



Norwegian Afghanistan Committee

Ethical Guidelines and Commitments for NAC Staff, Interns, Officers, Consultants and Volunteers (2019)

As NAC staff, interns, officers, consultants and volunteers we are representatives of an organization built on the principle of solidarity between people, respect for human rights and dignity for all.

The following guidelines and commitments are binding for all staff, officers, consultants and volunteers; we are both individually and collectively responsible to act in accordance with the principles and values stated in these 'Guidelines and Commitments'.

These 'Guidelines and Commitments' were approved by the NAC Board on 26th February 2018. They will aid all staff, officers, consultants and volunteers in upholding the values and principles of the NAC and ensure that we protect the rights and dignity of our staff, members, partners and beneficiaries. As staff and officers of the NAC we are seen to represent the organization both during and after working hours and therefore we are expected to uphold and promote the highest ethical and professional standards at all times.

Whether signed or not, these 'Guidelines and Commitments' automatically form an integral part of any consultancy or short or long term employment contract for the NAC in both Afghanistan and Norway.

If anyone of us fail to adhere to these 'Guidelines and Commitments' we accept that we may face disciplinary action, dismissal or even legal action. We understand that we all have the duty to report any breach, or suspected breach, of these 'Guidelines and Commitments' according to the Whistle Blower Policy and Commitment found below. We accept and understand that we as development and humanitarian workers have a special responsibility to uphold the highest ethical standards in both our professional and private lives.

With these 'Ethical Guidelines and Commitments' we wish to contribute to the development of democratic and just Afghanistan free from harassment and abuse, where all women and men, girls and boys have the right to respect, dignity and peace.

Kabul, 23rd August 2019

Liv Kjølseth
Secretary General

Terje Magnussønn Watterdal
Country Director

Ethical Guidelines

1. Respect for human rights and dignity

- We will respect the human rights and dignity of all colleagues, partners and beneficiaries, regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, ethnicity, tribe, religious and political affiliation, social and economic background, physical and mental health condition, and marital status;
- We will respect national and international law;
- In all our actions we will take consideration of local cultures, and;
- We will always seek to protect the rights and dignity of those most vulnerable to discrimination, marginalization and exclusion, especially; children, widows, divorcees, persons with disabilities, minority population groups, and refugees.

2. Personal and professional conduct

- We will act in conformity with all NAC policies, regulations and instructions;
- We will conduct our work and fulfill our responsibilities according to the highest standards of integrity, competence, efficiency and professionalism, thereby strengthening and supporting public confidence in the NAC;
- We will not, in words or deeds, discriminate against any colleague, partner or beneficiary based on gender, abilities, disabilities, ethnicity, tribe, religious and political affiliation, social and economic background, physical and mental health condition, or marital status;
- We will work towards increased participation of women and girls in public life as well as equal opportunities for education and employment, both in our professional and private lives;
- We will not give any form of preferential treatment to any colleagues, partners or beneficiaries in return for favors, or based on ethnic or tribal affiliation, family relationships, friendship, association, social status and position, personal bias, or religious and political affiliations;
- Our decisions and actions will be free from self-interest or any consideration of personal gain;
- We will conduct our official duties and private affairs in such a manner that any conflict of interest is avoided;
- We will not abuse any powers, take advantage of our position, or exploit any privileges that come with our position, or office in any private, or professional dealings with colleagues, partners or beneficiaries, and;
- We will behave and dress in a manner that is appropriate to our assignment, as well as cultural and social settings.

3. Honesty, confidentiality and Integrity

a) Corruption and nepotism

- NAC has a zero tolerance policy on corruption; we will therefore not accept any forms of bribes or kick-backs;
- We will not assist any private individuals or companies in their dealings with the NAC where this might lead to unfair and preferential treatment;
- We will never participate in activities related to procurement of goods or services, or in human resource activities where a conflict of interests may arise, however when women are travelling in the field husbands or other male family members may be contracted for shorter periods of time (ref: HR & Personnel Manual 2019) to increase their security and guarantee their participation in field activities;
- We will not accept any honor, decoration, favor, gift or remuneration from any authority, partners, or beneficiaries valued to USD 100 and above; such gifts must be politely refused with reference to NAC policies and regulations;
- Where it will be impolite or inappropriate to decline, we may accept minor gifts and token items of appreciation under the value of USD 20. Gifts and tokens of appreciation valued between USD 20 to USD 100 must be handed over to the NAC Administration Department in Kabul, listed and placed in stock to be used later for the common good of the organization;
- Gifts from one staff member to another are prohibited, with exception of minor gifts and token items (under the value of USD 100) in connection with weddings, births, and other social occasions where gifts are commonly given and culturally appropriate;
- We will not engage in any outside occupation or employment without prior authorization (ref. Employment Contracts), and;
- We will not accept supplementary payments or subsidies from a government or any other source.

