and the active participation of local people in the definition and implementation of the project objectives on the other hand, Sign of Hope aims to promote **ownership and participation** of project partners and participants. In addition to this approach of helping people to help themselves, Sign of Hope also sees the chance to learn from the partners. By mutual support in building up knowledge and skills and by reflecting on measures that have been carried out, a contribution is made to the common goal of a **sustainable, positive change in global living conditions**. To this end, like the project partners on the ground, Sign of Hope strives to involve local institutions and to hand over the activities that have been started to state or civil society structures for continuation. In general, the projects are designed to contribute to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**). The OECD standards of **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact** and **sustainability** are also applied in the implementation of the project contents.

Meaningful help and giving

People who support Sign of Hope can be sure of giving help which is meaningful.

Sign of Hope reports publicly on those in need and makes information available on the humanitarian and human rights situation in a number of countries. Through **donations**, through **prayer** or through **protest campaigns** Sign of Hope gives anyone who is interested the opportunity to get involved by giving, by helping to fight against suffering, poverty and abuse of human rights. These activities are **signs of hope and charity**. Through their personal contact Sign of Hope staff convey these feelings to the beneficiaries of the aid and to project participants. The gratitude shown to Sign of Hope staff in those countries where projects are being run is passed on to helpers and donors. This is how Sign of Hope brings about the development of relationships between people. Sign of Hope spends donations only with the greatest of care and with full attention to the needs of beneficiaries. It is absolutely **essential that donors have full confidence** in us. We deploy the funds entrusted to us with professionalism, with care, with a sense of responsibility and to the best effect.

Donations are being documented to the donor, so that the tax authorities recognize the donation as serving non-profit or charitable purposes.

Through collaborative work with local partners and through the work of our staff who are members of the indigenous population, we take into consideration local and cultural conditions in the planning and implementation of projects. Furthermore, we support target groups in the implementation of jointly planned activities and, in doing this, to strengthen the skills and sense of personal responsibility of the people we are working with. The 'help to self-help' approach plays a primary role in our projects.

Employees

Sign of Hope is careful to establish **good working conditions** for all members of staff, whether male or female, whether salaried employees or volunteers. Sign of Hope fosters a good working atmosphere of mutual esteem, respect and tolerance and pays attention to an atmosphere of collegiality regardless of hierarchy and levels of responsibility.

On the basis of the Christian view of human life and in awareness of the importance of biblical statements for social inclusion, employees of Sign of Hope are called upon to meet their fellow human beings with **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control** (Galatians 5:22 f). Sign of Hope employees do for others what they want them to do for them (Matthew 7:12). Critical issues should be addressed in a clear, open and affectionate manner and in humble awareness of one's own weaknesses (Matthew 7:4). The willingness to forgive one another (Colossians 3:13) is a central basic value in human interaction at Sign of Hope.

Sign of Hope encourages and supports its staff to broaden and deepen their knowledge in order continuously to improve the level of service offered by the organisation.

The salary scheme of Sign of Hope is transparent for employees and the public.

Financial resources

Sign of Hope is a not-for-profit organisation and uses its funds to achieve its organisational objectives. Sign of Hope finances its operational activity by **donations** and by **contributions from donor institutions**.

In order to protect the independence of Sign of Hope, public contributions of this type should not exceed 50 per cent of the total monetary income. Sign of Hope's conduct towards its donors is transparent, respectful and legally compliant. It follows the "Donors' charter", the German Fundraising Association's "Sound, ethical fund-raising practice: 19 basic rules" and the basic principles of the German Donation Council.

Financial reporting is carried out according to current accounting standards for not-for-profit organisations and is distinguished by its high level of **transparency**. In order to ensure its long-term future, Sign of Hope accumulates financial reserves in an appropriate fashion vis-a-vis the organisation's donor income and in agreement with financial authorities. Sign of Hope is a member of the German Donation Council and is required to adhere to the basic principles of that organisation by means of a declaration of commitment. An independent certified public accountant examines Sign of Hope's annual financial statements and checks that the basic principles referred to above are being maintained.

Organisation and management

The policy of the association is determined by its **members** and they, in turn, are responsible for the updating of the constitution. The voluntary **supervisory board** is responsible for strategic leadership and has oversight of the operational activities of the **executive board**. The full-time executive board is responsible for the operational leadership of Sign of Hope. It deploys the means at its disposal efficiently and effectively. Important pre-conditions for a person taking up a role in the organs of the association are professional competence, availability and motivation based on the Christian faith. The management of Sign of Hope operates in line with current basic principles for the management of not-for-profit organisations. The Freiburg Management Model for non-profit organisations, which basically demands **participative and cooperative management behaviour**, provides a framework for orientation in this context.

Downstream of the guiding principles as the central management instrument are the performance concepts of the respective organisational units, which in turn form the basis for the individual goals of an employee within the framework of the concept of "**management by objectives and by exemption**". In addition, a series of internal guidelines and rules of conduct form a binding framework for employees' activities.

An **internal control system** is to ensure the correctness and completeness of Sign of Hope's processes. In addition, the internal control system is intended to prevent embezzlement, corruption and exceeding of authority. Sign of Hope's internal control system consists of the dual control principle, the principle of separation of functions, the transparency principle and the principle of minimum information.

Sign of Hope operates country/regional offices in selected countries of operation.

The guiding principles were adopted by the General Assembly on 13 March 2009 and revised on 15 March 2013, 10 March 2017 and 13 March 2020.