



Human Resource Policies and Guidelines

Version 3.0
February 2025

This document includes:

- 1. Human Resources Policy**
Comprehensive guidelines and principles governing employment practices and organizational conduct.
- 2. Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy**
Principles and practices to ensure fair treatment, promote diversity, and foster an inclusive work environment.
- 3. Code of Conduct**
Standards of behavior and ethical guidelines expected of all staff, consultants, advisors, and Board members.

Development, Approval, and Revision Process for Human Resource Policies

Creating, approving, and revising Human Resource policies involves a structured approach. Initially, needs are identified, and research is conducted to draft comprehensive policies. A draft undergoes internal review and stakeholder consultation to gather feedback and ensure compliance. Once revised, the policy is submitted for formal approval from senior management or the Board. After approval, an implementation plan is developed, including training and communication. The policy is then distributed and accessible to all relevant parties. Regular monitoring, feedback collection, and periodic reviews ensure the policy remains effective and up-to-date, with revisions made as needed and reapproved through the same process.



Human Resource Policy

1 Definitions

1.1 Staff

Individuals employed by the Heights and Minds Foundation under a formal employment contract. Staff members are responsible for carrying out the day-to-day operations and activities of the Foundation.

1.2 Consultant

An external expert or professional hired on a temporary or project-specific basis to provide specialized knowledge or services. Consultants are not employees of the Foundation and do not receive employment benefits.

1.3 Intern

An individual who works for the Foundation, usually for academic credit or to gain professional experience, under an agreement with an educational institution. Interns may be compensated or provided with a stipend, depending on budget and policy.

1.4 Advisor

An external expert who provides strategic guidance and advice on specific areas relevant to the Foundation's work. Advisors typically work on a pro bono basis and may have their travel expenses covered if necessary.

1.5 Board Member

An individual serving on the Institutional or Global Board of the Heights and Minds Foundation. Board members provide oversight, strategic direction, and governance for the Foundation. They are not remunerated but may have their travel expenses covered by the Foundation.

1.6 Volunteer

An individual who offers their time and services to the Foundation without financial compensation. Volunteers assist with various activities or projects based on their skills and interests, and they may receive reimbursement for approved expenses related to their volunteer work.

2 Preface

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

The core values of the Heights and Minds Foundation are integrity, mission-driven, innovative, respectful, fun, teamwork, adaptable and flexible and passionate. The core principles of the organization are demand-driven, needs-based, community-owned, technology-driven, shared expertise, sustainable, empower, globally-connected. 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 policies which apply to all stakeholders, including staff, consultants and Board alike. It is complemented by our Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy and Code of Conduct, which define the behavioral expectations for staff and the Board.

3 Mission:

The mission of Heights and Minds is to give children a strong foundation in life by preventing chronic malnutrition and promoting cognitive development in the first 1,000 days of life.

To achieve this, we use an innovative tech-based approach to address child growth, development and parenting challenges in the first 1,000 days through local MindUp centers run by local partners supported by our global Heights and Minds team.

4 Vision:

Heights and Minds envisions a world where every child's first 1,000 days ensure a happy, healthy, and productive life, free from malnutrition and rich in cognitive development opportunities.

This vision supports the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 "No Poverty," 2 "Zero Hunger," SDG 3 "Good Health and Well-being," SDG 5 "Gender Equality", and SDG 8 "Decent Work and Economic Growth."

5 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 avenues to provide input into policy development. They must then be ready to understand, accept and work within that policy framework. 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 where relevant with 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.

6 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Heights and Minds is dedicated - in recruitment, training, selection and working environment – to creating an inclusive work environment free 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 the Global Network and video exchanges among the MindUps in diverse countries.

Our training decisions are based on a needs-assessment of the tasks ahead and skills assessment for the individual.

7 Boards

The Heights and Minds Foundation statutes define the composition, roles and responsibilities of the Institutional Board and a Global Board.

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.

The 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.

8 Staff, service providers, experts, advisers and interns

Heights and Minds Foundation may hire staff, consultants, and experts and use the services of companies, advisers and interns to achieve its mission.

Staff members are those with employment contract with the Foundation.

All persons involved in the work of the Foundation are chosen to give the Foundation the broadest possible representation and to give opportunities to nationals of the beneficiary countries.

The Foundation also employs an external administrator to provide the monthly and annual statements.

9 Code of Conduct

Our Code of Conduct sets forth the standards of behavior expected from staff, experts, and volunteers, and all who are part of representing and contributing to the Foundations' mission to guide the work both within the organization and with partners. It emphasizes respect, professionalism, and adherence to ethical practices. All parties must avoid discriminatory behavior, respect local laws and cultural norms, and refrain from substance abuse and illegal activities. Violations may lead to termination of contracts or other actions.

