

Code of Ethics

1. Context

NGOs operate in an increasingly complex field paved with many challenges and shrinking community support (HIVA, 2012¹). People's perception of the relevance of development cooperation is declining, as is the perception of its effectiveness (only 8.6 % is convinced that the money is 'well spent'). A growing group is of the opinion that development cooperation budgets should be reduced (more than 44 % in 2012). This tendency can be explained in several ways, the causes being both internal (quality, effectiveness, transparency, scandals... in the field of development cooperation) as external (economic crisis, far-reaching secularization...).

Light for the World's value and long-term success are inextricably linked with our flawless reputation and the confidence in our organization on the part of all parties concerned. This is why it is of paramount importance to continue to uphold the highest ethical standards and values. Light for the World's performances are assessed not only on the basis of the results obtained, but just as much in the light of the way in which those results have been achieved.

This Code of Ethics will be the moral compass directing our activities towards the achievement of our vision and mission.

2. Vision and mission

As a Belgian certified NGO, Light for the World is continuously striving for the highest possible level of transparency, sound management and accountability. As far as fundraising is concerned, the organization subscribes to the code of ethics of the VEF/AERF ('Association for Ethical Fundraising', *Vereniging voor Ethiek in de Fondsenwerving/Association pour une Éthique dans les Récoltes de Fonds*, <http://www.vef-aerf.be/?Ethische-Code>).

Light for the World not only maintains ethical principles as far as fundraising is concerned. The organization instils ethical values and principles in every facet of its functioning. They serve as guidelines for every important decision taken. By drawing up a Code of Ethics, the organization aims at preventing and/or revealing misconduct and learning from the past in order to avoid future similar situations.

Ethical principles have a direct bearing on the vision and mission of the organization (<F:\09. Procedures - ISO manual\09. Handboek LFTW\09. General policy management\09. Vision-mission - strategy\BD009 - strategisch kader 2015-2020.pdf>):

Light for the World is a Belgian NGO committed to fighting avoidable blindness and curing eye diseases, empowering and improving the quality of life of people with a disability and their families and defending their rights, in underprivileged countries.

To this end, Light for the World will grow further into a reference centre for Central and East Africa as

¹Pollet, Ignace (2012). *Algemene barometer draagvlak ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Enquête en focusgroepsgesprekken over het draagvlak voor ontwikkelingssamenwerking bij de Belgische bevolking*. Leuven: HIVA-KU Leuven.

far as preventing and curing blindness and eye diseases as well as empowering and improving the quality of life of people with a visual impairment are concerned.

3. Values

Light for the World commits itself to achieve its vision and mission upholding the following values:

- Integrity
- Decisiveness
- Compassion
- Involvement
- Professionalism and focus

a) Integrity

We treat each other with mutual respect. We are fair and reliable and expect no less from our partners.

b) Decisiveness

We implement our plans in an efficient and effective manner.

c) Compassion

We are working towards establishing sustainable relationships and building trust through dialogue and inclusion. We feel connected with and committed to others. We respect the uniqueness of each individual.

d) Involvement

We feel connected to our mission and vision and believe in the meaningfulness of our actions. We ensure that human rights are protected and strive for full participation of persons with a disability. We are pursuing sustainable development and involvement of our stakeholders.

e) Professionalism and focus

We have the expertise and skills to implement our mission in the most efficient way. We focus on saving eyesight, improving the quality of life and defending the rights of people with disabilities.

4. Code of conduct

4.1. Integrity

DISCRIMINATION, (SEXUAL) HARASSMENT, ABUSE, EXPLOITATION, BULLYING

(<http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/HT-toolkit-en.pdf>)

- 1) Create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, abuse of power and corruption and promotes the introduction of and compliance with a code of conduct. Executives at all levels have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems maintaining such an environment.
- 2) Never engage in an activity that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to individuals, especially women, boys and girls.
 - We will never engage in any sexual activity with children (minor under the age of 18) regardless of the local age of majority or age of sexual consent under local law. Mistaken belief in the age of a child cannot be argued in defence.
 - We never engage neither in sexual exploitation nor in sexual abuse of any target group (men, women and children). This shall be considered as gross misconduct that may warrant termination of the employment contract.
- 3) Never exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours. No form of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour shall be allowed.
- 4) Never engage in sexual relationships with beneficiaries since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of development work. This rule applies during as well as after working hours.
- 5) Never accept or request sexual services, never participate in buying sexual favours or draw profit from sexual services. This rule applies during as well as after working hours.

ABUSE OF POWER AND EXTORSION/ BLACKMAIL

- 6) Light for the World's employees and partners do not abuse their position of authority to seek personal benefit.
- 7) No form of extortion is tolerated within the work of Light for the World.
- 8) Abuse of power for the purpose of obtaining sexual favours is strictly prohibited.

BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION

- 9) Light for the World does not tolerate any form of bribery or corruption.

Only exception: when the health or the life of the organization's staff or volunteers is at stake (e.g. circumvent a roadblock or pay bail to be released from unlawful deprivation of liberty, etc.). In such cases, documented information shall timely be forwarded to the management of the organization.

 - Light for the World's staff and partners shall never accept bribes from potential partners attempting to enter into contracts, or from present partners seeking to accelerate payments or to authorize payments in the absence of the required supporting documents.
 - Light for the World shall pay no bribes in order to influence partners or obtain benefits.
 - Light for the World can immediately terminate all support to partners known to accept or give bribes.

- 10) We do not abuse our position to deny humanitarian assistance or give preferential treatment to certain parties concerned, or to obtain sexual favours, gifts, payments or advantages in any form whatsoever. We must be fully aware of the fact that any abuse of our position is prohibited and that we cannot accept gifts (with the exception of small tokens of appreciation) or bribes (see anti-corruption strategy).

FRAUD AND THEFT

- 11) Light for the World does not tolerate any form of fraud or embezzlement. Fraud / embezzlement and theft are punishable offences and can never be used in order to obtain personal or professional benefits.
- No payments are made before submission of the requested financial report (an exception can be made in cases of urgency such as earthquakes, floods, etc.).
 - The accounting and documentation rules are applicable at all times.
- 12) All forms of fraud / embezzlement and theft shall be reported to the competent authority.
- Reported suspicions of fraud and theft are investigated confidentially.
 - All employees and managers of Light for the World are encouraged to pay particular attention to any evidence of fraud or theft they may be faced with in their professional capacity.
 - All employees and partners shall be encouraged to report every suspicion they might have, without fear of suffering disadvantage or retaliation.
- 13) Every contract concluded with a third party whose direct involvement in fraudulent activities has been proven, shall be terminated.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND GIFT

- 14) Employees, consultants, volunteers and partners of Light for the World avoid all conflicts of interest between their personal interests and the interests of the organization.
- If the employee has misgivings about his position over a specific decision, he shall draw advice from his line manager or a colleague.
 - Employees may not engage / continue to engage in any other professional activity – even part time or small side jobs – without informing the organization.
 - Employees cannot participate in any independent business or activity, or supply services to another organization, to the extent that they are no longer able to devote the time and commitment needed to fulfil their function within Light for the World.
- 15) Friends, family and other personal relationships shall not be given preferential treatment during recruitment and tender procedures even in terms of granting assistance and other situations.
- As far as recruitments for local representation offices are concerned, decisions are taken jointly by the representative of the local office and a second person.
 - In certain cases, when the conflicts of interests have been dealt with, the recruitment of family members or friends can be accepted with the approval of the person with managerial responsibility (or the Board of Directors if it concerns higher management functions).
 - Family members shall not be part of any decision-taking body dealing with recruitments, decisions about the employment of family members or other persons with whom the staff member has a personal relationship included.
 - In order to avoid favouritism and nepotism in tendering procedures, priority shall be given to the economically most favourable tender, as mentioned in the contract.

- 16) No employee or family member shall have a significant direct or indirect financial interest in a corporate organization conducting business with Light for the World, unless the interest has been fully disclosed in a letter to the employee's line manager.
- 17) Direct or indirect gifts or other benefits which may affect the employee's performance shall not be accepted or granted.
 - Gifts in cash are never accepted
 - Small tokens can be accepted in order to respect local traditions and hospitality (never exceeding the equivalent of EUR 30). Those small tokens are shared with the colleagues.
 - The employee uses his common sense and good judgement as far as the kind of present that can be accepted is concerned – in cases of doubt he will consult his line manager.
- 18) The management of the organization is immediately informed of any conflict of interests and shall transfer the decision-taking authority to another member of the management.

4.2. Empathy and commitment

- 19) We respect and promote fundamental human rights without any discrimination and irrespective of social status, race, ethnicity, colour, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, civil status, origin, political opinion or disability.
- 20) We treat all beneficiaries, communities, target groups and other parties involved fairly and with respect, dignity and courtesy, in compliance with the case-law of the country concerned and with the provisions of international law and taking into account local customs and culture.
- 21) We never take advantage of the vulnerability of any target group, especially women and children, and never allow a person to be put in a compromising situation.
- 22) Light for the World bases collaboration with partner organizations on mutual responsibility, accountability, participation, equality and alignment.
- 23) We are devoting particular attention to our way of dealing with children. This is why you should:
 - try to never be alone with a child. If it cannot be avoided, try to make sure that others can hear / see what you are doing. This applies to home visits, taking a child to your own house, and taking a child for medical or other care in a personal vehicle or taxi;
 - avoid being involved in bathing or toilet activities except with pre-schoolers or children incapable of washing themselves - and only then if done openly with another worker within hearing / seeing distance;
 - when teaching children or raising awareness amongst this target group about our work, make sure that it happens in an open environment, where other adults are present and have access to the room;
 - avoid engaging in inappropriate physical contact with children, including overly affectionate touching, suggestive behaviour, rough physical play, or inappropriate tickling;
 - not spend excessive time with any particular child/children or show obvious favouritism;
 - not use physical punishment to discipline a child. Discuss any potential disciplinary issues with a colleague / manager;
 - not engage children in domestic work. The ILO Minimum Age Convention (C138) states that the minimum age for any kind of work is never lower than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, not lower than 15 years of age (14 years in specific countries) (art.2). National laws may allow children aged 13 to 15 years to be

