

The slo Center



Code of Conduct

Approved by the Board of Directors 03.02.2014

1 Introduction

The Oslo Center is an independent, non-partisan democracy assistance centre which assists fragile states and vulnerable democracies in strengthening democratic political institutions and processes.

The Oslo Center has a commitment to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power. We implement development programs and provide democracy assistance in many countries around the world. Staff and others representing the Oslo Center are personally and collectively responsible for upholding and promoting the highest ethical and professional standards in their work.

The management of the Oslo Center has a responsibility to ensure that all staff and persons representing the organisation are aware of this Code of Conduct, that they understand what it means in concrete behavioural terms and how it applies to the programme context.

2 Purpose

The main purpose of the Oslo Center Code of Conduct is to raise awareness and promote greater accountability among and between representatives of the Oslo Center, our Partners and the people with whom we work in our development programs. It seeks to protect staff as well as every woman, man girl and boy with whom we work from abuse by individuals within the organisation. The Code of Conduct is intended to serve as a guide for Oslo Center staff and representatives to make ethical decisions in their professional lives and at times in their private lives.

3 Scope

The Oslo Center Code of Conduct applies to all staff employed by or on contract with the Oslo Center. It also applies to temporary personnel such as consultants, volunteers and students/interns who work with or represent the Oslo Center in our development work. The term “staff” will be used hereinafter in this document for all who represent the Oslo Center as employed personnel or as volunteers.

All Oslo Center representatives are encouraged to promote the spirit and principles of the Oslo Center Code of Conduct among our partners.

The Code of Conduct shall be signed by all Oslo Center staff. All staff is responsible for ensuring that the Code of Conduct is complied with.

4 Oslo Center Code of Conduct

The Oslo Center Code of Conduct outlines the key responsibilities of all staff in relation to respect for the welfare and rights of the people with whom they work in the development context. It is designed to assist staff to better understand the obligations placed upon their conduct, as to prevent the following: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), all forms of harassment, fraud and corruption, security breaches, and unethical business practices.

Therefore, all Oslo Center staff shall at all times:

- Respect and promote fundamental human rights without discrimination.
- Treat all communities and Partners with whom we work fairly and with respect, courtesy, dignity and according to International Laws and Standards
- Promote the implementation of the Oslo Center Code of Conduct by contributing towards the creation and maintenance of an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse, abuse of power and corruption.
- Report immediately any knowledge, concerns or substantial suspicions of breaches of the Code to her/his line manager, who is expected to take prompt investigative action.
- Be aware that failure to disclose or knowingly withhold information about any reports, concerns or substantial suspicions of breaches of this Code of Conduct constitutes grounds for disciplinary measures.

- Feel protected by the Oslo Center`s commitment to providing a safe environment through which to voice a concern, without fear of reprisal or unfair treatment.
- Uphold the highest standards of accountability, efficiency, competence, integrity and transparency in the provision of assistance, goods and services in the execution of their job.
- Cooperate when requested with any investigation into alleged breaches related to this Code.

4.1 Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Sexual exploitation and abuse are one form of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The Oslo Center recognises that Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) can occur in any development or humanitarian setting.

To protect our stakeholders in all situations, Oslo Center staff shall while on duty and off duty:

- Understand that sexual exploitation and abuse by staff involved in development and humanitarian work constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
- Never engage in any sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- Not accept, solicit or engage in the "buying" of or profiting from sexual services.
- Never exploit the vulnerability of any target group in the context of development and humanitarian work, especially women and children, or allow any person/s to be put into compromising situations.
- Know that the exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited.
- Never abuse a position to withhold development or humanitarian assistance or give preferential treatment; in order to solicit sexual favours, gifts, payments of any kind, or advantage.
- When working with children, avoid actions or behaviour which may constitute poor practice and never act in ways that may place a child at risk of abuse.
- In countries where the Oslo Center undertake long-term development work, an employee who engages in a long-term sexual relationship with a member of the community or the Partner organization, which is benefiting from the Oslo Center programme, and/or with another employee, is encouraged to inform his or her manager about the relationship to prevent a possible conflict of interest.
- The Oslo Center promotes the integration of a gender-sensitive perspective into efforts to effectively prevent and respond to sexual abuse and exploitation.

4.2 Harassment

Oslo Center staff shall never commit any act or form of harassment as it results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to individuals, especially women and children. The Oslo Center does not tolerate any form of workplace violation such as harassment (including sexual, gender and racial harassment), bullying and discrimination, that is, any unwelcome comment or behaviour that is offensive, demeaning, humiliating, derogatory, or any other inappropriate behaviour that fails to respect the dignity of an individual.