b) Misuse of information, financial resources, equipment, property and facilities

- We will make careful and responsible use of the information and resources we have access to through our employment with NAC;
- We will handle NAC's financial and material resources with great care, protect them at all times against theft or other damage, keep and maintain them properly, and prevent any unauthorized and unethical use of NAC resources;
- We will not use NAC offices, property or information gained from our work with the NAC for private gain, financial or otherwise, or for the private gain of any family members, relatives, friends or neighbors;
- We will exercise extreme care in all matters of official business, and not share any confidential information about the NAC, colleagues, beneficiaries or any other work-related matter (ref. Confidentiality Agreement), both while working for and after leaving the NAC, with any third party. We are aware that the breach of professional secrecy might lead to claims for compensation and/or prosecution, and;
- We will protect, manage and utilize all NAC human, financial and material resources efficiently and effectively, bearing in mind that these have been placed at our disposal by our donors for the benefit of our programs.

c) *Media and Information Technology*

- We will ensure that individuals and partner organizations are represented fairly in terms of their capacities and vulnerabilities. All efforts must be made to explain how photos and stories will be used and to obtain permission from the individuals for the use of their photos and stories;
- We will refrain from making comments to the media or to journalists on behalf of the NAC without prior agreement with the Country Director and/or the Secretary General, the same is the case when meeting journalists in informal settings;
- We will show great discretion when commenting on political, security and military matters in both official and private communications, including telephone calls, chats and comments on Facebook and other forms of social media, e-mails and letters;
- We are responsible for maintaining electronic files and archives in a responsible manner. Information that may be considered illegal, offensive or inappropriate must under no circumstances be processed, downloaded, stored or disseminated. Any association with materials that incite violence or contain child-pornography will lead to immediate dismissal and prosecution;
- We will not issue statements to the press or other agencies of public information or submit articles, books or other material for publication, including on Facebook or other forms of social media, on behalf of or related to the NAC without prior written approval from the Country Director and/or the Secretary General;

4. *Criminal and unethical activities and behavior*

- We will not be involved in violent and criminal activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the security, image and interest of the NAC;
- Threatening behavior, physical violence and abuse of colleagues, partners and beneficiaries is prohibited;
- We will exercise care with alcohol and will refrain from using any intoxicating substances while on duty;
- We will not support or participate in any form of illegal, exploitative or abusive activities, including; prostitution, child labor, human trafficking, smuggling of commodities and drugs;
- We will under no circumstances drive a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or any other illegal intoxicants, with the exemption of a life threatening situation where all other options have been considered and eliminated! Any claim to have utilized this exemption clause, will be thoroughly investigated by the Country Director or the Secretary General to clarify the circumstances. Knowledge of staff operating any kind of motorized transport, or heavy machinery, under such influences should be reported and this may lead to consequences for the individual's contract;
- Sexual exploitation and abuse violates universally recognized human rights standards, is a criminal offence in most countries, and has always been and will always be unacceptable behavior for NAC staff, officers and volunteers;
- Intimate and sexual relationships with beneficiaries undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the NAC and are therefore prohibited;
- Intimate and sexual relationships between NAC staff, interns, officers, consultants and volunteers are strongly discouraged as these may lead to serious conflicts of interests, unhealthy dependencies

and create security risks for the NAC and all of its operations. Should two NAC staff members fall in love and wish to get married they should inform the Country Director to prevent any suspicion of wrongdoing and potential conflicts of interest arising;

- Intimate and sexual relationships between senior and junior staff is strictly prohibited as it could constitute sexual abuse and harassment, and as it would lead to serious conflicts of interests, unhealthy dependencies and create security risks for the NAC and all of its operations;
- Where NAC staff, interns, officers, consultants and volunteers develop serious concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a colleague, he/she must report such concerns to the responsible regional manager and the Country Director or directly to the Secretary General or the Board (see reporting guidelines outlined under the Whistle Blower Policy on page 6);
- NAC staff and management are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse, and promotes the implementation of these 'Ethical Guidelines'. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems that maintain this ethical environment;
- In this context, the term 'sexual exploitation' is defined as any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of others. Similarly, the term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical and psychological intrusion and contact of a sexual nature, including verbal or written abuse, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions;
- Another common form of abusive and inappropriate behavior is 'sexual harassment' which in Norwegian Law (freely translated) is defined as 'unwanted sexual attention.' It is divided into three main categories:
 - 1) Verbal;
 - 2) Non-verbal, and;
 - 3) Physical harassment.

