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# MODERN SLAVERY ACT TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT OF HELNETAS SWISS INTERCOOPERATION

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## 1. Introduction

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This statement is given on behalf of HELNETAS Swiss Intercooperation Switzerland and its network organisations HELNETAS Intercooperation gGmbH, Germany, and HELNETAS USA, USA, hereinafter HELNETAS.

HELNETAS is a civil society organisation engaged in development cooperation and humanitarian response. We strive for people's empowerment to determine the course of their lives in dignity and security, using environmental resources in a sustainable manner. Helvetas has been contributing to alleviate poverty, advance human rights, and address injustice across the globe since it was founded in 1955. Poor and disadvantaged people and communities are at the centre of our work. Together, we create new prospects, leveraging existing potential, strengths, and assets: we help people to help themselves. We provide humanitarian response in the wake of natural disasters and conflict, or protracted crises. We always work closely with local partner organizations from civil society and the private sector, as well as with local authorities, fostering mutual accountability and collaboration between rights holders, duty bearers and service providers. We operate in over 30 countries worldwide, in Africa, Asia, Latin America & the Caribbeans and Eastern Europe & Caucasus including developing, in transition and fragile contexts.

As per our organisational strategy, our work is guided by the following principles and approaches:

- Our engagement is based on solidarity and partnership.
- We work towards achieving human rights and upholding the principle of self-determined development.
- We are committed to social equity and strive for equal opportunities for all people regardless of gender identity, age, origin, language, religion, culture, mental and physical capacity, sexual orientation, or political convictions.
- Our collaboration with our partners is based on mutual respect for cultural values and principles.
- We stand for development that balances economic viability, environmental responsibility and social benefits.

HELNETAS regards all forms of modern slavery and human trafficking as a fundamental violation of human rights and is committed to ensuring that all its stakeholders are treated with dignity. HELNETAS is committed to counter slavery and human trafficking and assumes a zero-tolerance position towards slavery and human trafficking in our organisation, partners or supply chain. We are committed to acting ethically and with integrity in all our business dealings and relationships and to implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to ensure that any form of slavery is prevented in our own organisation, partners or supply chains.

The organisational values are the basis for the attitude, behaviour and high standards that HELNETAS demands to be respected and adhered to by its employees. Further, we expect that all individuals and

institutions with whom HELVETAS engages, respect these values and act in accordance with them, as well as with national and international laws.

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## 2. Our staff and labour standards

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HELVETAS employs worldwide about 1'400 employees. The dedication and commitment of our staff to our core values are essential for the achievement of our objectives. It is therefore vital that the way we engage with our staff reflects our core values and that we treat people with dignity and respect.

HELVETAS applies the highest standards in the recruitment of employees. This includes not only professional assessment but also a careful examination of the personality of candidates and their suitability and match with the values of HELVETAS. In addition, these standards prohibit the misrepresentation of false or fraudulent facts, representations or promises regarding employment when offering employment or recruiting a person for employment, the charging of recruitment fees to employees, or the provision or arrangement of accommodation that does not meet the housing and safety standards of the host country.

All our staff has the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. This is reflected by the employee's commissions (PEKO) that represent the interest of the staff in Switzerland and abroad towards the employer. They are supported by labour unions in negotiations and with legal advice. HELVETAS' personnel regulations, working time regulations and salary regulations ensure that employees have decent employment conditions, social security, rights at the workplace and opportunities for participation and social dialogue as per the international labour standards.

All our employees or any other person involved in our activities have a right to work in a harassment-free and respectful environment. We are committed to promote the respect and protection of all our employees, partners, and primary stakeholders against all forms of emotional, physical, and sexual misconduct and/or aggression.

Through our Code of Conduct for Employees, which every employee must sign and adhere to, we have Zero tolerance to all forms of slavery, human trafficking, mobbing, sexual harassment and abuse of authority. We have reporting mechanisms to deal with a suspicion on slavery, human trafficking, mobbing, sexual harassment and/or abuse of authority and prevent retaliation related to the reporting of allegations of harassment. Whistle-blowers who express a suspicion of inappropriate behaviour are protected. Information concerning a suspicion is confidential. The presumption of innocence applies to alleged perpetrators. Our measures to deal with inappropriate behaviour are based on principles of fairness and impartiality.

