

# Standards of Conduct

## Introduction

Since our founding in 1979, we have provided assistance in more than 60 countries and regions. As our activities have expanded, we have come to work in many different countries and regions with different cultures and customs, with a variety of staff and volunteers from different backgrounds and values that have taken charge of our activities.

We all have the best intentions to improve the quality of people's lives and overall make people happy. However, our good intentions may differ from the values of the people we support. As a result, we may create misunderstandings and could even potentially end up hurting people we support. Our activities, which are built on good intentions, are valuable, but individual good intentions alone are not sufficient to carry out beneficial assistance.

To ensure that our actions do not have a negative impact on people, we must not only "do" something, but also be aware of what we "do" and "how we do" it, as well as what we "do not" do. We also believe it is essential to define what the organization values and aims to achieve, and to demonstrate this both inside and outside the organization, rather than relying on the good intentions of individuals. This concept is considered one of the most important in efforts to protect people from sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH: Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment), and to prevent children from being exposed to risk of abuse (CS: Child Safeguarding), the importance of which has been increasingly recognized internationally in recent years.

Therefore, this Standards of Conduct sets forth how we should and should not behave so as to achieve our vision and mission, while adhering to the human rights policy and PSEAH/CS standards that have been established. In order to realize our support for improving people's lives, we will conduct our activities in accordance with the following standards of conduct.

## Scope

This Standards of Conduct applies to all Association for Aid and Relief, Japan ("AAR") staff, volunteers, interns, consultants, and all those who enter into a service agreement with AAR and they should sign this Standards of Conduct before engaging in AAR's activities. In addition, partner organizations, contractors, suppliers, vendors, and visitors (supporters, journalists, researchers, students, etc.) with whom AAR has a working relationship should sign this Standards of Conduct prior to any contact with AAR beneficiaries, and should understand and ideally sign this Standards of Conduct even when not in contact with beneficiaries.

## Definitions

- **Children:** Any individual under the age of 18, irrespective of local country definitions of when a child reaches adulthood.
- **Vulnerable adults:** Any person aged 18 years or older who, due to gender, age, disability, physical and mental health status, or a variety of other factors, has difficulty protecting himself or herself from risks such as abuse or exploitation.
- **Safeguarding:** The responsibilities that AARs have to ensure that people are not exposed to any risk of abuse or exploitation by the organization's staff and stakeholders, and that any safety concerns that may arise through activities are reported to the appropriate authorities.
- **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.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person.

- Abuse of Authority: Any conduct of a person using his/her higher position or advantage in human relationships, directed towards other persons in the same workplace, which can lead to mental distress or physical pain, deteriorate their working environment, or cause concerns about employment, beyond the proper scope of the job or regarding matters that are irrelevant to the job.
- Child Labour: Work by children under the age of 15 that interferes with compulsory education, also work that is dangerous and harmful to children under the age of 18. Work that does not result in the loss of educational opportunities, that is properly compensated, or that helps children to develop themselves does not fall under this category.

## Standards of Conduct

### Equality and Respect

I will conduct myself as follows:

1. I will respect the human rights of all people and treat them with respect regardless of race, colour, religion, nationality, language, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, origin of birth, political or other opinion. I will not discriminate or violate human rights on any grounds. I will respect the laws of the countries and regions in which we operate as well as international norms.
2. I will respect the opinions, choices, rights, dignity, and autonomy of beneficiaries, and treat them with appropriate language and behaviour when conducting our activities. I will pay specific attention to people facing obstacles or difficulties in communicating or fully expressing themselves due to impairment, gender or any other reason.
3. I will not engage in violence, abuse, insults, or degrading behaviour in any form, including physical, verbal, or psychological. I will not speak or act in a manner that disrespects traditional and cultural practices.
4. I will protect personal information obtained through AAR's activities.

### Safeguarding

I will conduct myself as follows:

5. When in the position to, I will always consider children and vulnerable adults' best interests.
6. I will plan and implement activities while ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are not placed at risk, and take actions to minimize the impact of hazards that may occur.
7. I will not strike, physically punish, or physically harm children or vulnerable adults through violence.
8. I will not behave in a way that may psychologically harm children or vulnerable adults in any way, including shaming, damaging self-esteem, disrespecting, or patronizing.
9. I will not use inappropriate language or engage in insulting or offensive behaviour toward children or vulnerable adults.
10. I will interact with beneficiaries within sight of another adult whenever possible. (I will pay special attention to children and vulnerable adults.)