involved in light work, provided that it is not harmful to their health or development and not such as to prejudice their attendance at school (art.7). In other words, children can engage in domestic and personal work for staff or anyone else, as long as it does not interfere with their schooling and that they have time to finish their homework and sufficient time for rest, leisure and recreation, etc.

- comply with national and international laws and regulations dealing with children's rights.

4.3. Professionalism and focus

- 24) We uphold the highest standards of accountability, efficiency, competence, integrity and transparency in the provision of goods and services by our staff.
- 25) Light for the World is a pluralistic and apolitical organization, meaning that:
- All contributions to political parties in whatever form are prohibited.
 - Development work can never be used to further a political or religious standpoint. Granting development aid shall not be tied to recipients embracing a particular political or religious creed.
 - We endeavour not to act as instruments of a government's foreign policy: we shall never allow ourselves to be used knowingly - or through negligence – with a view to gathering information of a political, military or economically sensitive nature for governments or other bodies that may serve purposes other than those which are relevant to the respective programme or project being sponsored; nor shall we act as instruments of the foreign policy of donor governments.
 - We ensure that our contacts with the authorities, and especially with security forces (military and police), do not compromise our neutrality – neither in the facts nor in the way they are perceived.
 - We do not engage in the practice of proselytizing as Light for the World is a non-religious organization.
- 26) Generally speaking, any personal relationship between a staff member and his/her line manager shall be made public; the management shall then allocate the decision-taking power to another member of the organization.

5. Scope

The principle behind this Code of Ethics is that all prevailing laws and regulations need to be complied with. We moreover commit ourselves to the fundamental principles or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

5.1. To whom does this Code of Ethics apply?

This Code of Ethics is to be abided, not only by Light for the World's staff but also by consultants, volunteers, partners and every person visiting the projects at the organization's behest.

Every staff member, volunteer, consultant or partner organization is expected:

- to be aware of and adhere to this Code of Ethics;
- not to display a conduct in conflict with the values set out in this Code of Ethics;

- to contact the staff member responsible for integrity if clarification about the interpretation and the application of this Code of Ethics is needed, via the following email address: info_integrity@lightfortheworld.be;
- to be involved in detecting possible violations of this Code of Ethics;
- to report all information about a possible violation of this Code or any conduct in conflict with this Code to his/her line manager.

5.2. Implementation of this Code of Ethics within the organization

This Code of Ethics shall be addressed and implemented at different times. It is an integral part of our functioning and explains what Light for the World stands for.

- It is covered during selection and recruitment of new staff members, volunteers, partners, etc.
- It is submitted, discussed and signed when welcoming new staff members, partners, volunteers...
- It forms part of the annual assessment of our staff members insofar as we analyse to what extent their activities were in line with the code of conduct.
- It gets on the table when signing new contracts with consultants and new partners.

5.3. Breaches of the code of conduct

Reporting code breaches

Each party concerned shall immediately report any breach of the provisions of this Code, in accordance with the [complaints procedure](#) and the [procedure for receiving and processing complaints](#).

Any breach of the Code of Conduct shall result in disciplinary action pursuant to Light for the World's general terms and guidelines. Any staff member purposely making false accusations on any action by another staff member, which could be in breach of this Code of Ethics, will be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of the employer.

The application of disciplinary measures shall be without prejudice to the outcome of any civil or criminal proceedings, whereby the rules of conduct imposed by the Code of Ethics are binding independently of the court ruling and regardless of the crime and/or unlawful act constituting the breach committed. Misconduct or any behaviour breaching the provisions of this Code, or any improper, incorrect or unauthorized conduct, shall never be considered as justified or be trivialised, even if committed for the benefit of the organization.

Light for the World ensures that all confidential information, including reports of breaches of these provisions by colleagues, obtained from beneficiaries or other colleagues, is channelled correctly and handled with utmost confidentiality.

6. Validity

This Code of Ethics applies as from 01/01/2020 and is valid up to the date of its update after 10 years.

By taking up this function I commit myself to carry out my tasks properly, in accordance with the provisions of this Code of Ethics.

Name:

Signature:

Date: