



# PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

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## 1. VENTO DI TERRA

Vento di terra is a non-discriminating non-governmental organization that works in the border territories defending human rights.

Together with interventions aimed at helping children in distress, abandoned or victims of abuses, VdT supports programs of emergency relief and sustainable development in the field of education, protection, livelihood, women empowerment, vocational training, strengthening of local communities, rehabilitation of schools and wash.

Our mission is to defend unconditionally the rights of the weakest and the balance of our planet. VDT combines energies to spread a culture of peace, defend human rights and the environment, and giving citizenship to childhood, when it has been violated, especially where violence, weapons and exploitation prevail. We are committed to the idea of community development related to the concept of social, economic and cultural growth, and our projects always come from a proposal by the local community.

## 2. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

**Beneficiaries:** The individuals, groups, or organizations that directly or indirectly benefit from an intervention, project, or program.

**Child or children:** Anyone under 18 years of age.

**Survivor:** Refers to person who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused.

**Sexual Abuse:** The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. This would include forced marriage and sexual slavery and also includes sexual activity with a child (any person under the age of 18).

**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. Oxfam recognizes that the terms sexual abuse and exploitation represent a wide spectrum of behaviors and is not limited to the act of sexual intercourse.

**Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favor, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behavior of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another. Such conduct will be also be considered sexual harassment when it interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. While typically involving a pattern of behavior, it can take the form of a single incident. Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the opposite or same sex. Both males and females can be either the victims or the offenders.

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

VdT: Vento di Terra

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies globally to all Vento di Terra Employees and Related Personnel both during and outside normal working hours. All representatives of Vento di Terra, including local partners, on project visits are required to sign the PSEA to make sure they will adopt a proper and fair behaviour with the beneficiaries of the projects and, more generally, comply with the rules of that document.

Compliance with the PSEA guidelines is binding for the partners. Not acting in accordance with the PSEA of VdT is a good reason for automatic rescission of the MOU / partnership agreement / contract.

## 4. PURPOSE OF PSEA

### 4.1 Guiding principles

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by Vdt staff and related personnel constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary actions and/or termination of employment contract within the applicable and current regulations.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense and in no way shall ignorance of the age of the person be accepted as a justification. A specific Children Protection Policy further set the principles and the operationalizing procedures and guidelines for guaranteeing children safeguarding in all domains of Vdt action.
- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex or sexual favors and degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes:
  - Sexual relationships between Vdt staff and beneficiaries and members of the community are forbidden since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of the Humanitarian aid work.
  - Where Vdt member and related personnel develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or by a fellow worker, whether the individual works for Vdt or for other organization, partners, suppliers or other related stakeholders, he or she must report such concerns through the means, tools and procedures provided by the PSEA.
  - All Vdt staff members, whatever their levels, are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of the Code of conduct and Ethical Code.

## 5. RULES OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct is an agreement signed by VdT and its staff, its partners and visitors as well as all people getting in contact with the children involved in the projects.

The Code describes a behavior model that VdT finds appropriate to build a relationship between adults and children.

### 5.1 Responsible use of power and position

- Each position should be used only for the benefit of the organization when dealing with government officials, donors, sponsors, suppliers and other people affiliated to VdT. Conflict of interest arising from personal interests and/or obligations will be avoided.
- As a person in authority, never use the position for your own benefit or for the benefit of your own family or friends.
- Never enter into any sort of business relationship on behalf of Vento di Terra with family members, friends or other personal contacts for the supply of any goods or services to VdT.
- The employment of relatives, spouses and partners of existing employees and board members is strongly discouraged.
- Never ask for or invite any personal payment, service or favor from others, especially participants in VdT services, in return for our help, support, goods or services of any kind. Never accept bribes or significant gifts (except small tokens of appreciation) from governments, participants in VdT services, donors, suppliers or others which have been offered as a result of my employment.

- When involved in local political, religious, or community activities, ensure that VdT' mission and objectives are not compromised, and that VdT are not brought into disrepute.
- Never work under the influence of intoxicating substances such as alcohol or any other substances that significantly impair the ability to work.
- Ensure good and constructive working relationships with all co-workers. Never allow any personal relationships with the co-workers to have a negative impact on the work, other co-workers or the working environment in general. Any intimate personal relationship with the line-manager, or a co-worker in the same team, should be declared.

### **5.2 What Vdt staff are required to do in case of reporting of abuse**

- Do ensure the person is not in immediate danger. If they are, seek police or medical assistance.
- Do remember to remain calm.
- Do listen carefully if the person discloses abuse.
- Do secure the scene if necessary and if possible.
- Do explain to the person that you have a duty to discuss the issue with your project manager/supervisor.
- Do remember, the person may not want their family informed as the family may actually be involved.
- Do make a note of the time, date and setting in which the allegation was made, if the event was witnessed, and any witnesses to the event.
- Do make a note of anyone else who was there at the time.
- Do record what was said using ONLY the person's own words.
- The account you record must be legible and include the date and your signature.
- Do provide information to the person about the steps that will be taken and reassure them that the issue will be taken seriously.
- Do inform the person that they will receive feedback.
- Do give your report to your project manager/supervisor to keep in a safe and confidential place.

### **5.3 What Vdt staff must avoid to do in case of reporting of abuse**

- Don't place yourself or anyone else in danger
- Don't be judgmental
- Don't make promises you cannot keep
- Don't ask detailed or probing questions
- Don't interfere with, or contaminate potential evidence following physical or sexual assault, for example, by washing, sheet changing, teeth cleaning, etc.
- Don't question witnesses except to obtain basic information
- Don't leave detailed confidential information in plain sight or unattended
- Don't, in any circumstances, discuss the issue with the person alleged to have cause harm
- Don't attempt to influence or intimidate potential witnesses
- Don't conduct your own enquiry or investigation without explicit permission from your supervisor

## **6. REPORTING PROCEDURES**

The reporting procedure/complaint must be clear and easily understandable. It must be respectful of the SEA survivor's higher interest. Two principles must be insured:

- Confidentiality: VdT won't make the identities and names of the people involved in the complaint public, unless it is required by justice procedures.
- Loyalty: VdT will support the reported person and will consider them innocent until their guilt is proved. Appropriate measures will be taken in order to ensure safety and protection for survivors, as well as alleged perpetrators and complainants if different from the survivors. Where there is any conflict of interest between the survivor and another involved party, the survivor's wishes must be the principal consideration in case handling, particularly when there is a risk of additional physical and/or emotional harm. Adequate mechanisms need to be established in order to guarantee that SEA survivors are provided with timely and appropriate access to comprehensive assistance and care. VdT will be responsible to ensure that PSEA referral pathways and related operating procedures are operational and regularly updated in each country office/base where the project is implemented.

## 7. INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

Repeated interviews with survivors can contribute to a survivor's trauma. Therefore, coordination must be maintained with all other stakeholders to avoid duplication of interviews with an individual survivor. Furthermore, the following protocols need to be observed when interviewing alleged SEA survivors:

- Survivors will be told of the purpose of the interview and informed consent must be sought before the interview is conducted;
- Interviewers will ensure that survivors feel safe at all times;
- Interviews will not be conducted in any space where it may create suspicion amongst outsiders (including authorities, community members, etc.);
- All efforts will be made to ensure that survivors do not feel exposed or vulnerable during the interview;
- Interviewing techniques and methodologies should be age, culture and gender appropriate;
- As much as possible, follow-up interviews/discussions will be conducted by the same interviewer;
- Survivors will be informed of all possible steps and obligations, including referral for assistance and possible investigation;
- At all times, interviewers must ensure the "Do No Harm" principle is adhered to.