

# **Code of Ethics**

**Atlantic Council for International Cooperation**

**June 3, 2009**

## Preamble

ACIC's Code of Ethics is a set of guidelines that exemplifies ethical standards and good practices. It is intended as a resource to inspire ACIC members and their partners.

## Background & History

ACIC has done a great deal of public engagement work on themes related to ethics. Our "**Travelling Wisely**" project engaged the public on issues related to ethical travel. In 2005 our project on ethical images, "**The South through the Northern Eye**", enabled ACIC and its members to critically examine the promotional materials we produce using an ethical lens.

The idea of creating a Code of Ethics evolved from a workshop and panel discussion at ACIC's 2007 AGM in St. John's, NL, where members strongly supported the idea that a Code of Ethics be developed to set an ethical standard for ACIC and its members to aspire to in our international cooperation work. With this direction from members, and based on work done by the CCIC on developing a Code with its members, ACIC began to think about how we could create something that would assist members with their operations and at the same time, enable us to find points of intersection, or common principles that would guide us in our work. In 2008, we outlined this process in our Three Year Strategic Plan for 2008-2011. Under strategic direction number two, "building members' capacity", we identified that we would improve development practices by articulating a code of ethics with our members.

At the Annual General Meeting in 2008, we mandated a team of ACIC staff and the ACIC's Policy Committee to be responsible for developing a draft of the Code of Ethics. Over the next several months, the team worked to draft a Code of Ethics to present to ACIC's Board of Directors, borrowing from CCIC's Code where appropriate, and adding ideas specific to ACIC. The Board approved the draft in January 2009 and a series of provincial meetings have been held to get feedback from our members. The Final Code of Ethics will be presented for ratification by ACIC's membership at the 2009 Annual General Meeting.

## I Definitions

In this Code of Ethics:

**"ACIC"** means the Atlantic Council for International Cooperation;

**"ACIC Board of Directors"** means the duly constituted board of directors of ACIC, or its legal equivalent;

**"Organization"** refers to both the secretariat of ACIC and Member organizations;

**"Organizations' Board of Directors"** means the duly constituted board of directors

of each Member Organization, or its legal equivalent;

“**Partners**” are organizations and groups working together.

“**Internal Audit**” is the implementation of auditing procedures performed by individuals inside the organization rather than by an outside Certified Public Accountant.

“**Employee**” includes local, national and expatriate staff.

## **2.0 Guiding Principles**

The Atlantic Council for International Cooperation (ACIC) and its Members Organizations are, therefore, committed to the following development principles:

2.1 Promoting environmentally and economically sustainable livelihoods to ensure the holistic well-being of future generations.

2.2 Promoting equitable distribution of power, wealth and access to resources and opportunities.

2.3 Addressing the root causes of local and global inequality.

2.4 Respecting and promoting human rights and dignity of all people irrespective of religion, spiritual/cultural belief, age, race, ethnicity, mental/physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, socio-economic status.

2.5 Respecting, promoting and supporting peaceful solutions to conflict.

2.6 Upholding capacity building as an integral part of sustainability.

2.7 Developing partnerships based on equity, respect, openness and collaboration.

2.8 Facilitating the full engagement of all participants.

2.9 Being accountable and transparent.

## **3.0 Code of Conduct**

### **3.1 Partnerships**

Partnerships with civil society organizations should be established based on the ACIC’s Guiding Principles as provided in 2.0 and may be enriched by additional principles proposed and agreed upon by common accord.

#### **3.1.1 Initiating a partnership**

a) Partnerships shall be backed by mutually acceptable agreements, demonstrating that

all parties have negotiated objectives, expectations, roles, responsibilities, and contributions to the partnership. Agreements shall specify processes for evaluating the partnership. Formalized agreements may be necessary depending on the nature of the partnership.

- b) Agreements among partners shall ensure shared responsibility for attaining the negotiated goals, objectives and stated outcomes.
- c) Partners shall agree upon how conflicts shall be resolved.
- d) When a transfer of funds is expected to occur within a partnership, there shall be a negotiated and jointly signed contract within which there are mutually agreed upon reporting requirements to ensure that all parties use development funds as agreed.
- e) All parties should negotiate a mutually agreed upon contingency plan to be implemented in the event of catastrophic circumstances, such as major shortfalls in funds available within a funding partnership.