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### Child Safeguarding

I will act as follows:

11. I will support children so that they understand their rights and the actions to take when they have concerns about safeguarding.
12. I will not sleep in the same space with a child who is participating in our activities. I will not sleep in the same room as a child who is participating in our activities, except in exceptional circumstances and with prior organizational approval.

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual exploitation and abuse are acts of sexual misconduct by humanitarian and development workers against members of the communities in which they work. Sexual harassment, on the other hand, is sexual misconduct by a humanitarian or development worker against another worker.

13. I will not direct children to, or expose them to, the risk of inappropriate images, videos, or websites that include pornography or extreme violence.
14. I will not employ children or condone child labour.
15. I will not condone or participate in unsafe or abusive behaviour of children who are participating in AAR activities.
16. I will not favour or exclude any particular child who is participating in AAR activities from the group.
17. I will not contact or attempt to contact children whom I have met through AAR activities outside of AAR activities.
18. I will not help children to do things they can do by themselves (e.g., changing clothes, bathing, toileting, etc.) more than necessary.

### **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

I will conduct myself, both publicly and privately, as follows:

19. I will not have sexual relations with children under the age of 18 (not knowing that the child is under 18 is not justification for the act).
20. I will not have sexual relations with beneficiaries, nor will I request sexual relations from or sexually exploit beneficiaries in exchange for money, employment, goods or services, or assistance that is due to the beneficiaries.
21. I will not engage in sexual activity with sex workers, in any context, even if legal, as it is based on inherently unequal power dynamics and may undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of AAR.
22. I will not engage in or be involved in any form of sexual exploitation or prostitution, including the rendering of sexual services.

### **Public Relations**

When conducting public communications activities, including interviewing, news gathering and taking photographs and videos, I will conduct myself in the following manner:

23. I will conduct interviewing, photographing and filming in accordance with local customs and regulations.
24. I will explain the purpose of the interviewing, photographing and filming and how it could be used, and obtain prior consent from the person (or, in the case of minors, the person and his/her legal guardian).
25. I will treat people with respect and consideration so as not to infringe on their right to refuse interviews, photographing or filming, their publicity rights, and so as not to cause them emotional harm as a result of interviewing, photographing or filming.
26. I will take care to ensure that the interviewing or photographing of subjects, or the disclosure of information obtained, will not result in any risk of violence, retaliation, or exclusion of the subject.
27. I will ensure that the subject is not in a sexually suggestive posture or in sexually inappropriate clothing and that the subject is appropriately clothed when photographed.
28. I will not focus on the vulnerabilities or the emotional state of people in difficult situations, but represent them as independent, dignified, and respectful subjects.
29. I will ensure that children are not able to be identified, in particular to the disclosure of personal information contained in texts, images, videos, etc.

### **Conflict of Interest**

I will conduct myself as follows:

30. I will not tolerate any form of corruption and will not offer, promise, give or accept bribes in any form.
31. I will avoid situations where my personal interests could conflict or reasonably appear to conflict, with the interests of AAR. I will disclose any potential conflict of interest to my supervisor or focal point.
32. I will not offer assistance from AAR in return for the receipt of any services or benefits.
33. I will not be involved in awarding benefits, contracting for goods or services, or decision making of employment or promotion in AAR activities to my family, relatives, friends, acquaintances, or

anyone else with whom I have financial interests, without disclosing this to my supervisor or focal point.

### **Work Ethics**

I will conduct myself as follows:

- 34. I will take responsibility for the handling of AAR funds, resources, equipment, and information obtained through AAR activities.
- 35. I will not engage in activities under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- 36. I will not engage in any form of harassment, including sexual harassment or abuse my position of authority.
- 37. I will not engage in any activities or conduct business outside of the organization that would interfere with AAR's activities or adversely affect AAR's reputation.

### **Reporting**

I will conduct myself as follows:

- 38. I will attempt to immediately consult with the focal point within the organization if my dignity has been violated by conduct that I believe breaches these standards of conduct.
- 39. If I see or hear of any conduct that I believe violates these standards of conduct, I will immediately report it to the focal point within the organization.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Office/ Department \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Approved Date: 29 November 2023