

Aims and Basis of Cooperation with Companies

1. Aims of company cooperation

Terre des hommes would like to appeal to companies as part of society and gain their support for its goals.

Terre des hommes would like to prevail upon companies that violate human rights through their business activities to cease such abuses and act responsibly.

Thematic aims of company cooperation

Company cooperation has the aim of advancing the implementation of children's rights and promoting projects for children. The aim of cooperation with companies is to improve the situation in which children live.

Practical objectives are agreed in detail in each case. The basis and orientation are taken above all from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the relevant standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESC rights) and, depending on the topic, other relevant international agreements, along with the development policy positions of terre des hommes.

Financial aims of company cooperation

The systematic use of the instrument of company cooperation serves to increase and secure income for terre des hommes.

Public relations aims of company cooperation

The organisation terre des hommes becomes better known.

A specific topic or issue is given greater publicity.

New target groups may be approached (company staff; customers; corporate business partners).

2. Basis of company cooperation

Company cooperation is one instrument among others. It is integrated into the political strategy of terre des hommes. The role of terre des hommes here is that of an independent partner in a critical dialogue. Its critical awareness-raising must not be limited by the cooperation. Companies that infringe human rights, deny this and/or make no effort to remedy the situation must be confronted with public pressure, campaigns etc. Cooperation is not a suitable instrument for that. Such confrontative instruments can turn into joint projects, e.g. the carpet campaign led to the Rugmark Label or the flower campaign produced the Flower Label Programme. But even then, the role of Terre des hommes remains that of an independent partner in a critical dialogue.

There shall be no cooperation with companies that infringe human rights through the manufacture of certain products, their dealings with their staff and customers or generally through their business approach, which do not protect the environment or which disregard the law. This concerns, e.g.

- companies that make weapons or war materials and/or sell them,
- companies that through big projects contribute to environmental degradation and the displacement of people,
- companies that manufacture or sell harmful substances although the use of these substances is prohibited,
- companies that abuse people's lack of rights, e.g. in dictatorial systems,

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- companies that bribe decision-makers and/or engage in tax evasion,
- companies that profit from illegal activities.

Company cooperation must have clearly defined aims relating to the cooperation. In practice, terre des hommes cannot advise and accompany a company in all questions of human and labour rights, health and safety, environmental policy, prevention of corruption and other aspects of ethical action. Terre des hommes concentrates on the implementation of the rights of children. However, the behaviour of companies in other fields plays a role in its decision on cooperation (coherence).

Should infringements of human rights or environmental protection by a company be known or become known during a cooperation, these must be raised with the company. The cooperation must be terminated, or not even begun if the company refuses to cease these abuses although this would be in its power.

When terre des hommes cooperates with a company two different worlds come together. On the one hand, development policy work, which is concerned with economic, social, mental and physical distress and problems, the causes of which are also to be found in our economic system. On the other hand, the company must first be mindful of its own economic goals. When they cooperate terre des hommes and the company come from different worlds. For successful cooperation terre des hommes and the company must get to know each others' goals and strategies, respecting their logic and mechanisms. This respect must find its limits in the event of proven violation of human rights.

Terre des hommes must be able to conduct a critical dialogue (professionalism, resources).

Terre des hommes and the company agree to enter into a process together, in particular with thematic cooperation. Starting from a certain issue, goals are agreed, to be reached within an appropriate period of time. Here the local situation has to be brought in, along with the assessment of the project partners and, as required, other local NGOs, in particular on the named timescales for the desired developments (differing dynamics of campaigns/demands in Europe and what actually happens at the local level.)

The linking of thematic cooperation with companies to project partners must be guaranteed. Project partners must be in a position to take part in critical dialogues.

In the case of thematic cooperation with a company in which projects are also supported there must be guarantees that terre des hommes will continue to support the projects during the agreed term, even if the critical dialogue with the company is interrupted for reasons of political differences. The cooperation agreement states that the company will continue to pay the promised donations to the end of the agreed period. Should this prove impossible due to the serious nature of the conflict, terre des hommes will continue to support projects from its normal budget; reserves will be formed for that purposes.

Projects must correspond to the project criteria of terre des hommes. The whole project accompaniment (monitoring and financial control) lies in the hands of terre des hommes. The cooperation partners will be informed of how terre des hommes and its partners work, and will accept this. Cooperation is based on the agreement that the cooperation partner will not have any influence on the functioning of terre des hommes and its partners.

Terre des hommes can at any time reject donations or terminate cooperation with a company if that company violates its principles.

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Terre des hommes has a fundamentally positive attitude to donation cooperation with companies and associations. It should be noted, however, that the goals of business enterprises, in particular, may conflict with important aims of terre des hommes. Cooperating with companies may entail risks for terre des hommes. For that reason such agreements must be decided and carried out with great care. The board has adopted relevant Implementation Criteria, which will be regularly reviewed and updated.

Adopted by the Delegates' Conference 12th June 2006.