PEOPLE IN AID

Promoting good practice

in the management and

support of aid personnel

Policy Guide and Template

Codes of Conduct

Created December 2003, Revised in 2008

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Foreword by People in Aid

Aid and development work is as much about how assistance is delivered as it is about the type of assistance provided. The personal and organisational behaviour of humanitarian personnel has a direct and often significant impact on the success of humanitarian efforts. That is why developing a "code of conduct" has become increasingly important for the continuation of our roles, protection of our staff, and why this is such an important issue for those of us involved in management.

Introduction to the Policy Guides

Since its inception, People In Aid has been bringing together agencies working in the aid and development sector, to enhance the impact they make through better management and support of staff and volunteers.

This document is part of a People In Aid initiative, the 'Policy Guidelines', whereby agencies share their knowledge and experience of a particular issue in order to increase the quality of people management generally within the sector. It forms part of a bank of reference material on a range of people management themes. The material is categorised in three levels:

- Resource Sheets – one or two pages of references and sources of information
- Information Notes – slightly more detailed overview of a specific area of interest
- Policy Guidelines – more detailed documents offering guidelines on policy development

For those agencies which have no established policy we hope this document both prompts and assists you. For those agencies which already have a policy, perhaps the document will encourage a re-think in one or two areas, or a complete revision.

The following notes are not intended to give you an 'off the shelf' policy which you can immediately use within your own organisation. They do, however, offer you the thinking and experiences of other agencies in our sector and prompt you to assess how your own organisation, with its unique mission, values and resources, can best respond to your organisational and staff needs in this important policy area.

The People In Aid Code of Good Practice suggests that human resource policies benefit the organisation most when staff have been involved in their creation and are briefed on their use. In addition, effective policies require managers to implement them and monitor their effects.

We hope to be continually updating our policy guide documents. This relies on new knowledge and experience being relayed to us by you. Please e-mail us on info@peopleinaid.org with your contributions and comments.

Acknowledgements

This document has benefited from the policies, suggestions or thinking of International Federation of the Red Cross, International Organization for Migration, Mission Aviation Fellowship Europe, Médecins Sans Frontières Holland, Norwegian Refugee Council, PLAN International, Save the Children UK, Save the Children Sweden, World Food Program, The United Nations, Oxfam GB, Help Age International, Medair and a variety of expert individuals from the NGO community. People In Aid would like to thank them for their input.

Codes of Conduct: Introduction

As humanitarian assistance becomes more professionalised it is essential that organisations employing staff, or facilitating volunteers, ensure that all persons involved in service delivery maintain the highest standards of personal and organisational performance. Beneficiaries are entitled, and increasingly expect, to receive high quality assistance from high quality and qualified personnel. A failure to adhere to these expectations can significantly impact programme outcomes. It is therefore insufficient to focus solely on the integrity of programme outcomes; it is essential to also consider the integrity and behaviour of those who manage, lead and facilitate such programmes. Additionally, it is increasingly likely that a failure to maintain professional standards could result in legal action against the organisation and or its Trustees/Directors.

A code of conduct is, at its simplest, a description of minimum acceptable standards of behaviour that are required in humanitarian aid environments and those that do not form part of the repertoire of successful aid workers. A code such as this has many similarities to codes of ethics in health, the legal and other professions.

A code of conduct serves two primary purposes. To protect the reputation of the organisation and the people who work within the organisation. These two reputations form the only tangible asset of any humanitarian organisation. Losing a reputation for integrity will make it extremely difficult to obtain donor funds or to adequately connect to the local community. Preserving this primary asset must be a key strategy of any humanitarian agency.

Each humanitarian organisation will have a set of core organisational values which inform and drive the activities of its staff. In addition, the universal humanitarian values of equality, justice, equity, freedom, respect and access to basic resources form the basis for humanitarian work and are subscribed to by all organisations working in the sector. A code of conduct for workers should be linked clearly to the organisational values, however these are articulated.

It is important to realise that a code of conduct does not exist to protect an agency from its staff. A code of conduct should not be created with intent to limit the legal liability of a humanitarian organisation as a result of the actions of staff. While limiting legal liability may appear attractive to managers, the reality is that such an approach is really only useful internally. Externally an organisation will generally be viewed as being responsible for the actions of its staff no matter how successful it may have been in reducing exposure to court actions.

