



**PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
AND ABUSE (INCLUDING CHILD)
AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

POLICY

Latest revision November 2019

INDEX

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Scope of the policy	1
3	Core Principles.....	1
4	Commitments.....	2
5	OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel Standards.....	3

1 Introduction

ISTITUTO OIKOS (OIKOS) places human dignity at the centre of its relief and development work. At the heart of OIKOS' efforts to impact poverty and social justice is its engagement with marginalized communities, and vulnerable adults and children.

Vulnerable adults and children are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. This policy defines OIKOS' commitment to the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) of vulnerable adults, involving OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel. In recognition of the special vulnerability of children, this policy also affirms OIKOS's commitment to the welfare and protection from sexual exploitation and all forms of abuse of children, involving OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel. **OIKOS has a zero tolerance toward sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and child abuse.** OIKOS takes seriously all concerns and complaints about sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse involving OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel. OIKOS initiates rigorous investigation of complaints that indicate a possible violation of this policy and takes appropriate disciplinary action, as warranted.

2 Scope of the policy

This document presents OIKOS' vision for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), sexual harassment (SH) and child abuse, and sets out concrete strategies and interventions for creating and maintaining a safe and respectful environment for the people OIKOS supports and for OIKOS employees and related personnel. This includes OIKOS members, OIKOS affiliates and OIKOS Country Office staff. The term also includes board members, volunteers, interns, and international and local consultants, in addition to individual and corporate contractors of these entities and related personnel. This includes non-OIKOS entities and their employees and individuals who have entered into partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements with OIKOS. **The principles set forth in this policy apply all times, during and outside the office hours and during the periods of leaves, with no exception.**

OIKOS has adopted the UN standard definition for SEA, SH, child abuse, which are provided in the annex 1.

The use of the term "sexual exploitation and abuse" throughout this policy refers to children as well as vulnerable adults.

3 Core Principles

In order to protect the most vulnerable populations, particularly vulnerable adults and children, and to ensure the integrity of OIKOS activities, the following **six Core Principles**¹ must be adhered to:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and child abuse by OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of the majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defense and will not be tolerated as justification.

¹ The six Core Principles are from the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13). They have been modified by CARE International to refer to child abuse and "CARE Employees and Related Personnel".



- Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour by OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel is prohibited. This includes the exchange of assistance that is due to programme participants.
- Sexual relationships between OIKOS Employees/Related Personnel and programme participants are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of OIKOS' relief and development work.
- Where a OIKOS Employee or Related Personnel develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation and child abuse by a fellow worker, whether in OIKOS or not, he or she must immediately report such concerns to the Oikos focal point according to existing Complaint Handling Mechanisms.²
- OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse and promotes the implementation of this Policy. OIKOS Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems, which maintain this environment.

4 Commitments

OIKOS is dedicated to fulfilling the six Core Principles through implementation of the following Commitments. This includes time-bound, measurable indicators of progress to enable all entities of OIKOS International, and others, to monitor OIKOS performance.

- The Ethical Code is published on the web site and is distributed and duly known to everyone who collaborates in any way with OIKOS. The Ethical Code contains the mission, the vision, the declaration of values and principles, the set of rights, duties and responsibilities that it holds with whoever collaborates with OIKOS or benefits from its projects or programs;
- Incorporate OIKOS' standards on sexual exploitation and abuse and child protection in relevant codes of conduct and in induction materials and training courses for OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel, including specific provisions for child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- OIKOS employee and related personnel are completely aware of the Core Principles contained in this Policy, and the related principles included in OIKOS Staff Code of Conduct, Ethical Code.
- Develop organization-specific strategies to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse, including incorporating appropriate job responsibilities (such as staff training, complaints and response mechanisms, and coordinating high-level oversight and progress reports by directors) in specific staff positions to support and ensure effective implementation of organization strategies to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse;
- Ensure that when engaging in partnerships, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements, these agreements a) incorporate this Policy as an attachment; b) include the appropriate language requiring such contracting entities and individuals, and their employees and volunteers to abide with a Code of Conduct that is pursuant to the standards of this Policy; and c) expressly state that the failure of those entities or individuals, as appropriate, to take preventive measures against sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse, to investigate and report allegations thereof, or to take corrective actions when sexual exploitation or abuse or child abuse has occurred, shall constitute grounds for OIKOS to terminate such agreements.
- Ensure that complaint mechanisms for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse are accessible and that OIKOS focal points for receiving complaints understand how to discharge their duties. This should link to existing Compliant handling Mechanism (CHM) and include a documented

² The established complaints mechanism may at times be an internal OIKOS mechanism however OIKOS is also committed to participating in inter-agency community based complaints mechanisms in humanitarian contexts and therefore inter-agency complaints mechanisms may be the established system in some contexts.

reporting procedure in a relevant local language for sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse allegations and policy for non-compliance, including available sanctions for breaches.

