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# CODE OF CONDUCT

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## 1. Introduction

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This Code of Conduct defines basic ethical principles, attitudes and behaviour which are binding for all employees of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, hereinafter named HELVETAS. It is based on the Mission Statement, the Human Resource policy and our Personnel Regulations. It thereby reflects foundational values and principles of our organisation, to be applied irrespective of cultural contexts. The Code of Conduct expresses the commitment of each collaborator to adhere to and to promote high ethical standards in our work and as part of our working culture. It constitutes a compulsory annex to the employment contract.

The individual and collective conduct of employees is of specific relevance to HELVETAS. First, the intercultural context in which collaborators of HELVETAS operate makes their conduct particularly exposed and sensitive. Unethical conduct of a collaborator can, beyond its direct consequences, have far reaching negative impacts on the effectiveness of our work and on our reputation. Second, as a development organisation receiving donations from thousands of individual and institutional donors, our organisation and its employees are accountable to these donors and subject to a high degree of scrutiny by the public and the media.

This Code of Conduct is binding for all employees worldwide in any contractual relationship with HELVETAS (including interns & volunteers, Board of Directors and its Advisory Panel as well as consultants) at all times during their assignment with HELVETAS. It is expected that principles of this Code of Conduct are also respected outside the workplace and working time. Furthermore, all partners HELVETAS collaborates with must commit to follow the key principles of this Code of Conduct.

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## 2. Loyalty, confidentiality and civic duties

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My actions are consistent with the goals, the values and principles of HELVETAS as expressed in its mission statement and strategy; I have received a copy of both documents and I am aware of their content.

Particularly, I commit to

- contributing positively to the implementation of the policies and strategies of HELVETAS;
- reflecting regularly upon my actions and behaviour, those of my colleagues and those of my environment;
- handling all information received through my employment with the necessary discretion; never using it to the detriment of HELVETAS including after termination of my contract;
- abiding by the national laws, as a citizen or resident of a specific country or as a short-term visitor.

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### **3. Commitment and respect towards organizational culture and integrity**

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I am aware of my contractual obligations with HELVETAS and strive to fulfil them to the best of my ability, knowledge and capacity.

In particular, I commit to

- contributing actively with my work and through my behaviour to the strengthening and to the public trust of our organisation;
- contributing to our objectives not only as an individual professional, but as a member of the team(s) to which I belong;
- using my competences and capacities to support my colleagues;
- making use of the means and assets of HELVETAS and its partners effectively and efficiently, according to legal stipulations, internal regulations, contractual agreements and in conformity with project goals;
- treating the material entrusted to me with diligence and due care, using it and the official logo only for professional purposes;
- actively supporting knowledge sharing within our organisation and with our partners.

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### **4. Culturally sensitive behaviour**

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I am aware that even as a private person I am subject to public interest and that I have to consider this in my behaviour and in my statements.

In particular, I commit to

- respecting local norms and conventions in contacts with authorities, partners and local people as long as they don't contravene HELVETAS policy;
- taking into account in my appearance, my manner of dress, my behaviour and my style of communication the customs and culture of the country and the function that I perform;
- avoiding indecent or offensive behaviour, insulting or accusing statements, or spreading rumours;
- avoiding giving information to the media, policy makers and donors or the public, without an explicit assignment to do so.

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### **5. Highest standards in inter-personal relations and professional conduct**

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My relations with all persons irrespective of their sex, age, origin, cultural background, religion, social position, physical ability or sexual orientation are characterized by respect, fairness and equity. I am aware that as an employee of HELVETAS I have a privileged and often powerful status vis-à-vis partners and beneficiaries.

In particular, I commit to

- behave and represent the organization at all times in such a way that the reputation of HELVETAS is not damaged;
- never request any service or favour from primary stakeholders, beneficiaries or other persons of concern in return for support or protection. I will never engage in any exploitative relationships – sexual, emotional, financial or employment-related – with primary stakeholders, beneficiaries or other persons of concern;
- using my competences in the interest of the people for and with whom we work;
- rejecting any form of disrespectful social interaction and abstaining from anything that could be interpreted as degrading or putting others down;
- refraining from abusing my hierarchical, material, or social position in any way;

- protect the rights and integrity of children and youth and refrain from all unacceptable behaviour towards them;
- refraining from actions which may place me and/or others in a dangerous situation, as well as from those which may endanger our activities as a whole;
- respecting the physical and mental health of my colleagues;
- respecting the private sphere of my colleagues;
- providing explicit reference to the sources of my information/experiences, in any public communication;
- if in a decision-making position, applying decisions in a responsible, transparent, and unprejudiced manner that is not self-seeking, but in keeping with the mission of HELVETAS.