For many years smaller NGOs and organisations have not felt it necessary to formally document codes of conduct. These codes are contractually binding in many cases and form part of the terms and conditions of employment. The larger global agencies have in recent years moved to implement formal codes of conduct. Some of these codes are relatively complex, yet the core elements of a code remain relatively simple and are accessible to agencies of any size and complexity. Smaller size organisations may be tempted to avoid preparing a code of conduct on the grounds that they know their staff personally, everyone can be trusted, or there just is not the time to spend on its preparation. People In Aid strongly recommends that every humanitarian organisation, no matter its size or nature, incorporate a code of conduct in its human resource management policies.

It is also important to note that a code of conduct will not by itself meet all the organisational or employment needs. While a code can add considerable value to any humanitarian organisation it is best developed in the context of a comprehensive and holistic approach to the employment of people in humanitarian work.

Therefore humanitarian agencies need to ensure that the purpose of the code is clearly outlined in the introduction to the policy document.

Link to People In Aid Code Principles and Indicators

Although the People In Aid Code of Good Practice does not specifically suggest that agencies develop a code of conduct for staff and / or volunteers, it is clear that a code of conduct will help organisations in their efforts to meet the requirements of Principle 3, which stresses the importance of 'Good support, management and leadership of staff' in ensuring organisational effectiveness.

Definitions

To summarise, a code of conduct is, at its simplest, a description of the behaviours that are required in humanitarian aid environments and those that do not form part of the repertoire of successful aid workers. A code of conduct serves two primary purposes. To protect the reputation of the organisation and the people who work within the organisation.

Core Elements of a Code of Conduct

A code of conduct is primarily about human behaviour. Its purpose is to identify specific behaviours that are either essential to the success of the programme or those that could negatively impact outcome objectives or the wider reputation of the organisation. In its simplest form, then, a code is a list of behaviours viewed as either acceptable or unacceptable and may focus on behaviour both inside and outside the organisation and workplace. Examples of uncomplicated codes do exist and in many environments are sufficient. Where the work of the humanitarian organisation is broader, global and relates to wide sections of the local community it may be necessary to prepare a more in-depth code. The principles will, however, be the same. Organisations that have clear value and mission statements may wish to frame codes of conduct around those provisions. In cases where organisational human resource policies exist it is useful to link provisions of the code to those policies.

In order to be truly complete organisations will need to consider compliance mechanisms, disciplinary procedures and grievance actions that are appropriate if employees fail to comply with the code. This particular guide does not address these components in detail as there are others on these subject areas. However, no code of conduct can exist without some component of enforcement, an exercise of authority and a description of possible outcomes for behaviours or activities that fall outside the boundaries of acceptable organisational conduct.

Scope of the Code of Conduct

The introduction to a code needs to clearly outline who is covered by it. Where certain groups of people are excluded from the code a clear explanation of this should be provided. The code might also include reference to any review or performance appraisal system your organisation operates. Some humanitarian agencies are including codes of conduct as part of the performance objectives for workers.

- Does the code apply to only full-time paid staff, or does it also cover part time staff, volunteers, field staff, national staff, expatriate staff, staff dependents and family members?

Some organisations make differentiations between conduct at a field location and conduct in home cultures or countries. In these circumstances agencies may find it useful to clearly articulate this difference.

- Does the code apply to all agency locations or only to specific ones? Are specific behaviours relevant to specific locations and not to others?

Generally organisations find that there are key components of a code of conduct that are core to agency profile, operations and objectives. Where such core elements exist it may be useful to identify these components here in the scope. Essentially these elements are pertinent in any culture, context or circumstance, and will be complemented by local variations where appropriate.

In some contexts certain specific behaviours may be permitted for cultural or religious reasons that may not be allowable in locations where expatriate staff have come from. Where such conditions exist it is recommended that the code clearly identify what these behaviours are and which groups of staff are bound by the code. Core elements may be influenced by local culture and legal requirements. This may appear to lead to differences in policies as they relate to local versus international staff. By making it clear in the scope of the code why variations exist, staff will be assisted in maintaining compliance with the provisions.

In the table of contents we have ***italicised*** those items most likely to require local variations.

In creating a core list, and local variations, humanitarian organisations have had most success where there is a high degree of consultation at local and international levels.