### **3.1.2 Maintaining and strengthening a partnership**

- a) Partners shall strive to deepen their understanding of one another through transparent sharing of information. The activities relating to the partnership shall be open and accessible to the other parties, while respecting the right of individuals to privacy.
- b) Respect for differences -- including cultural, religious, socio-economic and political differences - shall be a hallmark of every partnership.
- c) Partners shall engage in regular and open communications for the general health of the partnership and to ensure that all partners are properly represented and that no organization unilaterally speaks on another's behalf.
- d) Organizations shall give credit to their partners' contributions, respect intellectual property rights and acknowledge appropriate ownership of products and results arising from partnership initiatives.

### **3.1.3 Ending a partnership**

- a) Terms, conditions and appropriate procedures for concluding or redefining the partnership as required shall be included in the partnership agreement.

## **3.2 Governance**

- 3.2.1 Member organizations shall be governed fairly, impartially, and responsibly.

3.2.2 For those organizations governed by a Board of Directors, the following guidelines shall apply:

- a) Each organization shall have an independent, active and informed Board of Directors. The Board shall have established by-laws and policies outlining the frequency of meetings, attendance of directors, voting policies, the role of the Executive Committee and establishing terms of service.
- b) Each organization's Board of Directors shall adopt a conflict of interest policy for Directors, employees and volunteers from using their position within the organization for their own interests/benefits.
- c) Each organization's Board of Directors shall approve policy statements and annual programs.

3.2.3 The organization shall adopt a policy requiring that no person be subjected to discrimination by the organization on the basis of religion, spiritual/cultural belief, age, race, ethnicity, mental/physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, socio-economic status. This does not supersede the right of the organization to define itself - when it is done in compliance with the law.

3.2.4 The organization shall adopt policies that work towards gender equity and participation of disadvantaged groups at all levels of the Organization.

3.2.5 The Organization shall be committed to full, open, and accurate disclosure of relevant information concerning its goals, programs, finances, and governance.

3.2.6 The Organization shall periodically reassess its respective mission and operations in light of the changing world environment through an on-going planning process.

### **3.3 Organizational Integrity**

3.3.1 The affairs of the Organization shall be conducted with integrity and transparency. The activities of the Organization shall, upon request, be open and accessible to scrutiny by its respective donors, except for personnel matters, legal matters and proprietary information, including anything specified by provincial or federal laws.

3.3.2 The Organization shall ensure that allegations of misconduct about anyone associated with the Organization be dealt with impartially, respecting the rights of the involved parties for confidentiality and disclosure.

3.3.3 The Organization shall oppose and shall not be a participant to any wrongdoing or financial impropriety in any of its activities. It shall take prompt and firm corrective action in the case of any wrongdoing committed by any Director, employee or volunteer.

3.3.4 The Organization shall recognize that all of its activities have an impact on the public perception of the international cooperation community, and that it shares a significant responsibility to enhance the public trust, and act accordingly.

3.3.5 Contact information will be shared only with the informed consent of the other party.

### **3.4 Finances**

3.4.1 Without limiting any obligations that may exist at law, the Organization shall conduct its finances in such a way as to assure appropriate use of funds, accountability and transparency to donors.

3.4.2 The Organization shall either have an annual audited financial statement, conducted by a qualified, independent accountant or, in the case of an organization with limited means, an internal audit. The audited financial statement shall comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and Requirements according to the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. In the case of members who are part of a larger institution, the audit of the larger institution will suffice.

3.4.3 The audited financial statement, full or summary, or an internal audit, shall be provided to any inquirer upon written request within a reasonable time.

3.4.4 Allocations of expenditures to administration, fundraising, and program services shall reflect the Organization's purposes and actual activities, and shall conform to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

3.4.5 The Organization shall operate a budget approved by the Board. It shall account for all funds from the moment they are received or committed until they are used in the project or services. It shall exercise adequate internal controls over disbursements to avoid unauthorized payments. The Organization shall prohibit any unaudited transactions or loans.