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## 6. Mobbing and Sexual Harassment

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I abstain from mobbing<sup>1</sup>, sexual or sexist harassment<sup>2</sup> of colleagues, partners or beneficiaries.

In particular, I commit to

- refraining from any form of sexual or other type of exploitation, and striving to counter such behaviour in a decisive manner, in particular in situations involving children, young or disabled people;
- refraining from degrading or exploitative behaviour such as exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex or sexual favours, or other forms of humiliation;
- countering observed and confirmed mobbing, sexual or sexist harassment of colleagues by other employees, taking appropriate action and/or informing my supervisors immediately on becoming aware of it;
- informing a person designated by the organisation for this purpose should I feel uncomfortable to disclose suffered or observed infringements to my supervisor.

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## 7. Conflicts of interest

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I am aware that professional interests can conflict with personal interests.

In particular, I commit to

- striving to make my own interests transparent and to avoid any behaviour which could be perceived as biased towards my own interests;
- not using my position to obtain personal benefit or to provide advantage to third parties;
- in the case of professional interests conflicting, or being potentially perceived to conflict, with personal interests, to step back and to pass the decision to the next higher level in the organisation: this applies in particular to relationships with relatives and friends and refers to matters such as recruitment, consultancy and procurement of contracts, purchase and lease agreements (also for personal purposes), or others;
- as a full time employee, not engaging in paid professional activity outside my contract with HELVETAS, unless it has been specifically permitted.

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<sup>1</sup> **Mobbing** means to pick on, pester or exclude a person or a group systematically at work in verbal or non-verbal attacks which affect the physical or mental health as well as the self-esteem of the person(s) concerned

<sup>2</sup> **Sexual or sexist harassment** is an action with sexual reference or undertones unwelcome to the person addressed. Sexual or sexist harassment can be expressed in the following ways: suggestive remarks; remarks about physical advantages or weaknesses or about sexual orientation; sexist talk and jokes in any form of verbal, written or non-verbal communication; sharing suggestive material over email or social media; ambiguous invitations; making bodily advances; making advances together with promises or threats of advantages or disadvantages at work.

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## 8. Fraud and Corruption

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I am honest in all my professional activities. I avoid and counter any kind of corruption or fraud. I abstain from abusing for personal gains or for third parties financial, material and intellectual assets to which I have access as an employee of HELVETAS.

In particular, I commit to

- not compromising my integrity, freedom of action and my impartial judgement through accepting or providing gifts or other advantages (like money, loans, invitations, rewards, reduced prices or fares etc.) from or to collaborators, officials, partner organisations, beneficiaries;
- bringing to the attention of my supervisor if I am approached with demands or promises by collaborators, partners organization, consultants or officials,
- informing my supervisor in case of acceptance of a present, and using it for business or humanitarian purposes or sharing it with other employees;
- If demands, gifts or advantages have to be declined, informing the person making the advances of the standards and practices applied in HELVETAS;

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## 9. Final remarks

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The breach of this Code of Conduct, in its letter or its spirit, leads to disciplinary actions as specified in the HELVETAS *Guidelines on Dealing with Mobbing, Sexual Harassment, Child Abuse & Abuse of Authority*, and HELVETAS *Guidelines on Dealing with Corruption, Fraud and Conflict of Interest*, including warnings, dismissal with contractual notice and in severe cases dismissal without notice and withholding of terminal benefits. Additionally, HELVETAS may take further legal action according to the respective national law.

HELVETAS endeavors to ensure that that employees can report suspicions without fear of reprisal and that individuals who express a suspicion are adequately protected (cf. Whistleblower Policy).

The responsibility to follow this Code of Conduct rests with each employee. All supervisors are responsible for promoting and enforcing it.

The Code of Conduct is issued in German, French, English and Spanish. It is also made available in our partner country programs, in the national language. In case of any doubts, the English version prevails.

I hereby declare to acknowledge and abide to the:

- HELVETAS *Regulations on Child Protection*
- HELVETAS *Regulations on Mobbing, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority*
- HELVETAS *Regulations on Corruption, Fraud and Conflicts of Interest.*

Irrespective of employee signature, the Code of Conduct is binding.

Read and agreed:

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Name of the Employee

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Place and date

.....  
Signature

Owner (Function & Name):	Kathrin Indermaur, Co-Head Personnel Services
Version (First/Latest):	17.10.2018/21.01.2019
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