

# **Code of Conduct for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

## *DVV International Regulations*

Effective as of 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

### **§ 1 Background**

DVV International is the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV). DVV International is a non-independent entity directed and controlled by the managing board of DVV. DVV is a registered non-for-profit association based in Bonn, Germany.

DVV International implements international cooperation projects of various donors with local and international partners around the globe through its regional and country offices.

This Code of Conduct is based on the minimum operating standards, recommendations and best practices developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises<sup>1</sup>. It furthermore takes reporting policies of key donors into account.<sup>2</sup>

DVV International will not tolerate any sexual abuse or an act of exploitation being committed by any of its team members or anyone associated with the delivery of our projects. DVV International will ensure that allegations of sexual exploitations and abuse are taken seriously, investigated conscientiously and that appropriate disciplinary measures are taken (“zero tolerance for non-acting”).

### **§ 2 Definition**

Sexual exploitation is defined as the abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. This includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.<sup>3</sup>

Sexual abuse is defined as the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

This Code of Conduct applies to all members of DVV International’s regional and country offices and all its employees, volunteers, consultants, representatives and those connected to

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines Inter-Agency Complaints Mechanisms - Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse,

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-03/Best%20Practice%20Guide%20Inter%20Agency%20Community%20Based%20Complaint%20Mechanisms.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> As for example the reporting policy of the German Foreign Office for alleged misconduct in projects of humanitarian aid, crisis prevention and stabilization.

<sup>3</sup> As per the UN Secretary General’s bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/13)

DVV International, including our local and international partner organizations. They should ensure that their conduct:

- is never influenced by personal gain or advantage that results in a risk or damage to DVV International,
- will not raise any suspicion of improper motive,
- will respect and never violate the rights of vulnerable people.

DVV International acknowledges and validates the 6 core principles of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises<sup>4</sup>, and applies these core principles as follows:

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for the termination of employment.
2. 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.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
4. Sexual relationships between staff members and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of work.
5. Where a staff member develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns to the country or regional directors or the ombudsperson at the DVV International's headquarters in Bonn (ombudsperson@dvv-international.de).
6. Humanitarian and development workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers working with DVV International or partner organizations have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

### **§3 Procedures to handle and report allegations**

DVV International will ensure that any allegation of sexual exploitation and/or abuse involving any of DVV International regional and country directors, employees, volunteers, consultants, representatives, and those connected to DVV International, including our partner organizations, will be thoroughly investigated.

DVV International ensures that when violations are reported and processed, there are no disadvantages for the informant or employees and supervisors who are obliged to investigate.

Appropriate disciplinary measures in compliance with the relevant local laws will be taken to the perpetrator. Where this Code of Conduct establishes a stricter standard than local laws, this standard shall prevail. In such cases legal advice shall be sought to ensure that staff can

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<sup>4</sup> <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/update/iasc-six-core-principles>

legally be held to account if they breach the Code of Conduct (as a minimum in terms of termination of contract or cooperation with DVV International).

As a general rule, DVV International will report cases of sexual exploitation and/or abuse to donors if there are sufficiently reliable indications of misconduct. Furthermore, where available, specific reporting regulations of the donors are considered.

#### **§4 Implementation of the Code of Conduct**

This Code of Conduct for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse elaborated by DVV International, was presented to DVV's Management Board on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2022, becomes effective from that point of time and shall be applied to handle internal and external reports on sexual exploitation and/or abuse allegations.

All employees contracted through DVV International's regional and country offices abroad will receive this Code of Conduct with their work contract and will have to sign an affirmative statement (as per template in Annex I). The signed affirmative statements will be archived in the personal files of the employees in the country and regional offices. Furthermore, this Code of Conduct will become integral part of all agreements and contracts with local and international partner organizations and other contractors such as experts and service providers.

The first contact point to report concerns or suspicions on sexual abuse or exploitation, whether directly or indirectly involved in DVV International's engagement abroad, are the country or regional directors or the ombudsperson at DVV International's headquarters in Bonn. The responsible ombudsperson is placed in the Human Resource Department and can be reached under [ombudsperson@dvv-international.de](mailto:ombudsperson@dvv-international.de).

Bonn, December 2022

Annex I: Affirmative statement for DVV International staff (regional and country offices)

## **ANNEX I**

### **Affirmative statement for DVV International staff (regional and country offices)**

I; ....., hereby confirm that I have received, read, and understood the DVV International Code of Conduct for the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

I declare that I shall carry out my duties to comply with the abovementioned rules of behavior and work for the implementation thereof to the highest professional standards and in the best interests of DVV International.

I am fully aware that failure to comply with the Code of Conduct requirements may be cause for disciplinary action, which may include contractual consequences and dismissal.

By signing this Code of Conduct, I also agree that it becomes part of my personal file and is stored at the regional / country office.

Employee name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_