Overall, HELVETAS endeavours to ensure that employees can report suspicions without fear of reprisal and that individuals who express a suspicion of harassment are adequately protected.

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## 3. Our safeguards, regulations and policies in relation to slavery, human trafficking and the protection of human rights

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HELVETAS implements a **set of policies and regulations** that ensure that the way we work and the way those we work with behave meet our high standards and expectations. This includes the following policies and regulations with relevance for this statement:

### 1. Code of Conduct (employees)

This Code of Conduct defines basic ethical principles, attitudes and behaviour which are binding for all collaborators of HELVETAS. It is based on the Mission Statement, the Human Resource policy and our Personnel Regulations. It thereby reflects foundational values and principles of our organisation, to be applied irrespective of cultural contexts. The Code of Conduct expresses the commitment of each collaborator to adhere to and to promote high ethical standards in our work and as part of our working culture. It constitutes a compulsory annex to the employment contract and is binding for all employees worldwide in any contractual relationship with HELVETAS (including interns & volunteers, Board of Directors and its Advisory Council as well as consultants) at all times during their assignment with HELVETAS. It is

expected that principles of this Code of Conduct are also respected outside the workplace and working time. Furthermore, all partners HELVETAS collaborates with must commit to follow the key principles of this Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct expresses the expectations of ethical conduct for each employee in the following areas: "Loyalty, confidentiality and civic duties", "Commitment and respect towards organizational culture and integrity", "Culturally sensitive behaviour", "Highest standards in inter-personal relations and professional conduct", "Mobbing and Sexual Harassment", "Conflicts of interest" and "Honesty, gifts and favours".

Among other, the code specifically highlights requirements such as

- the compliance with all national laws at all times, as a resident or short-term visitor,
- the abstain from indecent or offensive behaviour, insulting or accusing statements, or spreading rumours,
- to never request any service or favour from primary stakeholders, beneficiaries or other persons of concern in return for support or protection; to never engage in any exploitative relationships – sexual, emotional, financial or employment-related – with primary stakeholders, beneficiaries or other persons of concern,
- to reject any form of disrespectful social interaction and to abstain from anything that could be interpreted as degrading or putting others down,
- to refrain from abusing hierarchical, material, or social position in any way,
- to protect the rights and integrity of children and youth and to refrain from all unacceptable behaviour towards them,
- to refrain from any form of sexual or other type of exploitation, and to strive to counter such behaviour in a decisive manner, in particular in situations involving children, young or disabled people,
- to refrain from degrading or exploitative behaviour such as exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, sexual favours, other forms of favour and of other forms of humiliation,
- to counter observed and confirmed mobbing, sexual or sexist harassment of colleagues by other employees, taking appropriate action and/or informing my supervisors immediately on becoming aware of it,
- to not use the personal position to obtain personal benefit or to provide advantage to third parties.

## **2. Human Resource Policy**

The human resource policy provides the frame for all human resource management and development work of HELVETAS. It is rooted in the mission statement of the organisation and HELVETAS' institutional values. This policy document reflects both, the social responsibility of our organisation towards all staff members and the commitment to develop their abilities to become agents of change as well as HELVETAS' expectations towards its employees. All supervisors are responsible for ensuring that new collaborators are made aware of the human resource policy, and more generally for its application and implementation.

The policy addresses aspects such as HELVETAS' economic and social responsibility towards its personnel, the promotion of diversity as a strength, HELVETAS' efforts to protect and promote the well-being of its personnel, its commitment to personnel development and a suitable life balance of staff, its commitment to foster active and transparent information and communication and the promotion of knowledge sharing, the culture of feedback and constructive handling of conflicts as well as the expectations of HELVETAS towards its personnel, specifically also in regards to ethical and social behaviour.

## **3. Personnel Regulations**

The personnel regulations apply to full-time and part-time employees of HELVETAS and covers all aspects of employment conditions, the duties of the employees as well as the rights of employees.

## **4. Working-Hours Regulation**

The working-hours regulation covers all aspects of HELVETAS' employees regarding to worktime, including for instance yearly working-hours, part-time work, overtime, overtime compensation, absence, work at home, travel time, leave, maternity and paternity leave, and more.