10 Employment Policy of the Country

Heights and Minds Foundation is based in the Netherlands with the Chamber of Commerce registration number 70041512 and abides by the national employment and tax laws. Heights and Minds is also registered in the United States under EIN 923041626.

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 and local regulations.

11 Working conditions

11.1 Pay Structure

The Heights and Minds Foundation ensures fair compensation and is benchmarked against similar non-government organizations (i.e. smaller international network NGOs) within the country the individual is hired.

- **Base Salary:** Determined by role, experience, and industry standards, ensuring alignment with market rates.
- **Consultant Fees:** Set based on expertise, scope, duration of the assignment, and parameters of donor contract.
- **Benefits:** Benefits are not included in the standard pay structure and will be specified separately in individual contracts or agreements, if applicable.
- **Adjustments:** Compensation structures are subject to periodic evaluation.

11.2 Advisers

Advisers contribute on a *pro bono* basis. Travel costs may be reimbursed if the attendance of the adviser is desired at a specific meeting or training.

11.3 Interns

Interns are governed by the rules of their supplying educational institution. Where budget allows, a contribution to travel costs may be provided.

11.4 Working Environment

Remote work (work-from-home) is standard practice at Heights and Minds. The Foundation does not have and does not plan to have a physical location. 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.

For assignments that require on-ground presence (such as missions), the duration and specifics of these assignments will be explicitly detailed in the contract. This ensures clarity on the time commitment and logistics involved in such assignments.

11.5 Employment Contracts

Each team member will have a clear description in the employment contract as regards reporting, supervision, training, and annual assessment.

11.6 Travel Costs

Transportation for official work travel costs will be reimbursed based on public transport fares.

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.

11.7 Pension

Heights and Minds Foundation does not provide for a pension system.

11.8 Health and Safety

Heights and Minds Foundation will apply the health and safety standards in force in the Netherlands.

As regards international travel, it is expected staff and consultants acquire insurance may be reimbursed on the basis of each assignment. The costs of obligatory vaccination will be covered for each mission.

12 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.



Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy

1 Introduction

Heights and Minds Foundation 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. This policy outlines our commitment to equal opportunity and diversity, ensuring that all employees, experts, and volunteers are treated fairly and with respect.

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.

2 Definition

Equal Opportunity: Treating all individuals, including staff, consultants, and volunteers, fairly without discrimination based on irrelevant personal characteristics. This includes:

- Treating individuals as unique without bias or making judgments based on irrelevant personal characteristics, such as on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, or other protected characteristics.
- Respecting personal pro-nouns and identities.
- Ensuring work environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimization.
- Allowing all individuals to reach their full potential based on merit.

Diversity: Embracing and 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.

3 Diversity Principles

1. Heights and Minds is dedicated to attracting, developing and retaining a diverse and talented community, including staff, experts and volunteers.
2. We value collaboration, based on the diversity of our ideas, perspectives, and experiences.
3. We strive to create a safe and inclusive culture where all people treat each other with respect and dignity.
4. We proactively identify and address barriers to inclusivity within our work environment.
5. All members of our organization share the responsibility for supporting diversity and creating an inclusive work environment.

4 Equality principles

All individuals will be free from discrimination during recruitment, employment, and all related processes. 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.

5 Statement of Commitment

1. Heights and Minds is committed to fair treatment in all human resources decisions, including recruitment, promotion, compensation, performance management, training and development, and termination.
2. All members, including all staff, consultants, advisors, board members, experts and volunteers, must act in a manner consistent with this policy during their engagement with Heights and Minds and in interactions with our partners and global network.
3. As part of Heights and Minds' commitment to promoting equal opportunity, relevant indicators will be added, upon request, to Heights and Minds annual reports. We will report, upon request, on the recruitment that year as well as how diversity and equality principles were applied.

6 Procedure for Raising a Complaint

Heights and Minds is dedicated to addressing grievances related to equal opportunity and diversity and taking action to resolve issues.

As a small organization, Heights and Minds values open communication and encourages all members—including volunteers, staff, and external personnel—to raise concerns and express differing opinions in a safe and respectful manner. This approach helps address issues promptly and maintains a positive working environment.

If a dispute arises, it will be handled amicably in accordance with the organization's guiding principles. The initial step is to discuss the concern directly with the person involved. Should further resolution be necessary, a Board member not involved in the daily operations may be consulted to assist in resolving the issue.

Code of Conduct

1 Introduction

Heights and Minds is committed to maintaining the highest standards of practice and quality of work among its team members, partner organizations, and third parties, including suppliers. This Code of Conduct outlines the expected standards of behavior for all individuals and entities directly engaged with Heights and Minds, including but not limited to implementing partners, civil society organizations, INGOs, networks, alliances, and suppliers. Any behavior that breaches this Code may result in the termination of the contract or partnership with Heights and Minds.