Therefore, all Oslo Center Staff shall:

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect in the workplace. Speak with civility and kindness, listen carefully, and consider others wellbeing.
- Never commit any act or form of harassment as it causes physical, sexual, psychological or emotional harm or suffering to individuals, especially women, children and people with disabilities.
- Never engage in any behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, that makes the recipient feel persecuted, vulnerable and powerless.

- Understand what constitutes harassment, recognise early signs of sexual, gender and racial harassment (among others) and take swift action to prevent and resolve.
- Violent, harassing or discriminatory behaviour of any kind directed toward another person in the workplace or in the communities with whom the Oslo Center works is unacceptable and shall not be tolerated.
- If any incident of bullying should occur, immediate action will be taken to stop it. Employees, who become victims of bullying, will be supported and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against those found to have committed an act or form of harassment.

4.3 Fraud and corruption

The Oslo Center has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption. Oslo Center staff shall never take advantage of their position when working with communities, partners, or other stakeholders.

Therefore, Oslo Center staff shall at all time:

- Promote a culture of honesty and openness among Oslo Center staff and management.
- Be transparent in all work-related financial transactions.
- Never steal, misuse, or misappropriate funds or property, ensuring that financial and other resources are used solely for the intended purposes. This applies also to any other income generated such as any interest received/earned on the funds.
- Create a work environment where communities and staff can safely, and confidentiality raise and report all serious concerns about suspected fraud and corruption.
- Never knowingly support individuals or entities involved in illegal activities.
- Never deliberately destroy, falsify, alter, or conceal evidence material to an investigation or make false statements to investigators in order to materially influence or impede investigations into corrupt, fraudulent, coercive or collusive allegations.
- Conduct all business in accordance with internationally accepted practices and procedures and uphold the highest standards of accountability and transparency in relations to finances, management and governance, where relevant.

4.4 Unethical business practices

The Oslo Center promotes moral and ethical business practices.

Therefore, all Oslo Center staff shall:

- Always follow transparent, accountable and honest practices when receiving cash donations from the public earmarked for development purposes.
- Never use or accept a bribe in the form of money, goods and or services to secure a contract for services when dealing with suppliers in any development or humanitarian work.
- Never take part in activities that generate personal, organisational or collective profit such as buying or selling when such activities may affect or appear to affect the Oslo Center's credibility or integrity
- Never share in the profits or budget leftovers as kick backs, cuts or discounts for personal or organizational benefits
- Declare any known or potential conflicts of interest to their employer (e.g. direct relationship with service providers or suppliers of goods for Oslo Center's programmes, etc.)
- Never accept any gifts or other favours that may influence the performance of staff functions or duties. In order to respect national and local traditions and conventional hospitality, minor token gifts can be accepted.
- Never use illegal labour, child labour and forced labour in any work area
- Always pay compulsory State taxes and comply with national business law and international standards.
- Always strive for the highest health, safety and environmental standards in all programme work
- Ensure, where possible, that goods purchased are produced and delivered under conditions that do not involve the abuse or exploitation of any persons and have the least negative impact on the environment.

- Never use or distribute known unsafe products or supplies in any development or humanitarian setting.

4.5 Security breaches

The Oslo Center places the security and safety of all staff and those with whom we work as a top priority and will strive to do all that it reasonably can to ensure that staffs are secure as they go about their work. Security is an individual as well as an organizational responsibility.

Therefore, all Oslo Center staff shall:

- Adhere to the Oslo Center’s security principles and guidelines.
- Never use or possess weapons or ammunition of any kind while on duty
- Never drive a vehicle while on duty under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substance and comply with the laws of the country in which they are working in relation to both.

5 Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures

Violation of this Code of Conduct will not be tolerated and may, in accordance with relevant legislation, lead to internal disciplinary actions, dismissal or criminal prosecution. Offences will be subject to criminal prosecution.

The Oslo Center has a responsibility to handle and respond to any allegations of misconduct they receive from their partners or stakeholders about their employees. Management of the Oslo Center should establish proper systems for investigating, recording and dealing with misconduct. A mechanism should be in place where complaints are investigated promptly, while maintaining discretion and confidentiality and protecting the rights of all individuals involved. Breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported immediately to senior management and in line with agreed complaints handling procedures.