## **5. Regulations on Mobbing, Sexual Harassment & Abuse of Authority**

These regulations reflect the principles and responsibility of HELVETAS to prevent and address mobbing, sexual harassment and abuse of authority. All forms of mobbing, sexual harassment and abuse of authority are explicitly forbidden. Such behaviour or conduct manifest a considerable encroachment on the basic principles of equality and fundamental rights of those affected and is contrary to the principles and values of HELVETAS as stated in the Human Resource Policy, Code of Conduct and our mission statement. It elaborates on HELVETAS' zero tolerance policy in regard to mobbing, sexual harassment and abuse of authority, and the respective definitions as well as protection, prevention, reporting, sanctions, neutrality and confidentiality measures.

## **6. Guidelines on Dealing with Mobbing, Sexual Harassment, Child Abuse & Abuse of Authority**

These guidelines provide instruction on reporting and addressing alleged incidents of mobbing, sexual harassment, child abuse and abuse of authority. The guidelines provide practical guidance on the implementation of our regulations and outline practical steps to be taken recognising the diverse contexts and modalities we work in. Reporting mechanism and internal as external confidants are described in order to provide enough guidance for HELVETAS employees to be able to make informed and objective decisions to both preventing and addressing mobbing, sexual harassment, child abuse and abuse of authority in their working environment and seek additional support as relevant and required.

## **7. Regulations on Child Protection**

HELVETAS recognizes that especially in situations of poverty, humanitarian crisis and/or conflict, children can be extremely vulnerable and acknowledges its fundamental duty to protect them.

These regulations have been developed to ensure maximum protection of children within our activities from all forms of abuse and exploitation. It ensures that HELVETAS has procedures in place to prevent and deal with child abuse, child exploitation and breach of regulations. Additionally, HELVETAS aims at protecting HELVETAS staff from false or malicious allegations of misconduct. Furthermore, HELVETAS seeks safeguarding of HELVETAS' organisational integrity and reputation, as well as that of its partners, by introducing sound Child Protection Regulations.

In all aspects of our work, HELVETAS is committed to the key principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically:

- guaranteeing, without any form of discrimination, the rights of children.
- considering the best interests of children in all actions relating to them.
- recognising the right to life, survival and development of each child.
- reflecting children's views in matters affecting them.

## **8. Whistle-Blower Policy**

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (hereinafter: HELVETAS) is committed to operate

- Legally, in accordance with applicable legislation and regulation
- Properly, in accordance with organisational policy and procedures
- Ethically, in accordance with recognised ethical principles

HELVETAS' regulations and guidelines require directors, employees, external consultants and employees of collaborative organisations to observe high standards in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. They all must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling their responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations. They are expected to cooperate with the organisation in maintaining legal, proper, and ethical operations, if necessary, by reporting non-compliant actions by other people. Correspondingly, HELVETAS is committed to protect people who raise concerns through the complaint mechanism from being penalised in any way.

The Whistle-blower Policy meets the following objectives:

- Encourage the reporting of matters that may cause harm to individuals or financial or non-financial loss to HELVETAS or damage to its reputation, on a confidential basis,

- Enable HELVETAS to deal with complaints in a way that will protect the identity of the whistle-blower as far as possible and provide for the secure storage of the information provided,
- Establish appropriate instruments and procedures for protecting whistle-blowers against reprisal and retaliatory actions by any person internal or external to the entity,
- Provide for the appropriate reporting channels,
- Help to ensure HELVETAS maintains the highest standards of ethical behaviour and integrity.

This policy applies to HELVETAS employees and every other person working for HELVETAS. HELVETAS has introduced these procedures to enable employees and other persons to raise or disclose concerns about malpractice at an early stage and in the right way. They apply in all cases where there are genuine concerns, regardless of where this may be and whether the information involved is confidential or not.

The scope of this policy covers the following matters warranting complaints, including but not limited to information concerning:

- an act or omission constituting a violation of HELVETAS policies, standards or practices,
- an act or omission constituting an offence under any provincial, national or federal legislation,
- an act or omission that creates a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or to the environment,
- gross mismanagement.

