

Recommended procedures in the case of sexual abuse of children and adolescents occurring within projects

Position paper issued by KOLPING INTERNATIONAL

Children and adolescents are in particular need of protection. We at KOLPING INTERNATIONAL consider it our duty to empower young people, further their development and protect them from all manner of dangers, but in particular from exploitation, sexual violence and abuse. However, we can only meet this obligation with our KOLPING INTERNATIONAL partners, in a spirit of true cooperation and mutual trust.

We at KOLPING INTERNATIONAL and the partners that we sponsor have contributed a great deal towards ensuring that children and adolescents are respected as individuals and allowed to grow in a safe, nurturing environment. These young people have been entrusted to those running the projects and whose role is multi-faceted, be it as trainers, teachers or caregivers. This trust is a precious asset. Any form of sexual abuse is especially damaging. It causes the abused immeasurable pain, destroys all trust and discredits the project managers and their organisations.

As a rule KOLPING INTERNATIONAL provides the funding for our partners' operations, but we are not in charge of operations and therefore cannot be held directly responsible for the misconduct of any member of staff working on those projects; nor can we intervene directly in the case of abuse. And yet we bear considerable moral responsibility for the well-being of all those in our charge and this requires our special attention and sensitivity. For this reason, it is imperative that any danger or suspicion of misconduct be followed up and investigated. With this in mind, we ask all project partners to instruct their staff about the following guidelines:

1. If any member of staff at KOLPING INTERNATIONAL learns of any incident of sexual misconduct from a worker at our partners' organisations, he or she is to inform the International Executive Board and the SEK e.V. Executive Director immediately.
2. The project officer responsible for that particular project will immediately report these allegations to the legal entity responsible, or to the board members, and request a response. He/she will also request to know what measures if any, have been put in place. Should there be real grounds for suspicion or fear that the safety of those in our charge has been jeopardised, we will demand that the project officer suspend the alleged suspect from all further duties and deny him/her all access to the alleged victim of abuse, as well as to all other children and adolescents, until such time as the matter has been properly investigated.
If necessary KOLPING INTERNATIONAL will arrange a meeting with the partner organisation or, depending on the nature of the case, commission an external investigator to look into the matter.
3. Preliminary investigations into abuse allegations shall be conducted with the utmost diligence and care. Protecting the alleged perpetrator is as important as recognising the right to be assumed innocent until proven guilty by due process of law. All accusations are to be responsibly handled and thoroughly investigated. Throughout the course of the investigation, the legal entity is obligated to respect the particular legal requirements of that country with regards to disclosure of information to the relevant prosecuting authorities.

4. The legal entity shall offer necessary assistance to the victim and to his or her trusted third party and shall, in the name of the organisation, beg forgiveness in an appropriate manner.
5. As project contractor, KOLPING INTERNATIONAL shall maintain contact and be informed as to how the case is proceeding, what measures are being taken and what the outcomes have been.
6. Should we judge the case to have been inadequately managed by the project officers in charge, we reserve the right to take further steps with regards to structuring plans for future cooperation. This will involve among others, taking the following action against our partner, depending on the gravity of the situation, acts and omissions. We will:
 - stop already approved payments
 - cancel any agreement and end all cooperation
 - reject any further project-related funding
 - consider their possible expulsion from the International Kolping Society

It is important to ensure that the measures are based on a proper sense of proportion so as to avoid unnecessarily putting an entire project at risk or threatening the future work of a partner agency at the cost of damaging the many other children and adolescents in our care.

Position paper approved by the Board of SEK e.V. on 09-12-2010 in Cologne, Germany.