Verbal harassment is for example inappropriate comments about body, clothing, private affairs, and "jokes" with sexual undertones, suggestions or demands of sexual services or relationships.

Non-verbal harassment can for example be inappropriate looks and gazes, inappropriate exposure of nudity, or showing of photos, films and objects of a sexual nature.

While physical sexual harassment can be unwanted and inappropriate touching (which differs greatly from one culture to another), pinching, rubbing (e.g. «accidental» touches, or blocking the way or standing too close when someone wants to pass through a doorway or a narrow hallway), attempted rape and rape. Common for all forms of sexual harassment is that victims feel these attacks as a violation of their personal and physical integrity. Sexual harassment is prohibited in the NAC, and severe cases will lead to dismissal and legal persecution;

- In order to protect the most vulnerable populations, especially women and children, staff must declare and accept the following:
 - We will not commit any act of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment;
 - We will not engage in any sexual activity with persons (adults or children) that benefit or seek to benefit from NAC's assistance;
 - We will not marry or engage in any sexual activity with any persons under the age of 18 years;

- We will not exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior. This prohibition extends to any use of sex workers. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense;
- We will not produce, procure, distribute or use pornographic material in NAC's offices or on NAC's equipment, including reading and surfing pornographic websites or message boards, or send e-mails with pornographic contents, and;
- Any connection with child-pornography will lead to immediate dismissal. Any documentation will be handed over by the NAC to the police for further investigation.

Other types of sexually exploitative or abusive behavior may also be ground for disciplinary measures.

5. Whistle Blower Policy:

By "whistle blower" is meant a person who is making valid complaints about malpractices in the organization and breach of these 'Ethical Guidelines and Commitments.' These are the key principles of the NAC Whistle Blower Policy:

- 1) Every complaint will be taken seriously and given due consideration;
- 2) The interests of both the whistle blower and those targeted by the complaint must be safeguarded. The legitimate interests of any incriminated persons must in particular be respected to avoid victimization and stigmatization;
- 3) The identity of anonymous complaints will not be sought revealed. The withholding of the identity of named persons that wants to remain anonymous in further follow-up, will be respected;
- 4) Anonymous accusations will not be acted upon without prior consultation with the parties involved;
- 5) An accusation can by itself never prove anybody's fault;
- 6) In the case of revelations indicating personal danger, this will always be communicated to those involved, whatever the credibility of the information may be, and;
- 7) Intentionally false accusations and reports are considered a serious breach of these 'Ethical Guidelines.'

If you have been the victim of physical and/or sexual harassment (as described above) and should you wish to speak with someone of your own gender, male and female staff representatives will be elected by the NAC staff during the first quarter of every year for one year at the time. They will sign a special Confidentiality Agreement to protect your rights and integrity. In such cases they are authorized to handle your case and report directly to Country Director, Secretary General, Staff-Contact appointed by the Board or any other senior representative of the NAC of your choice.

If you are unsure if what you have seen or experienced constitute a breach of these guidelines please contact your Project Manager, Regional Manager, Country Director or Staff Representative for guidance.

Commitment

We have read and understood these 'Ethical Guidelines'. We have the duty to adhere to these 'Guidelines' and to report any misconduct or failure committed by NAC staff, interns, officers, consultants, volunteers or anyone else representing the NAC.

We will report any information received indicating a situation where any of the above agreements are broken through one of the following reporting channels:

- 1) Through the responsible regional or project manager and the Country Director
- 2) Through the Country Director if the regional manager is involved
- 3) Through the Secretary General if the Country Director fails to act or if he/she is involved
- 4) Through the Chair of the Board if both the Secretary General and the Country Director fail to act or themselves are involved
- 5) Through the Staff-Contact appointed by the Board should the Chair of the Board fail to act or if he/she is involved
- 6) You can also report directly to the elected female or male staff represented (see text in red below)

If you have been the victim of physical and/or sexual harassment (as defined above) and should you wish to speak with someone of your own gender, male and female staff representatives will be elected by the NAC staff during the first quarter of every year for one year at the time. They will sign a special Confidentiality Agreement to protect your rights and integrity. In such cases they are authorized to handle your case and report directly to Country Director, Secretary General, Staff-Contact appointed by the Board or any other senior representative of the NAC of your choice.

If you are unsure if what you have seen or experienced constitute a breach of these guidelines please contact your Project Manager, Regional Manager, Country Director or Staff Representative for guidance.

We are aware of the fact that any breach of these 'Ethical Guidelines' may lead to disciplinary actions, dismissal or even legal action and will be subject to disciplinary action.

Place _____ (date: DD/MM/YYYY) _____

(Signature)

(Name in Capital Letters)

(Position)