



Institutional Policy

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## Protection of beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse

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Federal Executive Division  
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**Institutional Policy**

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## **Protection of beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse**

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# 1.

## Objectives of the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policy

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Through this policy, Handicap International expresses its determination to combat the sexual exploitation and abuse of aid beneficiaries by humanitarian workers. It is therefore implementing a series of measures intended to reduce risks on its programmes, whatever the context.

Handicap International also encourages its staff to think about their actions and the potential consequences of these actions.

# 2.

## Definitions

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Handicap International has based the following definitions on those of the United Nations:

### Sexual abuse:

- Actual or threatened **physical intrusion**,
- of a sexual nature,
- whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

This means that the use of actual force is not necessary to constitute sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can also occur in situations of inequality or under coercive conditions.

### Sexual exploitation:

- 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.

This means that any individual acting as an intermediary in the organisation of abuse is equally guilty of exploitation.

# 3.

## Principles

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### 3.1

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse perpetrated against beneficiaries constitute serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary action.

### 3.2

Sexual activity with persons under the age of 18 is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally<sup>1</sup>. Mistaken belief in the age of a person is not considered a defence.

### 3.3

Exchange of money, employment, goods, services or any type of assistance for sexual favours is prohibited.

### 3.4

Sexual relationships between Handicap International staff and aid beneficiaries are strongly discouraged, as they are based on an inherently unequal power relationship and undermine the credibility and integrity of Handicap International's work.

### 3.5

Where a Handicap International staff member develops concerns or suspicions with regard to possible sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by a fellow worker, whether the individual works for Handicap International or for another aid organisation, he or she must report such concerns through the line-management channels, or should this be the case, to the programme's PSEA focal point.

In concrete terms, this means reporting concerns or suspicions, including rumours, in good faith, without attempting to investigate the matter personally in order to obtain proof or write a report. Reprisals against any staff member having reported sexual exploitation or abuse is prohibited.

### 3.6

Handicap International undertakes to ensure that any allegations remain confidential and that an impartial internal investigation is carried out that will not, however, replace investigations which may be conducted by the competent local authorities. If reported information concerns a partner of Handicap International or any other aid organisation, the Field Programme Director/ Head of Mission will be required to take the appropriate measures.



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1. Except in the case of legally recognised marriage.

### 3.7

All Handicap International staff members, and managers in particular, whatever their level, are expected to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

Preventing a culture of complacency and impunity demands continuous effort. Managers, amongst others, must be familiar with and enforce this policy. They must be proactive in overseeing their teams.

Staff responsible for project implementation, follow-up and evaluation and for fund-raising must be particularly mindful of risks of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, in accordance with activities and context. Risk reduction strategy must be a matter of constant concern.

### 3.8

Handicap International undertakes to provide assistance to any individual who files a complaint with the organisation, and to ensure specific assistance and support for the victims of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse perpetrated by one of its staff members.

Victims will be informed that perpetrators of acts of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse hold full responsibility for their actions, irrespective of the nature of the assistance provided by Handicap International.

## 4.

### Disciplinary measures

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Any staff member failing to comply with the principles or failing to meet the requirements set forth in this protection policy may face disciplinary action.

## 5.

### Scope of the policy

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The principles set forth in this policy apply:

- To all Handicap International staff, whether expatriates or national, throughout the federal network.
- At all times, i.e. during and outside of office hours and during periods of leave.
- To all people or entities who have signed a contract with Handicap International: consultants, day labourers, suppliers, partner organisations, etc.



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- **IP 05:** Tackling the risk: Safety and Security Policy (2012)



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## **Protection of beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse**

This paper presents the policy and measures adopted by Handicap International to prevent and combat the sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiary populations by humanitarian workers.

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