



مؤسسة المرأة الجديدة New Woman Foundation

New Woman Foundation Code of Conduct and Work Ethics

Introduction

This document, which the Board of Trustees of the New Woman Foundation (NWF) has been commissioned to draft, represents a contract/covenant between all associated parties, namely NWF Board of Trustees, higher management and all salaried employees and volunteers. It shall be binding for all these parties after they review it and sign every page. It also is a commitment towards the broader public NWF interacts with. In its entirety, it guarantees the continuity of NWF's respectable image, so that the respect it has built over the past thirty years is maintained. The document consists of three integral parts:

I. Code of Work Ethics

The Code of Ethics represents the basic ethics, values, and principles we aspire to achieve and that have settled throughout the years of practical experience. This part, although shorter than the Code of Conduct, is more general. It is also publishable and relates to the general principles by which we are governed, and which are centered around our values and vision. The principles and ethics that we believe in include the following:

- Up-holding human rights in general with a special focus on women's right, more specifically:
 - **Non-discrimination and the eradication of all forms of violence** on grounds of gender, marital status, class, age, religion, ethnicity, color, beliefs, education, physical and/or psychological disability, or otherwise. In all cases the dignity of others shall be preserved.
 - **Facilitate the access** of target groups to financial, legal, and psychological resources.
 - **Respect differences** in intellectual and personal choices in line with NWF's mission and vision.
 - **Acknowledge the abilities** of others and assert and encourage their professional and intellectual development.
 - **Promote inclusion**, by involving, versus excluding, employees in decision-making processes. Expand the base of people aspiring to change their lives for the better by supporting them in exploring their priorities and taking them into account. All while stimulating a strong local, regional, and international women's movement capable of broadly advocating for their demands and garnering the widest possible public support.
 - **Promote integrity and professional ethics** – at the private and public level – and stand firm against any misleading allegations or defamation attempts.
 - **Promote** and defend democratic values and practices externally and at the very least internally and call for their activation at the public level.
 - **Provide a safe work environment** internally and externally (for our associates); NWF undertakes to provide a work environment for employees and associates, that is free

from threats to health, or other difficulties faced at work, by (including, but not limited to): resolving personal conflicts peacefully, lending an ear to all concerned parties, and appealing to impartial parties to propose fair solutions to the conflicting parties; safeguarding internal information; providing occupational safety, etc.).

- **Continuously advance the capabilities and skills** of employees and target groups.

II. Code of Professional Conduct

This Code is based on the principles and values of the New Women's Foundation's Code of Ethics; it is more specific as it includes permitted, required, or prohibited practices and practical activities. It generally relates to NFW's internal life and specifically between certain parties. Its provisions are interconnected and concern everyone and is therefore longer. The following are the basic factors for the application of the Code of Ethics:

Target Groups

Individual Responsibility

Everyone is expected to offer their help to the target groups to achieve their basic objectives without expecting additional compensation; everyone is encouraged to voluntarily sacrifice part of his/her time and employ their professional skills towards this goal.

Social Justice

Forms of social injustice like poverty, unemployment, discrimination require focused efforts and a sensitive approach based on in-depth knowledge about the forms of oppression practiced against those who suffer discrimination and marginalization as well as access to relevant information and the involvement of target groups in the formulation of appropriate decisions that concern them.

The Dignity and Worth of the Human Person

We shall treat every person with respect for his/her dignity and cultural, social, economic, and ethnic differences while advancing the right to self-determination of diverse groups, i.e., seeking to develop their capacity and advance their opportunities to enable them to effect the change themselves according to their actual needs, rather than imposing a bottom-down approach.

Inter-Human Relations

Employees in direct communication with the target audience shall realize that solid human relations are an important factor in bringing about change. Yet, it should be carefully avoided to compromise professional barriers as that could harm work ethics (e.g.: intimate relationships, authoritarian style, imposing solutions that contradict the requirements of self-determination, disclosing data about the organization, or adopting proposals without the primary stakeholders' full knowledge and previous fully informed consent, etc.).

Integrity

Our interactions amongst ourselves and with others are based on mutual trust. We are committed to abide by the standards of work ethics and values; hence we must act in consistency with our mission and develop good behavioral practices with others as well as among ourselves. This also requires that we treat information from people we interact with confidentially and/or obtain written permission for disclosure. They must be provided with a copy of their accounts and signed that they conform with what was stated and their consent to disclose it. If there is doubt that the information has not been clearly communicated to the target group, it must be explained in simple terms to ensure that it has been delivered correctly and unambiguously. Any harm to the reputation and credibility of the organization must be carefully avoided.

