



## **SolidarMed Child Protection Guidelines**

**Valid from: 01.07.2016**

**(updated on 23.10.2018)**

# SolidarMed Child Protection Guidelines

SolidarMed undertakes all necessary measures to ensure that the rights of children are respected and enforced and that children are protected from abuse.

## Basic principles

These regulations specify the organisational processes and the rules for the conduct of individual persons in connection with children. This document defines binding rules for all employed staff members and volunteers working for SolidarMed, both in Switzerland and abroad. Violations of these rules will be sanctioned. These regulations also call upon SolidarMed's partner organisations to respect the purpose and spirit of this document and to enforce the rights of children.

These regulations cover four areas:

- a) **Creating an understanding** for children's rights and threats facing children
- b) **Preventing** threats to and abuse of children
- c) **Reporting** violations of children's rights
- d) **Taking appropriate measures** in suspected cases of child abuse.

This document is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Swiss child protection legislation, the child protection legislation of the countries where we work and international good practice.

## Definition of child abuse

For the purposes of these regulations, physically or otherwise injuring children constitutes abuse. Persons under the age of 18 are considered children. The term "abuse" covers physical abuse as well as emotional abuse, cases of neglect as well as sexual assault.

## Rules of conduct for involved persons

SolidarMed employees and volunteers (called personnel hereafter) must be aware of the risk of child abuse in their activities and recognise situations which entail particular risks. Personnel must undertake all necessary measures in their work to protect children from abuse. Projects and activities are to be planned and carried out in such a way as to eliminate or at least minimise the possibility of abuse. In particular, this means:

### Sexual or physical assault

Personnel are not permitted to enter into any form of sexual contact or other forms of inappropriate physical contact with children, irrespective of the local regulations with regard to the age of consent and/or majority. Sexually suggestive conduct, be it verbal, gestural or otherwise, is forbidden. Personnel are not permitted to engage in any form of corporal punishment.

### Exploitation and extortion

Personnel are forbidden from exploiting or extorting children. In particular, personnel are forbidden from demanding or making use of sexual or other illegitimate services in return for goods, assistance or services.

### Emotional abuse and discrimination

Personnel are forbidden from discriminating against, disparaging, humiliating, shaming, demeaning or in any other way emotionally abusing children or adults.

### Private contacts

In their work, personnel should avoid being in contact with children without at least one further adult being present. If this is not possible, at least one additional staff member is to be given prior notice of this contact. If possible, this contact should take place in a location which can be easily supervised by other staff members.

### Child labour

SolidarMed does not employ children.

### **Indecent material and mind-altering substances**

The consumption, ownership, production and sharing of child pornography is forbidden. Personnel are prohibited from bringing children into contact with indecent material(s), whether intentionally or due to negligence. Personnel are prohibited from bringing children into contact with alcohol or other mind-altering substances, whether intentionally or due to negligence.

### **Illustrative material**

Personnel must ensure that the dignity of children is maintained in the production of all film or photographic material. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that no images can be used for sexual gratification other illegitimate satisfactions.

### **Information flow**

Personnel are forbidden from hampering in any way the contact of children to persons in whom they wish to confide. Personnel have the duty to report any justified suspicion of abuse to their superiors.

## **Institutional rules**

### **Personnel recruitment**

For the filling of positions with direct or increased contact with children, the suitability of the candidates is to be reviewed in depth. Specifically, in all cases two references are to be taken up and a suitable character check must take place.

### **Employment contract**

These regulations are an integral part of all SolidarMed employment contracts. The signing of the employment contract is confirmation that these regulations have been read, understood and recognised as binding.

### **Management**

Managers ensure that in their projects and activities, the risk of child abuse is eliminated or at least minimised. This issue is to be given appropriate weight in the management of personnel.

### **Protection of privacy for children and access rights**

Personal information is to be kept secure; only personnel which need access to this information in order to fulfil their duties should be given access accordingly. SolidarMed ensures that the disclosure of information about a child is only possible with the informed consent of this child or of his/her representative. If SolidarMed projects are visited by outsiders, direct contact to involved children will only be made possible in the presence of SolidarMed personnel.

### **Reporting incidents and suspected cases**

Managers are to create a working environment which enables children in particular to report suspected cases of abuse. SolidarMed ensures that persons who report an incident or suspected case of abuse in good faith are under no circumstances disadvantaged. Persons who knowingly spread baseless suspicions will be sanctioned. In cases of justified suspicion that a SolidarMed employee, contractor or volunteer is guilty of abuse, then this suspicion is to be reported immediately. SolidarMed personnel are to report suspected cases of this kind to their own superior. If this is not possible, the line manager of their superior is to be informed. Line managers informed of a justified suspicion must inform the Executive Director immediately. S/he immediately initiates an investigation and ensures that local experts or specialised child protection organisations are involved to investigate the matter further. Confidentiality with respect to other parties is to be maintained.

### **Handling of complaints or suspected cases**

If a staff member is under well-founded suspicion of child abuse, it is ensured that the suspected person is not in contact with children until the investigation is completed. Should no suitable assignment be found, the person will be released from duty for the duration of the investigation. SolidarMed ensures that in the handling of suspected cases, the reputation of the person under suspicion does not suffer needless damage. Persons who maliciously damage the reputation of suspected persons will be sanctioned.

### **Victim support**

If a child has become a victim of abuse in a SolidarMed project, SolidarMed will support the victim appropriately.

### **Sanctions**

Child abuse is a form of grave misconduct which will in all cases be sanctioned by SolidarMed and will normally result in the immediate termination of the employment contract through dismissal. Where applicable, additional legal steps will be initiated. Actual or ostensible misjudgements with regards to the age of the child cannot protect offenders from sanctions.

## **Rules for cooperation with partner organisations**

### **Cooperation**

SolidarMed will only cooperate with organisations which have child protection measures appropriate for the projects and circumstances. Where necessary, SolidarMed will support its partner organisations in the development and implementation of appropriate measures.

### **Review**

SolidarMed regularly reviews whether partner organisations are implementing their child protection measures.

### **Procedure in cases of non-compliance with child protection measures**

Should SolidarMed determine that personnel of the partner organisation demonstrate behaviour which contradicts the purpose and spirit of this document, then the SolidarMed desk officer and her/his superior will contact the responsible superior locally and will, where necessary, initiate an investigation by an independent, specialised child protection organisation. In cases of repeated abuse or no reaction after a warning or caution, the cooperation can be terminated.

### **Validity**

These guidelines were approved by the Board on the 23.06.2016 and will come into force on the 01.07.2016. This document will be reviewed by the Board every 4 years and adapted where appropriate.