A code of conduct is both foundational and dynamic. Most humanitarian organisations include a regular review process, most often annually, as a way to ensure that the agency code is matching the work reality. This review process can also serve the purpose of bringing the code to the attention of workers and reminding them of its provisions.

Workers need to be reminded that adherence to a code of conduct should not be at the expense of sensible decision making. For example, protecting the rights of children is a core element of most codes of conduct. However, an individual worker who intervenes in the beating of a child by a group of adults may not be demonstrating the most sensible approach towards adhering to the code.

Beginning the process of creating a code

Many humanitarian organisations have struggled to find the time, energy and personnel to start the process of creating a suitable code of conduct. There are so many conflicting pressures on management and staff. However, agencies that do not have a written code have found to their cost that the lack of a code consumes much more time and energy at a later stage.

Senior leadership affirmation appears essential to this process. Broad consultation within the organisation, both with local and international staff, advances the process.

- Is it possible for the most senior manager to issue a statement affirming the need for a code?

- How could you ensure the widest possible consultation for this process? It may not be possible to obtain opinion from every worker, but representation should be broad.

If the organisation has a specialist Human Resource management function, ensuring that line management are fully part of the process is essential.

- Codes of conduct reference behaviours. Is it possible to obtain legal advice from local as well as international lawyers to assist in the process?

Implementation of the code

The code needs to be clear as to who within the organisation is responsible for ensuring that it is implemented, monitored and evaluated. Generally this will be a specific position, such as in the Human Resources department, but in smaller agencies responsibility might be with the Director or Programme Manager.

Included in the implementation description there needs to be reference to enforcement or compliance provisions. Many organisations have disciplinary procedures, grievance policies and performance management processes. Where the implementation of a code of conduct interacts with other organisational policies or practices this should be included.

It is generally useful to include a short statement as to how the organisational code of conduct (and disciplinary procedures) relate to local and international employment law. Most organisational policies are subject to legal provisions but a few humanitarian agencies state that they are subject to laws in so far as they do not contradict the humanitarian principles of the organisation.

In order to enhance the importance of the code of conduct it is recommended that at the point of hiring each staff person be given a personal copy of the code, and sign a document indicating intent to comply with its provisions. Signing of the code demonstrates the organisation’s commitment to uphold the dignity of beneficiaries and their communities. Some organisations have taken the decision to make their code of conducts contractual in order to demonstrate unequivocally the importance attached to adherence.

Reviewing existing codes of conduct

It was apparent in reviewing the examples of existing codes that were shared with People In Aid that there are many common areas of focus. In the sections below we seek to highlight those areas and a few others that may be of use in developing a code. Some organisations have used their codes of conduct to provide an overview of some contractual elements such as benefits and terms and conditions and/or other HR policies such as harassment and bullying and discipline and grievance. This guide does not touch on these areas and focuses purely on conduct as defined above i.e. behaviour that can impact the reputation of the organisation or individuals who work for it.

In order to draft a code of conduct an organisation may wish to consider the following issues.

Personal integrity and organisational values

What kind of personal integrity does your organisation aim for in its staff?

Codes of conduct can remind people of their own deeply held values and encourage them to retain those as the foundations of their work. However, many people find it challenging to articulate these values in specific ways. Some humanitarian organisations have found a process of exploration as a team or a group to be useful to articulate individual values. Through this process employees can explore how values translate into behaviours and what these may look and feel like in practice. In most circumstances individual workers will identify with overall agency values, but this linkage may not be strong until an intentional process is undertaken to achieve this alignment.

- Does your organisation have a pre-existing value or mission statement? How can such statements be articulated in a code of conduct?

- Would it be possible to facilitate a process whereby workers are able to identify where their own values fit with organisational values?

Some agencies connect individual performance assessments with clear behavioural statements in a code of conduct. Utilising a behavioural competencies framework can help with this.

- How could this form part of your performance management process?

- How would you incorporate training and/or awareness of this code into staff recruitment or development procedures?

Professional ethics, neutrality and impartiality

Many staff are also members of professions that have existing professional ethical codes or statements. Such statements are powerful reminders of the need for integrity in humanitarian work. Some organisations have found that making specific references to previously existing codes assists in setting the context of an agency code of conduct.

- How could your organisational code of conduct encourage workers to adhere to any professional code they may belong to?

In order to attain our programme objectives neutrality is often a key component of organisational practice.

