



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS & VISITORS

This Code of Conduct for volunteers/visitors represents a general framework for adult behaviour and contact with children, youth and young adults, as part of our Child Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct for the SOS Children's Villages organisation. Bearing in mind the aim of the Code of Conduct for the SOS Children's Villages organization is to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct among all co-workers and persons affiliated to the organisation, the Code of Conduct for volunteers/visitors reviews the most relevant rules for adults that get in contact with children, youth and young adults on behalf of SOS Children's Villages.

1 Ensuring respectful and responsible conduct

1.1 Volunteers/visitors of SOS Children's Villages should be aware that they represent not only their company but also SOS Children's Villages in their volunteer work. Their attitude and behaviour have a significant impact on the children and co-workers in SOS programmes, and on the reputation of our organisation. They are therefore requested to be mindful of their conduct both within and outside SOS Children's Villages. In particular, they shall adhere to the local laws that apply where they live and work and they shall act according to the organisation's core values.

1.2 In their interactions with all children, youth, co-workers and persons affiliated to SOS Children's Villages, volunteers/visitors are committed to non-violent and non-provocative behaviour in action, language and gestures. They are requested to respect the basic rights of all, regardless of gender, age, ability, health, language, ethnicity, race, colour, religion, caste, sexual orientation and any other aspects of identity or personal characteristics. They are requested to act fairly, honestly and tactfully and will treat all children, youth, co-workers, and affiliated persons with sensitivity, tolerance, dignity and respect. Volunteers/visitors are also requested to respect the national law and local culture, traditions, customs and practices that are in line with UN conventions. Therefore, They are requested not to take part in any form of discrimination, harassment, or abuse (physical, sexual or verbal), intimidation or exploitation, or in any other way infringe the rights of others.

1.3 If the volunteer/visitor's role is that of a manager, he/she should also understand that he/she has additional responsibilities to model the good behaviour promoted through this code of conduct in order to create an environment in which good conduct can flourish. He/she should ensure that his/her co-volunteers are aware of the code of conduct and are supported in putting it into practice, and he/she should manage misconduct appropriately and actively address breaches of the code.

2 Professional conduct in relation to children

Child protection – keeping children safe from harm

2.1 Volunteers/visitors are requested to always uphold the trust and confidence placed in them by SOS Children's Villages to protect children and serve their best interests.

2.2 Volunteers/visitors are requested to conduct themselves in a way that safeguards children and youth from all forms of discrimination, abuse, mistreatment and neglect.

2.3 Volunteers/visitors should not initiate or become involved in sexual relationships with children. They should be aware that such a relationship will lead to legal consequences and impact the organization's reputation. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.

2.4 Volunteers/visitors should not exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. This includes any exchange of SOS services that are due to participants in the SOS programme.

2.5 This means that volunteers/visitors should not enter into sexual relationships with members of the local community that are receiving assistance or services from SOS Children's Villages, since these relationships are likely to undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of SOS Children's Villages.

2.6 Volunteers/visitors should not hire children privately as ‘house help’ (domestic workers¹) or for any work that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child’s education, or that may be harmful to the child’s, physical, mental, social, spiritual or moral development.

2.7 Volunteers/visitors should make sure that their work and interaction with children is visible to others and generally should not spend excessive time alone with children and away from others. Volunteers/visitors should not have SOS beneficiaries that are children to stay with them in their home (overnight or for extended periods) especially when there is no other responsible adult around.

2.8 Volunteers/visitors are requested to report all concerns regarding actual or potential child abuse, mistreatment or any other violation of the Child Protection Policy according to our reporting and responding system. They shall do this trusting that they shall be protected and supported by the organisation.²

2.9 Volunteers/visitors should keep data about the children and youth in SOS Children’s Villages’ programmes confidential³ (e.g. information on their family background, health status, etc). Such information – about HIV/AIDS status, mental health history, use of illegal drugs or charges of child abuse – can be harmful if released. Harm can occur even if records show that the information is unproven or inaccurate. Avoid prejudice or differential treatment as this may lower the expectations of children who are eligible for certain services. This may set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy in which lowered expectations lead to lowered performance.

Confidentiality also encourages individual young people to make use of services that has been designed for them by volunteers/visitors. Youth may avoid seeking mental/physical health services if they believe that information will get back to their mentors, teachers or peers. The same holds for birth control or HIV/AIDS-related medical consultations.

This principle of confidentiality also extends to former participants in SOS services and their siblings, and applies beyond the point at which volunteers/visitors cease their volunteer work/visit with SOS Children’s Villages.

2.10 Volunteers/visitors should reveal all information about any charges against them pertaining to child abuse either at the time of their joining SOS Children’s Village as a volunteering or arising during the time of their volunteer work or visit.

3 Professional conduct in relation to other aspects of work

Responsible use of power and position

3.1 When conducting volunteer activities volunteers/visitors should use their position for the benefit of the organisation when dealing with government officials, donors, sponsors, suppliers and other people affiliated to SOS Children’s Villages. Volunteers/visitors should avoid any conflict of interest arising from personal interests and/or obligations they might have towards third parties SOS Children’s Villages has business relations with.

3.2 Volunteers/visitors should be aware that children, youth and adults look up to them as a person in authority. Volunteers/visitors should not use that position for their own benefit or for the benefit of their family or friends.

3.3 This means volunteers/visitors must not enter into any sort of business relationship on behalf of SOS Children’s Villages with family members, friends or other personal contacts for the supply of any goods or services to SOS Children’s Villages.⁴

¹ The definition of child domestic work (‘house help’) does not include occasional babysitting, gardening, help during school holidays or out of school time.