- Provide support and assistance to complainants of sexual exploitation and abuse or child abuse. This may include medical treatment, legal assistance and psychosocial support as appropriate and according to the wants and needs of the survivor whilst also taking account of confidentiality, cultural sensitivities and survivor safety.
- In compliance with applicable laws, prevent perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse from being (re)hired or (re)deployed. Managers and Human Resource teams must ensure robust recruitment screening processes for all personnel, particularly for personnel who will have any direct or indirect contact with children. This could include use of background and criminal reference/ record checks, verbal referee checks, and interview plans that incorporate behavioral-based interview questions.
- Engage the support of communities and governments to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse by OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel.
- Take swift and appropriate action, including legal action when required, against OIKOS Employees and Related-Personnel who commit sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse. This may include administrative or disciplinary action, and/or referral to the relevant authorities for appropriate action, including criminal prosecution, in the abuser's country of origin as well as the host country.
- Take appropriate actions to the best of Istituto Oikos's abilities to protect persons from retaliation where allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse or child abuse are reported involving OIKOS Employees or Related Personnel.
- Ensure high-level oversight and information systems on sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse reports received and actions taken, in order to monitor effectiveness, report progress and improve efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse.

5 OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel Standards

OIKOS International's capacity to achieve its vision and mission depends upon the individual and collaborative efforts of all OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel. To this end, all OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel must uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct and abide by OIKOS' policies. This policy sets the minimum standards to be followed by all OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel to protect programme participants and communities from sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse by OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel.

The need for this policy flows from a recognition that our work often puts OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel in positions of power in relation to the communities we work with, especially vulnerable adults and children. OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel have an obligation to use their power respectfully and must not abuse the power and influence they have over the lives and wellbeing of the participants of OIKOS programs and others in the communities where OIKOS works.

These Standards apply to all OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel and are intended to provide an illustrative guide for employees and related personnel to make decisions that exemplify OIKOS' Code of Conduct and core values in their professional and personal lives. Any violation of these Standards is a serious concern and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in accordance with disciplinary procedures of each OIKOS Member or Affiliate and applicable laws. All OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel must sign these standards. Employees and individuals of non-OIKOS entities that have entered into partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements with OIKOS may instead sign their employer's code of conduct and standards if they are consistent with these standards.

- OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel will not request any service or sexual favour from participants of OIKOS programs, children or others in the communities in which OIKOS works, in



return for protection or assistance, and will not engage in sexually exploitative or abusive relationships.

- OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel will not exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. This prohibition against exchange of money for sex means OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel may not engage the services of sex workers.
- OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel are strongly discouraged from having sex or engaging in sexual activities with program participants because there is an inherent conflict of interest and potential for abuse of power in such a relationship. If an employee engages in sex or sexual activities with a program participant, the employee must disclose this conduct to his /her supervisor for appropriate guidance. Failure to report such conduct may lead to disciplinary action pursuant to OIKOS's policies and procedures.
- OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel must refrain from sexual activity with any person under the age of 18, regardless of the local age of consent, i.e. the local or national laws of the country in which the employee works. Ignorance or mistaken belief of the child's age is not a defence. Failure to report such a relationship may lead to disciplinary action pursuant to OIKOS's policies and procedures.
- OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel will not support or take part in any form of sexual exploitative or abusive activities, including, for example, child pornography or trafficking of human beings.
- OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel will treat all children with respect and not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel will not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities or which places them at significant risk of injury.

Annex 1 – Definitions

OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel: The term “OIKOS Employees and Related Personnel” includes all employees of OIKOS International, OIKOS Affiliates and OIKOS Country Offices. The term also includes board members, volunteers, interns, and international and local consultants, day laborers, in addition to individual and corporate contractors of these entities and related personnel. This includes non-OIKOS entities and their employees and individuals who have entered into partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements with OIKOS.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour 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 behaviour, 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.

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. OIKOS recognises that the terms sexual abuse and exploitation represent a wide spectrum of behaviours and is not limited to the act of sexual intercourse.

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)

Child Sexual Abuse: When a child is used by another child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual abuse involves contact and non-contact activities which encompasses all forms of sexual activity involving children, including exposing a child to online child sexual exploitation material, or taking sexually exploitative images of children.

Survivor: The person who it is alleged has been the subject of sexual harassment, abuse or exploitation.

Complainant: The person who raises a complaint (this may or may not be the survivor).

Subject of Complaint/Subject of Concern/ SoC: The person against whom the allegation, complaint or concern has been raised.



www.istituto-oikos.org