- How could your code articulate this objective without impacting important humanitarian activities such as advocacy and assertiveness of basic human rights?

Corruption and the abuse of power

Is corruption or the potential for abuse of power, a challenge in your working environment?

- What kind of personal and business behaviours would you wish to promote and enhance in your agency?
- What levels of compromise, if any, would you be willing to accept regarding local contracting customs, arrangement and agent's fees etc that enable business to continue?
- Is it acceptable in your working environment for family members and friends to be employed in the same location? Is nepotism acceptable in your agency? In which contexts is this permitted and which is it not?
- How will you separate workers' personal interests from organisational interests? Is it permissible for an employee to create a contract for services to your agency where the service provider is a member of the staff person's extended family? Where do you draw the line? In cultures where extended family networks are the main structural foundation it is not always easy to avoid family members having business relationships.
- Other potential conflicts of interest to be aware of include political affiliations and involvement, including party activism or standing for election.

Many humanitarian organisations have found that well designed employment provisions which clearly define the extent of restrictions on family members working together, or contracting for services with the agency, limit exposure to potential corrupt practices. Adequate, fair and equitable salary and benefits paid to staff may reduce the needs for extra income that may lead to pressures to indulge in corrupt practices.

Relationship to local culture, religion and traditions

Many humanitarian organisations find that there is a need to consider staff relationships to local culture, religion and traditions. While there are many behaviours that are obviously inappropriate in a specific location there are many more subtle factors that it may be useful to highlight in order to assist workers in field environments.

- Are there specific cultural practices that you wish to encourage or discourage? How would you define what are acceptable behaviours in the working environment? For instance, some humanitarian organisations disapprove of staff having more than one spouse, even if polygamy is legal in the local context.

- Where certain behaviours are permitted in the working location, but are illegal in other countries what restrictions would you wish to place in a code of conduct?

- If your agency employs local staff will any restrictions apply equally to expatriate and local staff? Is it possible to delineate provisions restricting expatriate involvement in local behaviours while permitting local staff to continue involvement?

- In many contexts today religious tension is a reality. Is it useful to you to limit staff involvement in local religious practices? Is it necessary to reduce staff's open involvement in their personal religious practices? What limits can you place on private and public behaviours?

- If your organisation has an explicit or implicit religious ethos how is that worked out in the behaviour of individual staff? Would it be useful to include such a recommendation in a written code? One code of conduct encourages staff to hold firmly on to their own religious beliefs while practising restraint in how such beliefs are shared in the local context. Where sharing of religious beliefs is part of the activities of the agency some have developed training programmes for workers in order to assist them to perform this function appropriately.

Involvement with local community activities

All localities have a wide range of community activity. Development and relief work depends on successful relationships with local community members. How would you like your staff to conduct their relationships with the local community?

- How could you encourage staff to be appropriately involved in local community affairs? A code of conduct need not be a list of restricted behaviours. It could also enhance relationships and build networks.

- There may be certain community activities you do not wish your staff to become involved in. Is it permissible for them to become members of local political parties? Are they able to personally advocate on behalf of local disadvantaged people? Or would you prefer that such activities are undertaken by defined organisational persons?

Security of organisational assets

Security of agency assets is a significant factor for many organisations. While large physical items such as vehicles and buildings have obvious security and ownership factors, many organisations are finding that the use of these, and other, assets by workers can impact operational functioning. Some codes of conduct include reference to this area by considering the following questions.

- How do you encourage workers to maintain security and integrity of organisational assets and knowledge?

- Does your organisation legally own all the information created or stored within the agency? How can you protect this institutional knowledge?

- How do you wish to manage organisational assets such as vehicles, office equipment and computers? Do you wish to limit personal use of these assets in any way?

- Do you wish to extend the definition of protecting assets to include restrictions on their appropriate use? For example, many organisations link their codes to their computer usage policy, for example, excluding the access or circulation of offensive material or material that runs contrary to the organisation's values, e.g. pornography.

- Marketing and branding are key components of humanitarian work today. How can you encourage workers to maintain the integrity of organisational logos or other advertising material? Are employees permitted to use such materials out of work time or for personal use?

Media relationships and press statements

Relationships with the media are critical to the success of humanitarian work. Most organisations have clearly articulated provisions relating to media relations contained in employment contracts and policy documents.