### **9. Gender Equality and Social Equity (GSE) Strategy & Policy**

The GSE strategy encompasses our commitment to GSE in our organisation at the level of our human resources management and development policies and practices in the form of our GSE Diamonds standards, alongside our GSE policy which outlines our working principles in our programs and field operations, The GSE policy reflects the vision and values of HELVETAS, it sets out the ways in which we can better focus our work in supporting the rights of women, girls and disadvantaged people or groups' rights to inclusion, participation, representation, access to essential services and in turn the equitable access to socio-economic benefits.. It expresses our commitment to human rights, social inclusion, social cohesion, social protection, social security and social justice. As a policy document, it is not time bound, but establishes a frame of engagement.

### **10. Code of Conduct for Contracted Parties**

HELVETAS' Code of Conduct for Contracted Parties is described in chapter 4 of this statement.

### **11. Policy on Collaboration with Private Companies**

This policy establishes, clear principles for engaging with private companies or corporate foundations based on the principles and values expressed in the mission statement. It aligns with Human Rights principles and the policies of HELVETAS. The annex to this policy outlines the decision-making process for engaging with a private company, including the assessment (due diligence) of reputational risks.

### **12. Procurement Manual**

The Procurement Manual (hereinafter: MANUAL) sets the fundamental principles for the procurement of goods, services and works, purchased by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (HELVETAS). The rules and regulations are applied at Head Office in Switzerland and in country offices and projects worldwide. The procurement manual, among others includes requirements in regard to social and environmental responsibility.

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## **4. Our supply chains, partners and Code of Conduct for contracted parties**

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Due to the nature of our work, we have diverse partnership and business relationships, but also working relationships with other actors worldwide. These are consortium partners, subcontractors, service providers,

suppliers, but also organisations of target groups or beneficiary groups, from civil society or the private sector.

It is important to HELVETAS that we can expect our partners, suppliers and service providers to work to the same high ethical standards as we do. This explicitly includes standards related to human rights and the treatment of their employees and workers with dignity and respect in a fair, ethical environment. This is expressed in our due diligence processes, as well as in the Code of Conduct for Contracted Parties, which is binding for all cooperation partners and prescribes compliance with HELVETAS' own policies, regulations and guidelines.

We conduct a systematic review process (due diligence) of potential partner companies, contractors, service providers and suppliers. This review covers aspects of our internal policies, values and Code of Conducts as well as aspects of UNGC's ten principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour and Environment as review criteria. HELVETAS also disposes and applies its policy for the collaboration with the private sector and the multistakeholder initiative assessment framework.

HELVETAS' disposes of a human rights due diligence tool specifically designed for the due diligence of private sector companies. Specific emphasis is given to aspects of gender, children's rights, labour rights, environment, and anti-corruption. The assessment standards of the tool integrate principles of the UN Global Compact as well as of UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

HELVETAS' Code of Conduct for Contracted Parties outlines the attitude and the behaviour that HELVETAS expects from consultants, services providers of goods and services, implementation partners, system partners and assisted organisations that are responsible for implementing projects, project components and/or recipients of contributions, in Switzerland as well as abroad.

The Code is binding for contracted parties and addresses components as civic duty, use of competences, means and assets, culturally sensitive behaviour, personal and professional conduct, protection of children and youth, mobbing and sexual harassment, conflict of interest, fraud and corruption, safety, security and health, environment and social safeguarding, anti-money-laundering, organised crime and countering terrorism, as well as respective reporting mechanisms and whistle-blower protection. The respective institutional policies, regulations and guidelines of HELVETAS (see chapter 3) are integral part of this Code of Conduct.

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## 5. Training

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HELVETAS places the utmost importance on its employees being aware of the issues of modern slavery and human trafficking, and on their adherence to HELVETAS' values and the corresponding institutional policies and codes of conduct, which they are obliged to follow.

Employees are trained in this regard during the hiring and onboarding process. HELVETAS will continue its commitment to strengthen employees' understanding of and adherence to their obligations.

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Melchior Lengsfeld, Executive Director  
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation



HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation  
Weinbergstrasse 22a  
P.O. Box, 8021 Zurich, Switzerland