

# Human Resources Policy

## Heights and Minds Foundation

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### 1. Preface:

NGOs are about principles. At Heights and Minds, everybody - founder, Board, network partners, staff, advisors and service providers should feel that they are part of the same mission and share the same vision.

The core principles of the Heights and Minds Foundation are reliability, accountability and transparency. We practice these ourselves and foster them in our external environment: network partners, governments, donors, and service providers.

One of the main requirements for those with whom we work is to be a reliable and transparent organization where everyone feels responsible and accountable as part of HR policy.

This document provides the Human Resources (HR) principles and policy which apply to staff and Board alike. They are supplemented with a Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy as well as a Code of Conduct which outlines the behavioral expectations and requirements for both staff and the Boards.

### 2. Mission:

The Heights and Minds' mission is to promote the growth and development of children and prevent chronic malnutrition during the first 1,000 days of life. Chronic malnutrition in the first 1,000 days increases the risk of impaired brain development with lifelong negative effects.

### 3. Vision:

The vision of Heights and Minds is to empower young parents, especially women, in underserved communities with the knowledge and tools to promote child development and prevent chronic malnutrition, by providing them with safe and fun places for experience sharing, collaboration, and articulation of local solutions. This place we call a MindUp.

By doing this, we contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 "Zero hunger" and SDG 3 "Good health and well-being".

#### **4. Working together**

Both Board and Staff will only function at their best if their relationship has a strong foundation. The staff need to have ways of providing information to the Board and contribute to the process of policy development. They must then be ready to understand, accept and work within that policy frame-work. And they need to have the room to make decisions themselves within the framework.

All policy documents at Heights and Minds Foundation are shared with staff and advisers for input and comments before they are discussed and approved at the Board. In case of divergence, the Board will endeavor to enter into a wider consultation process to achieve consensus on the respective policy.

#### **5. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

Heights and Minds is committed - in recruitment, training, selection and working environment - to refrain from any discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion, disability, health status or age. Our work with beneficiaries is designed to be as inclusive as possible – MindUps are accessible to anyone in the community with early childcare responsibilities. In addition, we promote cross-cultural learning and cooperation through video exchanges among the MindUps in diverse countries such as Senegal and Indonesia.

With regard to training, Heights and Minds will make decisions based on a needs assessment of the tasks ahead and skills assessment for the staff.

#### **6. Boards**

The Heights and Minds Foundation statutes define the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Institutional and Global Boards. The Institutional Board comprises a Chair and two Board members, who serve as Treasurer and Secretary. All Board members have an extensive track record in serving in international and multicultural organizations.

A Global Board is set up for advice on the Foundation's forward strategy as well as the global conditions guiding work for the nutrition and health sector in which Heights and Minds operates.

The Institutional Board and Global Board members are not remunerated. Travel expenses will be covered by the Foundation if needed and if the annual budget of the Foundation allows for this.

## **7. Staff, service providers, experts, advisers and interns**

Heights and Minds Foundation may hire staff and experts and use the services of companies, advisers and interns to achieve the mission of the Foundation. These are chosen to give the Foundation the broadest possible representation and to give opportunities to nationals of the beneficiary countries.

Heights and Minds Foundation currently employs an external administrator to provide the monthly and annual statements. Heights and Minds also uses the services of an IT company which kindly provides its services on a pro bono basis.

## **8. Code of conduct**

Heights and Minds developed a code of conduct for staff to guide the work both within the organization and with partners. This Code will emphasize working with respect with diverse persons , entities and cultures.

## **9. Employment policy of the country.**

Heights and Minds Foundation is based in the Netherlands and abides by the national employment and tax laws.

When working with partner countries, local contracts may be utilized. In these cases, the employment conditions of the respective country will apply as a rule. Heights and Minds will ensure that the contracts will be in line with the requirements of this HR policy.

## **10. Working conditions**

- The pay structure for staff is comparable to similar organizations (smaller international network NGOs) within the Netherlands.
- As regards free-lance work, the fee will be established based on the expertise needed, the skill set provided and the perimeters of the donor contract.
- Advisers will provide their work on a *pro bono* basis. Travel costs may be reimbursed if the attendance of the adviser is desired at a specific meeting or training.
- As regards interns, the rules of the supplying educational institution will apply, including, budget allowing a contribution to travel costs.
- As regards working times and days: work-from-home is standard practice as Heights and Minds does not have and does not plan to have an office. This practice is designed to be flexible, locally responsive and budget conscious. The number of working days per week or month are

specified in the individual employment contracts, again to be flexible and responsive to needs on the ground.