Those who wish to lodge a complaint about an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct by a member of Oslo Center staff should lodge their complaint to her/his line manager as soon as possible after s/he becomes aware of the concern.

Any Oslo Center staff person purposely making false accusations on any action by another Oslo Center staff which is in breach of the Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of the employer.

6 Understanding the Code of Conduct

The signatory (Oslo Center staff/consultant) below has read, understood and is in agreement with the content of this document, the Oslo Center Code of Conduct, which shall be subject to periodic revision and review. The signatory accepts the consequences of any violation of any of the above provisions under this Code of Conduct.

Name:.....

Signature:.....

Date:

Place:

Annex 1: Key terms and definitions

(Copied from ACT Alliance Code of Conduct – dated 05 February 2011)

Abuse of power: Abuse of power includes any abusive behaviour (physical, psychological, sexual, or emotional) by a person in a position of authority and trust against someone in a position of vulnerability and/or dependency.

Bullying is aggression expressed psychologically and emotionally rather than physically. The term is used to describe a repeated pattern of negative intrusive violation behaviour against one or more targets and comprises constant trivial fault-finding criticism, refusal to value and acknowledge, undermining, discrediting and a host of other behaviours.

Complainant: The person making the complaint, including the alleged survivor of the sexual exploitation and abuse or another person who becomes aware of the wrongdoing.

Discrimination: Discrimination means exclusion of, treatment of, or action against an individual based on social status, race, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, political affiliation or disability.

Corruption is the “offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may improperly influence the action of any person”

Fraud is an intentional distortion, deceit, trickery, and perversion of truth or breach of confidence, relating to an organization’s financial, material, or human resources, assets, services and/or transactions, generally for the purpose of personal gain or benefit. Fraud is a criminal deception or the use of false representations to gain an unjust advantage.

Harassment: Harassment means any unwelcome comment or behaviour that is offensive, demeaning, humiliating, derogatory, or any other inappropriate behaviour that fails to respect the dignity of an individual. Harassment can be committed by or against any member of the community with whom we work, partners, employee, vendor or other individual visiting or doing business with an agency (see definition of sexual harassment further below).

Minor: A person under age 18 (a child according to the definition in the Convention for the Rights of the Child, CRC).

Gender based violence (GBV): “Any harm that is perpetrated against a person's will; that has a negative impact on the physical or psychological health, development, and identity of the person; and that is the result of gendered power inequities that exploit distinctions between males and females, among males and among females. Although not exclusive to women and girls, GBV principally affects them across all cultures. Violence may be physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or sociocultural.” Gender-based violence may manifest in numerous ways: domestic violence, battering, rape and marital rape, female genital mutilation, torture, trafficking, and forced prostitution, dowry-related violence, marriage and in certain cases, violence perpetrated or condoned by the state.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse is actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual exploitation: Sexual exploitation means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, sexually or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (UN SG Bulletin, 9 October

2003). In these situations, the potential victim believes she/he has no other choice than to comply; this is not consent and it is exploitation. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- Humanitarian/development worker demanding (or accepting) sex in exchange for material assistance, favours, or privileges.
- Teacher insisting on (or accepting) sex in exchange for passing grade or admission to class.
- Refugee leader demanding (or accepting) sex in exchange for favours or privileges.
- Security worker insisting on (or accepting) sex in exchange for safe passage.
- Driver demanding (or accepting) sex to give a female person a seat in the vehicle.

Exploitation is using one`s position of authority, influence or control over resources, to pressure, force or manipulate someone to do something against their will or unknowingly, by threatening them with negative repercussions such as withholding project assistance, not approving an employee`s work support requests, threatening to make false claims about an employee in public, etc.

Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment means any unwelcome sexual advance, comment, expressed or implied sexual demand, touch, joke, gesture, or any other communication or conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, written or visual, by any person to another individual within the scope of work. Sexual harassment may be directed at members of the same or opposite sex and includes harassment based on sexual orientation. Sexual harassment can occur between any one or more individuals, employee or beneficiary, regardless of their work relationship.

Subject of the complaint (SOC): The person alleged to have perpetrated the misconduct in the complaint

Survivor or victim – the person who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused. This term implies strength, resilience and the capacity to survive.

Protection: Ensuring that individual basic human rights, welfare and physical security are recognized, safeguarded and protected in accordance with international standards.

Workplace violence: Any incident, in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work. These behaviors would originate from customers, co-workers at any level of the organization. This definition would include all forms of harassment, bullying, intimidation, physical threats/assaults, robbery and other intrusive behaviors (ILO).

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