Professional Competence

Professional competence entails social responsibility towards others, ethical responsibility towards co-workers, particularly our the responsibility we bear as professionals towards social work and our

professional responsibility towards the wider community in general is also part of it. This requires keeping abreast of the latest technologies and proposed interventions and consulting experts specialized in the field in question.

Co-workers

Mutual Respect

We all shall treat each other with respect and present each other's achievements and qualifications fairly, inside and outside the organization. It should be refrained from making negative remarks, inside the workplace or in front of outside parties, when assessing the competence level of female and male colleagues, or about the origin, color, sex, religion, marital status, creed, age, or different backgrounds of team members.

Interdisciplinary Cooperation

Co-workers shall collaborate and contribute to decisions that may affect the safety of target groups by providing analyses on prospects and their implications for the organization's values. They shall highlight their work experience and share current and emerging experiences and information. Colleagues who assume supervisory duties or provide career guidance have the responsibility to set clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries for colleagues.

Disagreements among Co-workers

Disagreements should not lead to someone taking advantage of the opportunity to obtain alternative positions or benefits at the expense of vulnerable groups, favoring this or that party. Rather disputes shall be resolved by:

- direct communication with the colleague concerned and seek face-to-face resolution; if this fails, an investigation committee, considered impartial by all sides, can be requested to decide on the matter after hearing the parties in disagreement. The committee can also consider hearing witnesses about the facts in dispute, before submitting its conclusions to the Executive Director and the Board of Trustees to take a final decision.

This clause shall apply to any form of transgression, irregularity, or evaluation discrepancies (including, but not limited to condescending behavior towards others, diminishing and ridiculing of other opinions, dismissive remarks on the professional incompetence of colleagues, or even verbal or physical bullying or sexual harassment). The application of gradual sanctions shall be decided in accordance with the provisions of the "Human Resources" chapter in the foundation's bylaws.

The Foundation

- Confidentiality: It is prohibited to disclose information about NWF without obtaining written permission from the direct supervisor, signed by a Board of Trustees member, responsible for the topic to be disclosed.
- Transparency: Employees shall provide all details in the relevant registers on the tasks they carry out – including data related to the means of communication and addresses of the target groups - as well as to facilitate deliveries and ensure a smooth continuation in the future if they leave work.
- Integrity and professional ethics: including but not limited to refraining from accepting valuable gifts from third parties, using the workplace for personal purposes, committing acts that harm the reputation of the organization, exploiting knowledge of secrets of work, colleagues, or target groups to defame or make public, drug or alcohol abuse in the workplace, allowing personal disputes to turn violent.

- Continuing education: managerial employees shall seek to develop their own expertise and that of the executive staff. This includes current knowledge and information and practical and ethical developments that emerge in the areas of work.
- Non-discrimination: any form of discriminatory acts based on sex, marital status, class, religion, ethnicity, color, creed, education, age, or physical and psychological disability shall not merely be refrained from but include to not promote, facilitate, tolerate, or abet any form of discrimination.
- Employees must do their utmost to not let their personal circumstances and lives affect their ability to perform their professional duties efficiently.
- When expressing opinions to any external parties, it is important to clearly state and separate personal opinions from the orientation of the Foundation.
- Promote and uphold the Foundation's principles and values through action that well reflects the organization's image.

The wider Community

- The Foundation as a whole – leadership and employees – must contribute to the advancement of public safety and security from the local to the global level.
- The Foundation shall demand living conditions that meet the basic human needs of all people, appreciate social, economic, political, and cultural values related to human rights, and uphold institutions whose mission contributes to social justice.
- The Foundation, through its policies and employees, shall be involved in activities that contribute to the promotion of equal access of all people – especially vulnerable and marginalized groups – to resources.