- Transportation for official work travel costs will be reimbursed based on public transport fares (2<sup>nd</sup> class as regards trains). For international travel the cheapest air fare will be selected unless travel time is deemed to be excessive. In this case, a more favorable travel option in terms of time may be selected.
- Holidays: 23 days as standard unless otherwise agreed upon in the employment contract. The holiday allowance will be calculated and included within the monthly salary.
- Pension: Heights and Minds Foundation does not provide for a pension system.
- Each staff member will have a clear description in the employment contract as regards reporting, supervision, training and annual assessment.
- Health and safety: Heights and Minds Foundation will apply the health and safety standards in force in the Netherlands. As regards international travel, insurance will be included for each assignment and the guidelines of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be respected and followed to cover security and health risks. The costs of obligatory vaccination will be covered for each mission.

## **11. Disputes**

In case of employment disputes, the matter will be discussed in an amicable manner based on the guiding principles of the organization between the person concerned and Heights and Minds management. If necessary, a Board member not involved in the daily work may be consulted to help achieve a solution to the issue at hand.

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## **Annex 1:**

### **Equal opportunity and diversity policy**

Heights and Minds believes that a diverse and inclusive work environment is essential to achieving our mission of ensuring access to high quality, inclusive, child centered nutrition services for all. Equal opportunity and diversity principles are in line with our aim to get the best from our people and give them the greatest opportunity to do their work well. The equal opportunity and diversity policy applies to all employees, experts and volunteers engaged by Heights and Minds.

#### **What is equal opportunity and diversity?**

Equal Opportunity means fairly treating staff, consultants and volunteers. Fair treatment is:

- treating people as individuals without making judgments based on irrelevant personal
- characteristics
- creating a work environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimization
- allowing all employees to work to their full potential
- making decisions based on merit.

Embracing diversity means celebrating the similarities and differences that makes each person unique and putting this into action through our policies, processes and behaviors to create an inclusive organizational culture.

#### **Diversity principles**

1. Heights and Minds is committed to attracting, developing and retaining a diverse and talented community of staff, experts and volunteers.
2. We value collaboration, based on the diversity of our ideas, perspectives and experiences.
3. We create a safe and inclusive culture where all people treat each other with respect and dignity.
4. Barriers to an inclusive work environment are identified and actions are taken to address them.
5. We all share responsibility for supporting diversity and creating an inclusive work environment.

#### **Equality principles**

Equality is first and foremost that all persons will be free from discrimination whether during the selection or recruitment process or at work. Heights and Minds refrains from and condemns discriminatory actions whether it is unfair treatment on the basis of age, sex, chosen gender, race, disability, sexuality, marital or domestic partnership status, pregnancy, association with child, caring responsibilities, identity of spouse, religious appearance or dress, political opinion, religion, social origin, irrelevant criminal record or trade union activity.

### **Statement of commitment**

Heights and Minds is committed to fair treatment of employees, consultants and volunteers in relation to human resources decisions, including in relation to recruitment, promotion, compensation, performance management, training and development and termination.

Heights and Minds also requires all employees, experts and volunteers to act in a manner consistent with this policy during the course of carrying out their work and in any interactions with Heights and Minds partners in its network.

As part of Heights and Minds commitment to promoting equal opportunity, relevant indicators will be added to Heights and Minds annual reports. We will report on the recruitment that year as well as how diversity and equality principles were applied.

### **Procedure for raising a complaint**

Heights and Minds is committed to listening to any grievances in relation to equal opportunity and diversity and taking action to resolve issues as appropriate. The first step is to discuss the issue directly with the person concerned. As Heights and Minds is a small organization at this stage differences of opinion or frictions all persons working for Heights and Minds whether volunteer, staff or external staff need to feel safe to raise issues when they arise.

In case of disputed the matter will be discussed in an amicable manner based on the guiding principles of the organization. If necessary a Board member not involved in the daily work may be consulted to help achieve a solution to the issue at hand.