² It is the responsibility of SOS Children’s Villages to ensure that those reporting concerns in good faith do not experience any negative repercussions or adverse effects as a result of carrying out their duty to report, even if the allegation later proves to be false. However, volunteers/visitors making knowingly false or malicious allegations may be subject to disciplinary action. See also: 4.3.

³ Confidential means “ensuring that information is accessible only to those authorized to have access”.

⁴ Such a purchase is acceptable if it results from an open, fair, transparent and accountable procurement process where the goods or services provided by the person or company represent the best quality and value for SOS Children’s Villages.

3.4 Volunteers/visitors should understand that they must not ask for or invite any personal payment, service or favour from others, especially participants in SOS services, in return for their help, support, goods or services of any kind. Volunteers/visitors should not accept bribes or significant gifts (except small tokens of appreciation)⁵ from governments, participants in SOS services, donors, suppliers or others which have been offered as a result of their volunteer work for SOS Children's Villages.

3.5 When involved in local political, religious, or community activities, volunteers/visitors commit to ensuring that SOS Children's Villages' mission and objectives are not compromised, and that SOS Children's Villages are not brought into disrepute.

3.6 Volunteers/visitors should not work under the influence of intoxicating substances such as alcohol or any other substances that significantly impair their ability to do their job.

3.7 Volunteers/visitors should ensure good and constructive working relationships with all co-workers. Volunteers/visitors should not allow any personal relationships with their co-workers and other volunteers to have a negative impact on their work, other co-workers or the working environment in general. If a volunteers/visitors is in an intimate personal relationship with his/her contact person within SOS Children's Villages, he/she should declare this relationship.

Responsible use of resources

3.8 Volunteers/visitors should administer resources entrusted to them by SOS Children's Villages in a transparent and prudent manner and in compliance with established controls that ensure optimum use of all our material and human resources.

3.9 Volunteers/visitors shall not behave in a way that creates unnecessary risk to my health, safety and security, or to that of others with whom they work.

3.10 Volunteers/visitors should use all computers and other information technology responsibly and refrain from inappropriate usage, especially that relating to the creation, viewing, downloading or distribution of any inappropriate or offensive material, including, but not restricted to, abusive images of children, pornography or child pornography.

3.11 Volunteers/visitors are requested to perform their work for SOS Children's Villages in an environmentally responsible manner in order to be a good role model for children and youth in this regard, and to pass an intact and healthy environment to the next generations.

Responsible use of information

3.12 Given that their position in SOS Children's Villages involves trust and confidence, volunteers/visitors should exercise prudence in disclosing information outside the normal requirements of their work for SOS Children's Villages. Volunteers/visitors should not communicate any sensitive or potentially damaging information to external bodies or individuals, including media representatives, without appropriate authorisation. They should comply with the restrictions set out in relevant SOS Children's Villages' guidelines.

3.13 When sharing general information about children and co-workers (for example, data, pictures, etc. for PR purposes) volunteers/visitors should do so with full respect and consideration for their privacy and dignity and must first seek approval on materials and intended use from SOS Children's Villages. It is requested NOT use children's real surnames in any reports. However, it is advisable that the first name be used with a changed name and the change being indicated as necessary to the reader due to child protection reasons.

3.14 Volunteers/visitors are requested to commit to sharing required information in a timely manner to contribute to a harmonious organisational climate, always bearing in mind the best interest of the child.

⁵ You should notify your contact person within SOS Children's Villages if you are offered or receive gifts of any kind

4 Consequences of breaching the Code of Conduct

4.1 Each of a volunteer/visitor's actions matter! Volunteers/visitors should realize that any violation of this Code of Conduct can have serious implications on the lives of children and youth, and for the organisation. Therefore, SOS Children's Villages will respond to violations of the Code of Conduct as deemed appropriate, regardless of position, status or personal relationship, and in accordance with national and local legislation and/or the terms and conditions of service defined within SOS. Consequences may include disciplinary action, such as dismissal from volunteer work, and possible referral to the national authorities, e.g. police or other relevant agencies.

4.2 Should a volunteers/visitors become aware of any breaches of the Code of Conduct, he/she should understand that he/she is duty bound to report these to his/her contact person within SOS Children's Villages or other person in a position to receive such reports.

4.3 Volunteers/visitors should understand that when reporting an actual or potential breach of the Code of Conduct they shall do so in good faith and that SOS Children's Villages will ensure that they do not experience any negative repercussions or adverse effects as a result of carrying out their duty to report, even if the allegation later proves to be false. However, if a volunteers/visitors knowingly makes a false or malicious allegation then he/she should also understand that he/she might be subject to disciplinary action.

4.4 Volunteers/visitors should understand that the Code of Conduct cannot cover all aspects of good conduct. Where a volunteers/visitors has any concerns about possible misconduct or behaviour that may bring the organisation into disrepute, he/she is requested to undertake to raise the concerns at the earliest possible time either verbally or in writing with his/her contact person within SOS Children's Villages.

4.5 In cases where a volunteer/visitor's contact person within SOS Children's Villages is the subject of concern, reports should be made to his or her superiors.

Agreement to comply with the Code of Conduct on behalf of our organization's Volunteers and Visitors

We understand and agree to comply with all the components of the Code of Conduct for our Volunteers/Visitors, including the behavior of protocols for interacting with children. We commit to contribute in keeping children safe by using this policy to guide us as we relate with children, families, and partners. We understand that under the Code of Conduct, we can be held liable for harm we might cause against the dignity of a child/children, community, and the organization.

Official Representative:

Name of Company/Organization	
Official Address	
Office Contact Number	
Name of Official Representative	
Designation	
Email Address	
Contact Number	
Signature	
Date Signed	