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Code of Conduct for NGOs in Ethiopia

Preamble

Whereas NGOs operating in Ethiopia are committed to the advancement and improvement of the quality of life of the people, particularly the disadvantaged and the marginalized, and as such NGOs constitute an important partner in the nation's development endeavours;

Whereas the NGO sector needs to institute a code of conduct and a level of modus operandi reflecting the minimum core values of the sector with the aim of effectively meeting its objectives of development in a collaborative partnership with the government and the people of Ethiopia;

Whereas the NGO sector needs to maintain a positive stance and image of concern and commitment for public benefit and humanity and institute minimum core values against which it measures its behaviour;

Whereas the effective and efficient discharge of this responsibility calls for co-ordination and co-operation with Government, the public and other partners on the basis of accepted cardinal values;

Whereas the guarantee for freedom of association granted in Article 31 of the Constitution of Ethiopia has established a conducive environment for NGOs to come together, formulate and put to practice a Code of Conduct;

Whereas a body with the principal role of educating, mediating, arbitrating will be established to ensure adherence to the Code;

Now therefore, we the representatives of NGOs in Ethiopia hereby voluntarily affix our signatures on this code of conduct committing our organisations and ourselves to uphold the standards of conduct enshrined herein.

Definition

1. Reference to the Code of Conduct is the "The Code of Conduct for NGOs in Ethiopia, 1998."
2. A Code of Conduct is a set of norms, principles and values to standardise the conduct, action and behaviour of NGOs.
3. A NGO signatory is a NGO that agreed to abide by this code. The pronoun "We" refers to all the NGOs which are signatories to the Code of Conduct.

I. Standards of Conduct

1. People-Centred

1. We see our efforts as a stepping stone for people and communities to take care of their problems by themselves encouraging and enabling self reliance and advancing the right of people to fully participate in the decision making processes of issues that affect their lives.
- 1.2. We shall act in solidarity with the goals of the community we work with and according to the priorities that our community partners identify for themselves.
- 1.3. We shall involve men and women of the target community to the great extent possible with them being responsible for the conception, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes .
- 1.4. We respect indigenous knowledge, the dignity and identity of the person, the culture, faith and values of the communities within which we work without being supportive of traditional practices that harm the individual and the community.
- 1.5. Our programs shall be designed on the basis of the need of the people, well being of the environment and the country.
- 1.6. Our programs shall be planned, designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated with egalitarian practices and a participatory role of the people concerned.
- 1.7. We shall devote the maximum possible proportion of available resources to our beneficiaries.
- 1.8. We respect and foster internationally recognised human rights.

2. Fairness and Equity

We shall exercise and promote fairness, impartiality and equity in all of our activities and dealings with interested parties, community partners and the public at large regardless of creed, gender, class, religion and political affiliation.

3. Moral and Ethical integrity

- 3.1. We shall abhor and refrain from an involvement in fraudulent and deceitful practices.
- 3.2. We shall utilise any and all resources and privileges bestowed upon our organisations only for the purpose intended refraining from abuse or exploitation.

4. Transparency and Accountability

- 4.1. We shall be transparent and accountable in our dealings with the Government, community partners, the public, donors and other interested parties using all available opportunities to inform the public about our work and about the origin and use of our resources.
- 4.2. We shall maintain and make available periodic audit, financial and narrative reports to the concerned bodies as per their requirements.

4.3. We shall conform and uphold to the laws, rules and regulations of the Government of Ethiopia.

5. Good Governance

5.1. We shall have a constitution or a memorandum of association that clearly defines the mission, objective and organisational structure of the NGO.

5.2. We shall develop a written policy that affirms our commitment to ethnic and cultural diversity in our governance and in hiring and promotion of staff and board composition. We shall fully integrate the policy into our operations in a manner consistent with our mission and the constituency we serve.

5.3. We shall ascertain the immunity of transactions from conflicts of personal and professional interest.

5.4. Where applicable the services of the governing body shall be given freely and voluntarily apart from a reimbursement for an incurred cost in the line of service.

6. Sound Financial Policies and Systems

6.1. We shall exercise with truthfulness, honesty and integrity in all matters related to the raising, use and accounting of funds.

6.2. We shall receive funds and donations whose purposes are consistent with our mission, objectives and capacity and which do not undermine our independence and identity.

6.3. We shall maintain an annual financial audit performed by an independent auditing firm and make public and provide the financial statements upon a request by relevant and interested parties.

6.4. We shall maintain a sound financial and accounting system that ensures the use of resources in accordance to intended purposes.

7. Independence

7.1. We shall be involved only in activities and practises that do not undermine the interests of our beneficiaries and organisations.

7.2. While respecting community values and traditions, we shall strive to maintain our autonomy and to resist conditionalities that compromise our missions and principles.

8. Communication and Collaboration

8.1. We shall foster an atmosphere of collaboration and co-operation in our efforts, partnership and supportive relationships to the best advantage of our organisations and beneficiaries.

8.2. We shall promote harmony, collaboration, and team spirit and maintain the standards of conduct shown herein the benchmark of our relationship within and outside of the sector.

8.3. We shall share and exchange information, experiences and resources pertinent to our mission with the view to promote learning and common understanding.