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## **Annex 2**

### **Code of Conduct**

Heights and Minds is committed to the best practice and quality of work of its staff, its partner organizations and other third parties, including the suppliers.

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to provide clear guidance on the standards of behavior required by all implementing partners, civil society organizations, INGOs, networks, alliances, and suppliers, involved in programs, further referred to as “third parties”. Any unacceptable behavior breaching this Code may result in termination of the contract with Heights and Minds.

#### **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Heights and Minds is obliged to ensure that staff, experts and volunteers will avoid any unacceptable behavior and they will comply with the following eight standards:

**1. Highest standard of personal and professional conduct**

All people have to be treated with respect and dignity. Any forms of discriminative behavior on the basis of race, gender, religion, social status, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation and others are unacceptable. Any behavior likely to cause harm to children, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, is prohibited.

**2. Local laws and cultural norms are to be respected.** All persons working for Heights and Minds should behave in a culturally sensitive manner, as long as the rules of local laws do not contradict international legal standards, universal principles of Codes of conduct and basic human rights

**3. All persons working for Heights and Minds should always use appropriate language and appearance in the given situation.**

**4. The possession, distribution or consumption of illegal substances at the work place (including vehicles) or when on duty is strictly forbidden.** Any type of work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any illegal substance is not acceptable.

**5. No involvement in activities which are illegal or might compromise the work of Heights and Minds is acceptable.** Taking part or supporting any illegal or criminal activities is unacceptable.

**6. In case a Heights and Minds partner or one of its staff is subject to criminal prosecution they are obliged to inform a member of Heights and Minds management immediately.**

7. No corrupt or fraudulent behavior is acceptable. All persons working for Heights and Minds should avoid any situation where personal interests could be in conflict with the interests. Corruption is an abuse of the entrusted power for the private advantage of any person. This includes offering, giving, demanding or receiving financial or material gifts, loans, rewards, provisions or any other advantages from/to a third person as incentive to achieve something which is dishonest, illegal or breaching confidence within the framework of contractual relations. This refers in particular to: Bribery and the acceptance of bribes, excessive gifts or favors in return for support, goods or services.

#### 8 .Fraud

All persons working for Heights and Minds should refrain from fraudulent actions. Fraud is a theft or misuse of funds or other resources, which may or may not also involve misstatement of financial documents or records to conceal the theft or misuse. Examples of fraud include, but are not limited to, the following:

Theft of funds or any property, falsification of costs or expenses, forgery or alteration of documents.

### **Core principles**

In order to protect the most vulnerable adults and children, and to ensure the integrity of Heights and Minds activities, the following seven principles must be adhered to:

1. Child abuse and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of contract or legal action.
2. 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.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes the exchange of assistance that is due to program participants.
4. Concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse, harassment or exploitation and child abuse by a fellow worker must immediately be discussed to Heights and Minds management.
5. All persons working for Heights and Minds are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents child abuse and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. All persons working for Heights and Minds should treat children



with dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, disability, or other status.

Behave appropriately; make sure that language is moderated in their presence and refrain from adult jokes or comments that may cause discomfort or offence.

6. When collecting data from children (during assessments, monitoring and evaluation, etc.) all persons working for Heights and Minds should reduce the risk of potential harm by using culturally appropriate ways of communication, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and not asking about painful experiences. If distressing data has to be obtained, try to use indirect data collection methods and be prepared to refer the distressed child to professional care.

7. When getting and/or using children's images for visibility purposes (i.e. photographing or filming a child/children) ensure that the products (e.g. photographs, films, videos) present children in a dignified and respectful manner, with children being adequately clothed and not in poses that could be misleading or seen as sexually suggestive. When taking an image of a particular child for a specific purpose (medialization, advocacy, fundraising, etc.), explain how the product will be used and for that obtain legitimate consent from the child, whenever possible also from a parent or guardian of the child. Ensure that images of children availed for public use do not reveal any identifying information.

All persons working for Heights and Minds must not touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive manner (personnel in direct medical care positions are to follow International and/or local country industry best practice guidelines).

All persons working for Heights and Minds must refrain from language or demonstrate behavior that is harassing, abusive, demeaning, sexually provocative, or culturally insensitive towards children.

All persons working for Heights and Minds should refrain from engaging children in any form of activity that is demeaning, offensive, sexually provocative, abusive or culturally inappropriate or insensitive act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others.

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