

2011

**VENRO Code of Conduct for Children's
Rights:
Protecting children against abuse and
exploitation in development co-operation
and humanitarian aid**

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Introduction

In the VENRO statutes, VENRO members have committed to make a contribution towards making the world a more just place. Working together, the German non-governmental organisations want to be even more committed to the fight against hunger, the realisation of human rights and the maintenance of natural living environments. In line with the principle >Children's rights are human rights<, all VENRO members are committed to strengthening the rights of boys and girls and protecting them against abuse and exploitation as part of their work in development co-operation and

humanitarian aid. In this context, the organisation of the two work fields should aim to create an environment that is safe for children¹ and persons at risk, and that guarantees compliance with human rights. This also includes protection against abuse in line with their own organisational and partner structures.

On 13 December 2007, the VENRO General Assembly unanimously adopted the >White Paper on Children's Rights: Protection of Children against Abuse and Exploitation in Development Co-operation<, which forms the basis for the following code of conduct.

Frame of reference

Boys and girls in every country and society are affected by sexual violence, abuse and mistreatment, as well as exploitation. Children make up a large number of the people who receive support as part of German development co-operation and humanitarian aid activities. Therefore they have a special need for protection. It is the task of development cooperation to

strengthen the rights of children to improve their development opportunities and protect them against possible threats.

The UN Treaty regarding the rights of the child, and the two supplemental protocols² form the frame of reference for this code of conduct. In this vein, the wellness of the child is the top priority.

1 According to the >UN Convention on the Rights of the Child< a **child** is "a person who has not completed his or her 18th year of age, unless the age maturity is reached earlier according to the law that applies to the child."

2 See >Facultative protocol on the treaty regarding the rights of the child, with respect to the participation of children in armed conflict< and >Facultative protocol on the treaty regarding the rights of the child, with respect to child trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography<.

Obligations

We want to establish the protection of children and the following standards as quality characteristics in our domestic and overseas co-operation work. The association and its members commit

1. to strengthen the rights of boys and girls with or without disabilities, and to protect them against sexual, emotional or physical abuse, exploitation and neglect;
2. to create a safe environment for children and persons at risk that guarantees compliance with children's and human rights;
3. to involve children in the activities that affect them, and to take their interests into account during the planning and implementation of our activities;
4. to create awareness of this issue within our organisation and at our partners;
5. to develop and implement suitable instruments, including clearly defined responsibilities and procedures in the area of prevention, crisis management and monitoring;

6. to ensure, as part of our media, educational and public relations work, that the dignity of the child is protected at all times;

7. to create awareness among decision-makers in politics and industry, and networks.

With the adoption of the code of conduct regarding children's rights, VENRO members also state their willingness to work on implementing the code of conduct. Experiences will be analysed and measures will be reviewed after a two-year test phase.

The VENRO Executive Board is required to follow up on alleged breaches of this code of conduct. It may involve the arbitration tribunal to identify breaches, if necessary. Once identified, breaches must be prosecuted in the appropriate manner.

Most recent amendment at the General Assembly on 16 December 2010 in Berlin.

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