9. Promoting Gender Equity

- 9.1. We shall seek to advance gender balance and equity and endeavour to ensure the full participation of women in all of our development initiatives.
- 9.2. We shall fully integrate gender sensitisation into our human resource development and promote non-discriminatory working practices and relationships.
- 9.3. We will strive to increase the number of women in senior decision-making positions at headquarters and in the fields, in boards, and in advisory groups where they may be currently underrepresented.
- 9.4. We shall have policies and procedures to promote gender and minority equity, pluralism and an affirmative action in recruitment, hiring, training, professional development and advancement.

10. Environmental Consciousness

We shall exercise a responsible and responsive approach for the care of the environment and the proper management of the eco-system in all of our activities.

11. Sustainability

- 11.1. We shall seek to ensure that our programs are designed in full consultation of the community and other interested parties. Projects that are to be taken over by target communities or government bodies, shall be designed and facilitated in such a way as they can be sustained after the point of hand-over.
- 11.2. We shall work towards the self-reliance of the communities and/or community partners that we work with.

12. Impact

- 12.1. We shall promote and develop clear and measurable impact indicators for our programmes/projects to help gauge the relevance and effectiveness of our inputs.
- 12.2. We shall institutionalise various monitoring and evaluation tools to gauge our performance in relation to the objectives, the short and long term goals of our activities.
- 12.3. We shall make public the findings of any assessment or evaluation of our activities.
- 12.4. We shall institute proper mechanism for internal and external evaluation of our programme accountability.

II. Code Observance

1. NGO Code Adherence Committee

- 1.1. NGO Signatories shall constitute the General Assembly of the Code Observance and is the supreme body of the Code Observance.
- 1.2. NGO Signatories shall institute the NGO Code Adherence Committee -- a mechanism to ensure the observance of the standards of conduct.
- 1.3. The Committee, accountable to the General Assembly, shall oversee, promote and maintain the observance of the Code and shall offer guidance to Signatories in the observance.
- 1.4. The Committee shall set up and oversee the Secretariat of the code observance.

2. Composition of the Committee

- 2.1. The Committee shall have seven members.
- 2.2. The General Assembly of NGO Signatories shall designate their representatives and also elect representatives from civil society.
- 2.3. The Committee shall consist of:
 - Five representatives of the NGO Signatories,
 - Two representative members from civil society.
- 2.4. The NGO Signatories nominate and select members of the Code Observance Committee by a vote of a simple majority and appoints its Chair.
- 2.5. The Committee shall have two alternate members.
- 2.6. The term of office of members of the Committee shall be two years. A member can only be re-elected for two consecutive terms.

3. Functions of the Committee

- 3.1. The Committee shall act as guardian of the Code of Conduct.
- 3.2. The Committee shall act as a bridge of harmony, understanding, trust and co-operation between the Public, the Government, the donors, the NGO sector itself and community partners.
- 3.3. The Committee shall promote and maintain the observance of the Code.
- 3.4. The Committee shall consider and determine petitions or complaints from staff, government, donors, community partners, the public and other NGOs related to non-observance or breach of the Code.
- 3.5. The Committee may from time to time review and recommend changes on the Code to the General Assembly of NGO Signatories.

- 3.6. The committee shall determine its own working procedure and norms and designate a person who would play the role of a Secretary for the Committee.
- 3.7. The Committee shall review all instances where a significant breach of the Code has taken place.
- 3.8. The Committee shall have the responsibility to create the necessary awareness of the standards of conduct to NGO Signatories.

4. Complaints

- 4.1. Any one person or group of persons may file a complaint or petition supported by evidence with the Secretary to the Committee.
- 4.2. A written complaint shall include the following:
 - 4.2.1. The name and address of the complainant;
 - 4.2.2. The name and address of the NGO or official against whom the petition is lodged; .
 - 4.2.3. The circumstances in which the breach or violation of the Code is alleged to have been committed; and
 - 4.2.4. The remedy sought.
- 4.3. The Secretary shall open a file after ascertaining that the complaint meets the requirements of 4.1 and 4.2 hereof.

5. Jurisdiction of the Committee

- 5.1. The Committee shall hear and decide all instances involving the violation or breach of the Code of Conduct by any NGO Signatory or any person acting for and/or on behalf of a NGO Signatory.
- 5.2. When a complaint is made under 4 hereof, the Committee may either dismiss the case where no breach of the Code is established or notify to the NGO signatory or official against whom the complaint is made.
- 5.3. The Committee may call a meeting of the accused NGO, Signatory and/or official of the agency and the person or group of persons who lodged the complaint to discuss the case.
- 5.4. The Committee may request any NGO Signatory and/or Official to provide evidence on a case under consideration.
- 5.5. Where the Committee find the NGO Signatory or its official to have violated the Code, they may take one or more of the following measures:
 - Provide the necessary education for compliance;
 - Call on another NGO Signatory to assist in the education process;
 - Advise the NGO Signatory to take corrective measures against the NGO official or employee who is directly responsible for the breach of the Code;
 - Admonish the NGO Signatory;
 - Recommend the suspension or cancellation from being a Signatory;

6. Appeal

- 6.1. An aggrieved party may appeal the decision of the Committee for consideration by the General Assembly of NGO Signatories within two weeks from the receipt of a copy of the decision.
- 6.2. An appeal out of date may be entertained only where the appellant is able to establish good cause.
- 6.3. The General Assembly may, after considering the decision of the Committee, the memorandum of appeal and the available evidence:
 - A. Remand the case to the Committee for reconsideration.
 - B. Confirm; reverse or vary the decision.

7. The Unseating of a Committee Member

A Committee member shall not take part in any deliberation or decision making process where he or she has an interest in the case before the Committee.