If the environment the organisation works in is particularly sensitive it may be useful to include reference to existing policies in the code.

- How do individual workers interact with organisational media personnel?

- It is possible that a worker is also a professional expert outside the context of the organisation. What guidelines could you offer for employees who also have a professional network or presence in their own area of speciality?

Behaviour outside of work

Does your organisation recognise a separation between work time and non-work time?

In many cultures the western concept of a person having a work identity which is separate from a private identity is untenable. Many western expatriates, however, continue to assert the belief that there are times in the day that the employer has no influence or authority over their behaviour. Many humanitarian aid agencies have found it useful to articulate these complexities as part of a code of conduct.

- Is there a private life as opposed to a public, paid life?

Some codes of conduct attempt to affirm the presence of both private and public life for individuals while reminding workers that external perception may not make the same distinction.

Some acknowledge that conduct outside the workplace carries greater potential personal and organisational risk in the field than at head office or a regional centre for example. Whilst all staff are bound by the code of conduct therefore, its interpretation may need to vary slightly depending on circumstance.

- Is it possible to articulate a code of conduct that affirms the widest possible range of cultural norms?

In terms of well-being and safety many organisations are promoting a strong separation between work and non-work. People In Aid supports policies that encourage workers to take time away from programme activities in order to enhance personal health. **(See People In Aid Code Principle 7 and policy guide on Rest and Relaxation).** Without negatively impacting this process is it possible to remind employees that when they are in a field location they are likely to be viewed as representatives of the organisation regardless of whether they are working or not?

Alcohol and drugs

The use of drugs and alcohol by humanitarian workers has been a controversial issue for many years. In response many organisations have included detailed sections on such use in codes of conduct.

In contexts where alcohol use is strictly illegal many organisations find it useful to remind workers that the organisation supports local law and culture. In some countries this could be strengthened with a clear statement that breaking local law in this way could result in disciplinary action. Some organisations have found that including such statements enhances relationships with local community leaders.

- How does your agency view the use of alcohol and drugs? Are there existing policy statements or value statements that refer to such use? How do these relate to a behavioural code?

- Where recreational drugs are freely available and even legal do you wish to create institutional provisions relating to drug and alcohol use? What would you base these provisions on? How would you enforce them?

- Most northern occupational and safety laws prohibit the use of any drug related substance and alcohol that impairs functioning in the work place. Would it be useful to expressly prohibit workers from being influenced by alcohol or drugs during the work period?

- What restrictions, if any, would your organisation wish to impose on staff during off-work or private time? It could be useful to remind staff that their behaviour during off-work periods will often be seen as reflecting on the employing agency.

- Are there prescription drugs that may cause issues? Some drugs, such as larium, for example, can cause psychotic type symptoms. What organisational provisions would be useful in these circumstances?

Sexual behaviour

Sexual behaviour in humanitarian work has become a major issue for many organisations. In environments where cultural protective mechanisms and legal provisions have been broken or corrupted the potential for damaging sexual behaviour is very high.

- Are there specific kinds of sexual behaviour that your organisation needs to prohibit?

- Will sexual relationships between unmarried people be permitted, discouraged or prohibited? Many organisations find that sexual relationships between staff members may cause work related problems and therefore place restrictions on intra-staff relationships.

The age of consent varies considerably throughout the world, even in Western nations. In some countries it is much less than 18 years, or may not be legally restricted at all. In response to the increasing problems that have arisen from these conflicting laws many organisations have placed clear restrictions on any sexual relationships between staff and people under 18. Some agencies say that staff must never engage in any sexual activity or form a sexual relationship with a child, and deal with issues around age of consent and married couples on a case by case basis. Increasingly agencies are also placing restrictions on relationships between staff and beneficiaries. If a behaviour is legal in the field location does this mean that the organisation also approves in terms of potential wider ethical issues such as unequal power dynamics?

In many countries behaviours and relationships that are permitted and legal in first world locations are culturally inappropriate. Some organisations expressly restrict workers from homosexual relationships or unmarried couples living together. Such restrictions can have employment law implications which should be investigated in the various jurisdictions which apply to the contract of employment. An employer could find that complying with one set of laws leaves them falling foul of another, therefore well informed yet pragmatic approaches need to be adopted.

