

HUNGARIAN INTERCHURCH AID

CODE OF CONDUCT for the prevention of corruption, fraud, exploitation and abuse

Revised and updated in January 2022

Current Code of Conduct lays down basics of ethical behaviour to be followed by HIA's humanitarian and social workers when working with aid beneficiaries in Hungary or abroad. Hungarian Interchurch Aid is a signatory to the **Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief** and as a member of **ACT Alliance**, HIA also adheres to *ACT Alliance's Code of Conduct Policy for the prevention of misconduct, including corruption, fraud, exploitation and abuse, including sexual; and to ensure child safeguarding, ACT Alliance Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, ACT Child Safeguarding Policy and Policy Guidance Document and the ACT Alliance Guidelines for Complaints Handling and Investigations.*

In addition to current code of conduct, **national social work** of Hungarian Interchurch Aid is also governed by the Ethical Code of Social Work issued by the Ethical College of the Union of the Social Professional Organizations (https://www.bmszki.hu/sites/default/files/fajlok/node-341/etikai_kodex_2016_0.pdf).

Child safeguarding is a priority area for HIA therefore a separate and more detailed policy has been elaborated to promote their protection (**HIA's Child Safeguarding Policy**).

I. Scope and purpose

The main purpose of this Code of Conduct is to promote greater accountability and outline the key responsibilities of staff. It seeks to protect all staff as well as every community member whom Hungarian Interchurch Aid seeks to assist. All staff must be mindful that each action in the respective context can have repercussions for the fate of many.

The following standards apply to all staff, including but not limited to all permanent and temporary staff, consultants, observers, volunteers, and any other individuals working for or representing Hungarian Interchurch Aid.

Headquarters

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II. Code of Conduct

Basic standards in aid work

1. Aid workers shall respect values, will, dignity, uniqueness and rights of each individual.
2. Aid workers shall perform their duties regardless of gender, age, social and ethnic status, religious and ideological conviction, sexual orientation, disability and health state and excluding any kind of negative discrimination.
3. Aid workers are entitled and obliged to call the attention of decision makers and the public to situations where privation and suffering are caused, and their mitigation is hindered by society or certain institutions. Aid workers are entitled to turn to professional organizations in these issues.
4. Aid workers are obliged to report on their activities to their professional principals and are responsible for performing their tasks in accordance with professional standards.
5. Aid workers accept that competency of each profession is finite.
6. Interests of the client require the cooperation of those who share professional responsibility connected with him/her.
7. Aid workers are obliged to ensure privacy and responsible information-handling.
8. Privacy applies to all verbal, written, audio- and videotaped information, potential conclusions based on these, case studies, case presentations and publications.
9. The agency treats disaster victims not as subjects of pity but as fellow-beings with human dignity.
10. During their work aid workers inform beneficiaries on the available alternatives. They think over the process and forms of cooperation and the expected impacts together with the beneficiary in order he/she could make an independent decision.
11. Even in case of working with beneficiaries with impaired decision-making ability, aid workers will try to elaborate rules of cooperation together with them. During the work with individuals with impaired decision-making ability, aid workers will represent the beneficiary's interests even if he/she is not requesting it.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

12. Aid workers should not take an unfair advantage of the beneficiary's dependency on others. Providing assistance is the crucial element of their work and any control is exercised only for the sake of cooperation.

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13. Aid workers shall never commit any act or form of harassment as it results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to individuals, especially women and children.
14. HIA does not tolerate any form of workplace violence such as harassment (including sexual, gender and racial harassment), bullying and discrimination, that is, any unwelcome comment or behaviour that is offensive, demeaning, humiliating, derogatory, or any other inappropriate behaviour that fails to respect the dignity of an individual.
15. Aid workers shall understand that sexual exploitation and abuse by staff involved in development and humanitarian and in national social work constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
16. Aid workers shall never engage in any sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Sexual activity with children is prohibited within HIA. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
17. Aid workers shall not accept, solicit or engage in the "buying" of or profiting from sexual services. This is applicable to HIA staff both within and outside of working hours.
18. Aid workers shall never exploit the vulnerability of any target group in the context of development and humanitarian work, especially women and children, or allow any person/s to be put into compromising situations.
19. Aid workers shall know that the exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
20. Aid workers shall never abuse a position to withhold development or humanitarian assistance, or give preferential treatment; in order to solicit sexual favours, gifts, payments of any kind, or advantage.
21. Given the increased vulnerability of populations in crisis situations, humanitarian staff are prohibited from engaging in sexual relationships with members of crisis-affected populations since such relationships are based on inherently unequal power dynamics and undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.

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22. When working with children, avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice and never act in ways that may place a child at risk of abuse.

Fraud, corruption and unethical business practices

Aid workers must never

- 23. Steal, misuse or misappropriate funds, property or any other income.
- 24. Engage in abusive transactions, forging of documents, money laundering, taking of commissions or influencing tender process for benefit or illegal activities.
- 25. Take part in activities that generate personal, organizational or collective profit such as buying or selling when such activities may affect, or appear to affect, Hungarian Interchurch Aid's credibility or integrity.
- 26. Share the profits such as kickbacks, cuts or discounts for improper personal or organizational benefits.
- 27. Accept any gifts or other favours that may influence the performance of staff functions or duties. Gifts are defined as, but not limited to: services, travel, entertainment, material goods, among others. In order to respect national and local traditions and conventional hospitality, minor tokens and gifts can be accepted.
- 28. Use illegal labour, child labour or forced labour.
- 29. Use or distribute known unsafe products or supplies in any development or humanitarian setting.

III. Disciplinary measures

HIA's employees shall be aware that non-compliance with current rules lead to disciplinary measures. The management shall take any disciplinary measures necessary against staff members if they are found to have breached current Code of Conduct as a result of the investigation conducted in the frame of ***HIA's complaints mechanism***. When a staff member is accused of a breach of the Code of Conduct, his/her immediate superior and the human resource department shall manage the situation in a manner which balances protection for the potential victim(s) of abuse, with procedural fairness for the employee. Confidentiality is of utmost importance during the course of an investigation, and the employee involved should be kept informed of the process at all times. The agency will need to cooperate with relevant authorities when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

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The management should immediately decide on disciplinary action if the complaint was substantiated. Such action can range from verbal and written warnings to dismissal and referral to national authorities for prosecution. Serious disciplinary measures must be enforced if an allegation of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse has been substantiated.

Budapest, January 2022

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