III. Basic Principles and Determinants of the New Woman Foundation's Anti-corruption Policy

Introduction

This document is an integral part of and complements the Code of Work Ethics and Code of Conduct of the New Woman Foundation. As the Code of Ethics states the "promotion of integrity and professional ethics at the public and private levels and standing firm against any misleading allegations or defamation attempts" as one of its work principles, it shall be considered binding on all parties associated with NFW, i.e.: all levels in the organizational structure, including the senior management entrusted with policy making decisions and matters that require a mindful approach, full-time and part-time workers, contractors, volunteers during their volunteering period. NFW also hopes that all partner and friendly organizations as well as beneficiaries of its activities, will include anti-corruption articles at the heart of their organizations' philosophy and orientations, and that the practices of their employees are committed to combating all forms of corruption, at least internally. Existing anti-corruption frameworks, such as laws, legislations, social rules, and norms, etc., alone are not sufficient for non-governmental organizations. However, when these organizations voluntarily develop internal rules and procedures that ensure high levels of integrity, transparency, and accountability, it more strongly emphasizes their attitude and the sincerity of their beliefs.

The Definition of Corruption and the Importance of Combating it

1. Corruption is broadly defined as *an abuse of entrusted power for private gain or for the gain of others* (relatives, close friends, someone a person tries to influence for personal purposes, etc.), whether financial, material, sexual, or other. By authorities it is not exclusively referred to superiors, or persons higher in positions, but can mean other forms of authority, such as physical, male authority, etc.
2. Corruption also deprives the most vulnerable and marginalized of access to their fair share in resources. Often, they lack the economic, social, or political power to fight corruption effectively and are more vulnerable to blackmail and threats. Since NWF primarily targets these brackets and seeks to empower them, fighting corruption and disseminating this culture may contribute to alleviating the injustice these groups suffer.
3. In the same context, many references on the subject call for adherence to a policy of zero tolerance towards corruption, as tolerating of any form of corruption causes significant harm to the image of the goals, vision, and mission of non-governmental organizations. In some definitions it is argued that in practice this means that any misstep, no matter how small, is firmly punished. There are other studies that indicate that it is generally impossible to apply this policy literally. Still others point out that concepts vary across cultures, such as hospitality, gifting or accepting symbolic gifts on events, and other practices that may be considered unacceptable in some parts of the world while it belongs to the cultural fabric in other parts.

Governing Principles of Anti-Corruption Policies

According to the literature, there are five basic conditions for anti-corruption policies to succeed:

- ❖ firm commitment and conviction of the importance of this policy at the organization's upper management.
- ❖ Assess and effectively address risks resulting from corruption.

- ❖ Adopt control procedures for the early detection of corruption, which is mainly related to financial regulations and the drafting of projects or contracts that sometimes may indicate corruption risks, and regular follow-up by higher management (i.e., executives)
- ❖ Review, supervise and apply the necessary procedures periodically and without hesitation through the deviances revealed by the stipulated control procedures in the preceding paragraph.
- ❖ Train and communicate with employees; this requires among other things, seeking their feedback on how they react to requests for bribes, when they deem a gift from an external client, a colleague or a superior acceptable or not, how they resolve conflict of interests, etc. This is what it means to carry out communication and training on a regular basis and with the greatest degree of transparency towards staff, while providing all employees with useful information on how to act when faced with a corruption case. The policy should be clearly announced, maybe even hung up in a place within the organization. Moreover, the Code of Work Ethics, the Code of Conduct and the Anti-Corruption Policy should be attached to all contracts, whether employment contracts, or service contracts (such as translation or other similar services). Contractors should be provided with a copy, to be signed and approved.

Common Forms of Corruption

It is important at this point to cluster the degrees of seriousness of different forms of corruption. This non-exhaustive list includes the most prominent forms of corruption with a few examples as follows:

- **Offering, accepting, or demanding bribes**, whether in cash or in any other form, in exchange for privileged treatment. It is quite possible that undisclosed commissions to direct superiors or higher levels are considered bribery. When discovered, they are not kept to oneself, but handed over to the senior leadership to decide on what to be done with it.
- **Abuse of influence** to obtain material or other benefits, such as: making employees work for the influential person, using the organization's assets for personal purposes, or favoring a worker (relatives or close friends) over more deserving employees.
- **Favoritism** to obtain advantages for oneself or others, such as favoring of a supplier though the offers are not advantageous; this is usually linked to nepotism.
- **Forgery** such as falsifying documents to demand allowances for fictitious missions, issuing payment orders to non-existing persons, or forging registers by adding participants' names.
- **Unauthorized exploitation** of the organization's assets, information, or services for personal purposes, such as the use of equipment, the abuse of prohibited substances within the organization (such as alcohol or drugs), or the disclosure of information to third parties.
- **Conflicts of interest**, such as appointing relatives or friends who are not qualified (some organization's regulations strictly prohibit the employment of first- or second-degree relatives) or making purchases for the organization from a supplier owned by the person issuing the purchase order or from one of his close friends employed at the organization.
- **Fraud**, such as demanding services without contracts and then not paying on the grounds of lack of evidence, delivering products with different specifications that are lower in quality, or providing forged credentials.
- **Embezzlement**, such as the unlawful appropriation of the organization's funds or of tools pertaining to a specific activity or tampering the wages schemes sent to banks.