The abuse of children is of significant concern to humanitarian organisations. In response most humanitarian agencies have written statements specifically referring to abuse of children in any form. Is it necessary to refer specifically to relationships with children? A useful resource may be Keeping Children Safe, available from People In Aid or http://www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk/

Most agencies view prostitution as an unequal power relationship between men and women, and between poor and wealthy. Humanitarian processes are most often based on values and mission statements aimed at reducing or removing such inequalities.

Many campaign on these issues and pursue internal policies of gender mainstreaming. In order to avoid the charge of hypocrisy it is not uncommon for humanitarian organisations therefore to explicitly prohibit workers undertaking any activity which could call the organisation into disrepute. Some go further and prohibit their staff from purchasing, or obtaining through other influence, sexual favours.

- If prostitution is legal should the organisation attempt to control workers' involvement?

Some codes of conduct make specific reference to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDs. Notwithstanding the risk of transmitting or receiving serious disease and impacting staff health, most organisations emphasise that the power abuse of women and children through sexual relationships may be of most concern.

Use of weapons

The proliferation of weapons in areas where humanitarian work is performed continues largely unabated. In recent years aid agencies have been specifically targeted and agency personnel injured or killed while working. Most organisations specifically prohibit workers from carrying or owning any kind of weapon in the field environment. Many also prohibit the carrying of armed persons, military, police or otherwise, in agency vehicles. In other locations organisations have found it necessary to employ armed guards on agency property.

- How will the code of conduct clarify for workers when and where weapons might be permitted?

- How could you assist staff to manage situations where pressure from armed persons might compromise the code?

Other provisions

Many humanitarian organisations focus on specific sectoral operational objectives such as advocacy, gender equity, health or agriculture. Such agencies may find it useful to include reference to behaviours specific to these sectors in their code.

- If your organisation has a specific objective, such as a specific advocacy position, would you wish to encourage staff to practice that position in all aspects of their life and practice?

- Where an organisation has a focus on gender equity is the code of conduct a place to include encouragement towards this objective?

- Agencies with a child focus may find it useful to include references to behaviour towards children, or behaviour that may influence children.

- Micro-credit organisations may wish to extend provisions relating to the management of money in a code of conduct.

Enforcement of the Code

A code of conduct that does not include some reference to consequences for a failure to maintain the code will not be as strong as one that does. This guide does not include details about disciplinary provisions as they are addressed elsewhere. However there needs to be a connection between a code of conduct and human resource disciplinary processes.

- Does the organisation have, or require, a written disciplinary policy? If so, how does this policy relate to a code of conduct?

- How will the code of conduct be implemented and enforced? Is this the responsibility of the supervisor/manager or the Country Director? In some large humanitarian organisations a specialised department, such as the human resources management, is assigned responsibility for managing enforcement processes.

- Are there some behaviours that are so unacceptable that dismissal of an employee could be a consequence? Where this is a possibility many agencies have found it useful to make reference to this in a code in addition to including this in other policy documents. In addition some codes also draw attention to the fact that some behaviours are so serious they may even lead to criminal prosecution.

- How does the organisation ensure that all workers are fully aware of the code of conduct and its provisions? Is it necessary to have an annual review of the code for staff? How would this be managed? Some organisations have both annual reviews and a review on promotion or transfer to another role.

Implementation

The way in which you implement and publicise your policy will depend on the culture and communication norms of your organisation. We have therefore not attempted to offer a "one size fits all" good practice implementation guide, suffice to say that clear communication and the opportunity to ask questions or involve staff in a discussion around the subject and its application within their operational context, as well as in the development of the policy itself, will help to raise awareness and understanding of the issues.

Appendix 1 - Sample Code of Conduct

RELIEF AID* – Code of Conduct

Date of Policy Issue:
Issue Number:
Date of Policy Review:

Introduction

RELIEF AID's work is based on deeply held values and principles. It is essential that our commitment to humanitarian principles is supported and demonstrated by all members of staff.

In order to meet our objectives RELIEF AID must retain its reputation as an NGO of integrity and respect. As a member of a team that brings assistance to needy communities you represent RELIEF AID in your work and life. The code of conduct outlined below is designed for your guidance and protection to help you understand what RELIEF AID considers to be acceptable professional and ethical behaviour. In accepting appointment, you undertake to discharge your duties and to regulate your conduct in line with the requirements of this Code.