2 Standards of Conduct

Heights and Minds expects all members, including consultants, interns and volunteers, to avoid any unacceptable behavior, and adhere to the following eight standards:

2.1 Highest standard of personal and professional conduct

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.
- Avoid any discriminatory behavior, including discriminative behavior based on race, gender, religion, social status, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.
- Prohibit any behavior that is likely to cause or will cause harm to children, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and neglect.

2.2 Respect for Local Laws and Cultural Norms

- Respect local laws and cultural norms.
- Ensure behavior is culturally sensitive, as long as the rules of local laws do not contradict international legal standards, universal principles of Codes of Conduct and Basic Human Rights.

2.3 Appropriate Language and Appearance

- Always use appropriate language and maintain suitable appearance in all situations.

2.4 Substance Abuse

- The possession, distribution or consumption of illegal substances at the workplace (including vehicles) or when on duty is strictly forbidden. Work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any illegal substance is not acceptable.

2.5 Legal and Ethical Behavior

- Refrain from involvement in activities which are illegal or might compromise the work of Heights and Minds. Participation in or support of any illegal or criminal activities is unacceptable.

2.6 Criminal Prosecution

- Inform Heights and Minds management immediately if a partner or member of the team is subject to criminal prosecution.

2.7 Anti-Corruption¹

- Avoid any form of corruption or fraudulent behavior.
- Refrain from any situation where personal interests could be in conflict or in conflict with the Foundation's interests.
- Do not offer, give, demand, or receive financial or material gifts or benefits in exchange for dishonest or illegal actions.

2.8 Fraud²

- Refrain from fraudulent actions, including theft or misuse of funds and falsification of documents.

3 Appropriate Conduct Principles

In order to protect vulnerable individuals, including women and children, and to maintain the integrity of Heights and Minds activities, adhere to the following principles:

3.1 Child Protection

- Child abuse and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of contract or legal action.

3.2 Prohibition of Sexual Activity with Minors

- 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.

3.3 Prohibition of Exchange for Sex

- 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.

3.4 Reporting Concerns

- Report any concerns or suspicious activity regarding sexual abuse, harassment, or exploitation, and child abuse to Heights and Minds management immediately.

3.5 Creating a Safe Environment

- Maintain an environment that prevents abuse, sexual exploitation, and harassment.
- Treat participants, including children, with dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, disability, or other status.

¹ 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.

² 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, are the following: theft of funds or any property, falsification of costs or expenses, forgery or alteration of documents.

3.5.1 Inappropriate Physical Contact

- Do 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).

3.5.2 Respectful Communication

- 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 participants and children.
- Behave appropriately; make sure that language is moderated in the presence of children and refrain from adult jokes or comments that may cause discomfort or offence.

3.5.3 Appropriate Activities

- 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.

3.6 Data Collection

- When collecting data from participants or children (during assessments, monitoring, evaluations, etc.), employ culturally sensitive methods. Prioritize minimizing potential harm by using appropriate communication techniques, securing informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and avoiding inquiries about distressing or painful experiences.
- If it becomes necessary to gather distressing data, opt for indirect data collection methods when possible, and be ready to refer any distressed child or participant to professional support services.

3.7 Use of Images

3.7.1 Images of Children

- When capturing or using images of children (e.g., photographs, films, videos) for visibility purposes, ensure that the images present children in a dignified and respectful manner. Children should be appropriately clothed, and poses should avoid being misleading or sexually suggestive.
- Obtain informed consent from the child's parent or guardian before using the images. Clearly explain how the images will be used, including any specific purposes such as media, advocacy, or fundraising.
- Ensure that any images of children used publicly do not reveal identifying information.

3.7.2 Images of Adults

- When capturing or using images of adults, ensure that the images are presented respectfully and in a manner appropriate to their intended use. Avoid any poses or content that could be perceived as misleading or inappropriate.
- Obtain informed consent from the individuals depicted before using their images. Clearly communicate the intended use of the images, including any public or promotional purposes.

- Ensure that images of adults used publicly do not reveal personal or sensitive information without their permission.

4 Training and Awareness

All individuals covered by this Code are required to read, understand, and adhere to this policy. It is their responsibility to familiarize themselves with the standards and practices outlined herein.

Heights and Minds does not routinely offer training on Code of Conduct, but if a request for training is made, the organization will provide appropriate training to help the individual understand and adhere to the standards set forth in this Code of Conduct.

5 Privacy and Confidentiality

Heights and Minds is committed to ensuring confidentiality during investigations and to protecting the identities of individuals who report breaches or violations.

6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Adherence to this Code will be regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure both compliance and effectiveness.