Senior Leadership Responsibility

- Be an exemplar model of professionalism, personal and public integrity.

- Carefully select external partners according to specific criteria of reputation, practices, and respectfulness.
- Widely disseminate the principles contained in this document among employees and train them on how to act on them.
- When suspicion arises of internal corruption, an investigation committee shall be formed, with full consensus on its members, defined tasks, and supervise the provision of the necessary capabilities to perform its work.
- Decisions on proven case(s) of corruption must be taken **unanimously**.
- In the instance of confirmed cases of external corruption, relations with these parties shall be severed immediately. Action that may be taken depends on the extent of the harm caused.

Responsibility of Employees

- Report any suspicion about or actual cases of corruption of any form within the organization or in surrounding circles directly to the immediate superior. If that is not possible, or when all other channels have been exhausted, report to the Board of Trustees.
- Strictly refrain from paying or offering bribes to others to facilitate a process or accepting money or valuable gifts (such as airline tickets, valuable articles, loans, or personal services). Inform persons in contact with the organization about its position on corruption in general, particularly bribery.
- Refrain from disclosing any information obtained by employees through their work within the organization unless there is a written authorization to provide information (e.g., to the media, criminal investigations, research bodies conducting a field study on the activities of your organization).
- Cooperate in internal corruption investigations with the inquiry commission and transparently provide it with the information necessary for the proper performance of its tasks as its composition is determined by the Board of Trustees.

Mechanisms for Reporting Suspected Corruption Incidents

- The administration must have a clear vision and procedures for the communication channels of internal and external reports as well as the timings of decisions. Details must be announced to all employees (e.g., in employment contracts and internal bylaws). These channels may take various forms such as hotlines, e-mails, or reporting to the direct supervisor. If this is not possible, either because the direct supervisor refuses or because he/she is under suspicion, it can be reported to the superior of the immediate supervisor or, after all other channels have been exhausted, directly to the Board of Trustees.
- Before verifying a complaint, senior management shall form a committee to investigate the parties involved. The committee may need to hear witnesses and rebuttal witnesses. The committee may consist exclusively of members of the Board of Trustees (especially members whose specialization is related to the type of investigation), or external parties assigned by the Board known for their reputable integrity to carry out this task. In all cases, at the end of the investigation, the committee shall prepare a detailed report on its findings and make specific proposals. However, these proposals are non-binding, and the Board of Trustees will have to make its own final decision.
- The senior management shall protect the privacy of the whistleblower to shield him/her from any form of blackmail or retaliation. This also applies to witnesses. The obtained information must be documented as there may be a conflict of interest with the reported person, whether internal or

external. It is always preferable for the investigation committee to record the meetings after obtaining written consent for recording.

Decisive Action Taken in Cases of:

- If the report is made up to retaliate against a person, the Board of Trustees may, after obtaining the facts, determine the penalties for this case, such as: seeking to resolve the dispute between the parties and asking the reporting party to publicly apologize to the other party, and/or temporarily suspend from work, and/or impose an appropriate financial penalty. Some literature considers this a form of harassment or bullying.
- If the suspicion is merely an unfounded assumption but made in good faith, the penalty may be a public apology to the party reported against and a written warning to the reporter.
- Gradual measures according to how serious the consequences of corruption are, especially if this threatens the credibility of the organization before itself, its target audience, and society. These measures can range from punitive administrative measures (such as temporary suspension from work, financial penalties, denial of periodic promotion, etc.), termination or, in extreme cases, referral to criminal authorities.
- If the corruption instance concerns external parties, relations with those parties should be immediately severed and publicly declared severed. This also applies to cases of termination of employment of a staff member and/or referral to criminal authorities, in the interest of the reputation of the organization.

By Nawla Darwish - 2023