Whilst recognising that local laws and cultures differ considerably from one country to another, RELIEF AID is a British based International Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), and therefore the Code is based on European and International Legal standards, as well as being written to reflect the organisation's fundamental beliefs and values, to support its mission and its commitment to ensuring that employees avoid using possible unequal power relationships for their own benefit.

- Where this code relates to existing RELIEF AID policy documents these connections will be noted. You are encouraged to familiarise yourself with these policies.
- When you have read the code please sign in the space provided to indicate your agreement with the provisions and return the completed form to the Human Resource department.
- This code of conduct forms part of your contract of employment and failure to adhere to it could result in disciplinary proceedings, dismissal or in some circumstances criminal prosecution.

Scope of the Code

- The code of conduct covers all full-time, part-time and volunteer workers with RELIEF AID.
- All locations where RELIEF AID works are covered by the code.
- In circumstances where conditions relating to locally employed staff conflict with this code such circumstances must be discussed with the Country Director.

* Fictitious agency

Implementation of the Code

- Each staff person is required to sign an acknowledgement of intent to comply with the code.
- In field or relief environments the Country Director or Senior Relief Director is responsible for the provisions of the code.
- The Human Resources division is responsible for administering the provisions of the code and acting to resolve issues under the code.
- Disciplinary process and grievance process are contained in relevant Human Resource Policies and are administered by the Human Resources division in consultation with the Country Director.

Professional Ethics, Neutrality and Impartiality

- Workers with RELIEF AID are expected to perform their duties from a position of neutrality and impartiality.
- Where workers are members of professions with established professional ethical codes they are encouraged to continue to abide by those ethical codes as well as the RELIEF AID code of conduct.
- Workers are encouraged to review significant international documents such as the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the People In Aid Code of Good Practice, etc.

Abuse of Power

Humanitarian work is a privilege and as a result of ongoing high standards RELIEF AID continues to enjoy respect amongst our beneficiaries.

- Workers are not to use the power of their position for their own benefit or for the benefit of family members or friends.
- Kickbacks, bribes or other forms of personal enrichment are not permitted in any circumstances.
- Employees are not permitted to receive personal gifts of money, materials or services from beneficiaries or sub-contractors. See policy on dealing with gifts and hospitality, in the finance Handbook.
- In situations where contracts to provide services for RELIEF AID are being facilitated by staff, all such contracts are to be fair, equitable, written and signed by all parties.

Relationships with the local community

RELIEF AID encourages workers to develop comprehensive relationships with members of the local community. The overall success of our work will be significantly enhanced through positive local relationships. This policy is of particular relevance to RELIEF AID expatriate staff.

- Where personal interest is present workers are encouraged to join with local cultural, community and religious groups.
- Involvement in local political movements or leadership in community activities that might compromise RELIEF AID's objectives in the field country should be avoided and must not be undertaken without written permission from RELIEF AID.

* Considerable care should be exercised in the area of religious activities. Although RELIEF AID will not restrict religious practice of any kind, staff and dependents need to be aware of local sensitivities towards particular religious practices and take the appropriate actions.

Local workers are members of the community and will have relationships with many community activities.

* In the context of such relationships such workers are encouraged to ensure that their personal activities are not seen as being the official position of RELIEF AID.
* Managers will assist in this process if required. If in doubt about this, or any other aspect of this code please consult your manager.

Conflicts of Interest

Occasionally situations arise where a conflict of interest occurs between RELIEF AID activities and personal activities. This can particularly occur in the areas of service provision and business contracts.

* Workers are not permitted to form business relationships between members of their own extended family and RELIEF AID.
* Staff who also manage private businesses or have a financial interest in businesses are not permitted to sign contracts between RELIEF AID and those businesses.
* Where an employee becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest they must immediately discuss this matter with their supervisor. RELIEF AID will make every effort to ensure that staff will not be disadvantaged by the process of enhancing neutrality and fairness.
* Where workers continue to permit a conflict to remain, disciplinary processes may be invoked.

Use of RELIEF AID equipment and materials

RELIEF AID provides equipment such as vehicles and computers in order to assist the local community. RELIEF AID recognises that in some circumstances this equipment is able to be used for private purposes. (See the *Vehicle Operating policy* and the *Use of Computers and the Internet policy*)

* Employees must use RELIEF AID vehicles and computers in accordance with organisational policy. Where permission is granted to use equipment for personal use discretion must be exercised in order to maintain the reputation of the organisation.

Over the years RELIEF AID has established a significant database of expertise and knowledge relating to our humanitarian work. This knowledge remains the property of RELIEF AID and must be protected.

* Employees are not permitted to use institutional knowledge for personal advancement.

Most of the equipment owned by RELIEF AID is recognisable by the attached organisational logo and colours. This means that our reputation in the community will be impacted by the presence and use of the agency colours.

- RELIEF AID workers are not permitted to use RELIEF AID logos or colours for personal use.

Media Relations

RELIEF AID regards media coverage of our activities as being pivotal to the success of our programmes.

- All media contact must be through the RELIEF AID communications office.
- Any requests for personal interviews or comments must be referred to the communications office in the first instance.

Relationships with Other Staff

Workers are encouraged to maintain open and professional relationships with each other. Differences in culture, religion and politics should be respected.

- Staff must abide by the requirements of RELIEF AID's equal opportunities, diversity and anti-harassment policies.
- Staff must not take part in any form of discrimination, harassment, or abuse (physical, sexual or verbal), intimidation or exploitation, or in any other way infringe the rights of others inside or outside RELIEF AID
- Staff must adhere to all legal and organisational health and safety requirements in force at the location of my work.
- All staff must comply with all legal and organisational health and safety requirements in force at the location of their work, including any security guidelines.
- While it is to be expected that friendships will develop between staff such relationships must not interfere with programme objectives.
- Managers and supervisors are never permitted to form relationships of the same nature as marriage with staff they supervise.
- While employment will not be impacted in such circumstances it will be necessary to reassign the supervisory process. (Please refer to the more extensive policies in the Human Resources Policy Manual)

Weapons

- RELIEF AID prohibits any weapons in any building owned or operated by RELIEF AID, including employee accommodation.
- RELIEF AID prohibits the carrying of any weapons on agency vehicles. Armed civilian and military personnel are not permitted on agency vehicles. If armed persons threaten violence if they are not transported then the provisions of the Security Policy are to be followed.
- RELIEF AID staff are not permitted to own or otherwise possess weapons while on field assignment.

Alcohol and Drugs

- Workers are never permitted to work while under the influence of any drug related substance, legal or illegal, that affects the ability to perform their duties.
- No such substances are permitted on agency property, offices or in vehicles.
- Working under the influence of alcohol is considered gross misconduct and Workers affected by alcohol during work periods will be dealt with in accordance with disciplinary procedures. (Please refer to the *Discipline & Grievance Policy*)

Please remember that whether you are at work or enjoying private time you are likely to be viewed as a representative of RELIEF AID. Therefore you are encouraged to maintain self-control and limit the use of all substances, legal or otherwise.

RELIEF AID does not seek to restrict workers activities during private periods.

- At all times staff must comply with local laws and provisions.
- In environments where the possession and/or use of alcohol are illegal staff and dependents must not consume or store alcohol.

Behaviour that is illegal, or brings RELIEF AID into disrepute, will be referred to the senior manager according to the processes outlined in the Discipline & Grievance Policy.

Sexual Conduct

Sexual relationships are extremely powerful. RELIEF AID strongly encourages careful consideration with regard to the development of sexual relationships.

- Workers must behave according to accepted international standards and laws with regard to sexual conduct.
- Workers must also comply with local laws and prohibitions.
- Regardless of local laws or lack of such laws, staff must never engage in any sexual activity or form a sexual relationship with a child.
- Sexual relationships with programme beneficiaries, their family members or persons employed by businesses contracted to RELIEF AID are never permitted.
- In keeping with RELIEF AID's aim to remove power and wealth inequalities, staff should refrain from purchasing, or obtaining through other influence, sexual relationships of any form.

Criminal Records

- Staff must notify RELIEF AID of any unspent criminal convictions or charges prior to employment and of any criminal charges that arise during employment.

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct

The Country Director is responsible for initiating disciplinary actions under the Discipline & Grievance Policy. Please refer to that policy for detailed provisions and a description of the processes.

I have received RELIEF AID's Code of Conduct, which I have read, understood and agree to abide by.

NAME: --

SIGNED: --

DATE: --

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Visit the online People In Aid member resource site for examples of current INGO Codes of Conduct. **The People In Aid Policy Bank:** http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/policybank.aspx