3.4.6 Contributions shall be used as promised or implied in the fundraising appeal or as requested by the donor.

### **3.5 Communications to the Public**

3.5.1 Any and all communications to the public by the Organization shall respect the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of people. In particular, the Organization shall avoid messages which:

generalize and mask the diversity of situations;

- fuel prejudice;
- foster a sense of donor superiority;
- show people as hopeless objects for our pity, rather than as equal partners in action and development.

3.5.2 The Organization will encourage the participation of its partners in the formulation of communications to the public.

3.5.3 No organization shall discredit another member organization or ACIC in its public communications; nor shall it give out misinformation about its affairs or those of other members.

### **3.6 Fundraising**

3.6.1 The Organization shall control all fundraising activities conducted on its behalf. All fundraising contracts and agreements shall be in writing.

3.6.2 Fundraising solicitations shall:

- accurately describe the Organization's identity, purpose, programs and need;
- only make claims that the Organization can fulfill;
- avoid using coercive or high-pressure tactics in soliciting donations;
- avoid misleading information (including material omissions or exaggerations of fact);
- avoid use of misleading photographs or images, nor any other communication which would tend to create a false impression or misunderstanding; and
- present an accurate view of the actual programs for which the funds solicited will be used.

3.6.3 In all its fundraising activities, the Organization shall ensure that:

(i) its donors are informed of the Organization's mission, of the way the Organization intends to use donated resources, and of the Organization's capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes;

(ii) the Board exercises prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities;

(iii) its donors have access to the Organization's most recent audited financial statements or internal audit and to a list of the Organization's current Board of Directors;

(iv) donations will be used for the purposes for which they were given;

(v) its donors receive appropriate acknowledgment and recognition;

(vi) information about donors and donations shall be treated with respect and in accordance with the donor's wishes as well as relevant law;

(vii) its donors are informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees or hired solicitors of the Organization;

(viii) its donors are encouraged to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.

### **3.7 Management Practice and Human Resources**

3.7.1 The Organization shall endeavour to follow sound management and business practices appropriate to its mission, operations, and governance structure.

3.7.2 The Organization shall have clearly defined written policies and procedures relating to its employees and volunteers, which shall clearly define and protect the rights of employees and volunteers, assuring fair treatment in all matters.

3.7.3 The Organization's expectation of its employees and volunteers shall be clearly defined and communicated.

3.7.4 The Organization shall endeavour to recruit and retain staff and volunteers who combine professional competence with a commitment to the mission of the organization.

3.7.5 The Organization shall promote employment equity, throughout its recruitment, hiring, training, and professional development and advancement.

3.7.6 Employee benefits shall be clearly described and communicated and the Organization shall make financial arrangements to protect its ability to honour its obligations to employees.

3.7.7 The Organization shall promote work/life balance among its staff.

### **3.8 Environmental Practices**

3.8.1 Organizations shall endeavour to abide by environmentally friendly practices wherever possible.

3.8.2 Organizations shall adopt an environmental policy that promotes a progressive approach to environmental practices.

3.8.3 Organizations shall evaluate the following environmentally preferable products and purchase them whenever the evaluation is favourable:

- Recycled paper and paper products;
- Remanufactured and/or refillable printer cartridges;
- Cleaning products with lowered toxicity;
- Energy saving products;

- Waste-reduced products;
- Water-saving products; and
- Other environmentally preferable equipment and products as needed.

3.8.4 Organizations shall commit to environmentally friendly practices in the course of daily office functions whenever possible.

3.8.5 Organizations will rely on electronic means for internal and external communication as much as possible to reduce paper waste.

3.8.6 Organizations shall promote the use of recycled and other environmentally preferable products.

3.8.7 Organizations shall organize events with products that are environmentally friendly and in ways that demonstrate our commitment to reduce waste where possible.

3.8.8 Organizations shall choose venues that share a commitment to environmentally friendly practices.

3.8.9 Organizations shall purchase local products, including food, where possible.

3.8.10 Travel choices shall be made that promote efficiency and minimize carbon emissions.

3.8.11 Organizations will coordinate periodic environmental policy reviews to report the progress of policy implementation and identify areas for improvement.

### **3.9 Abilities**

3.9.1 Organizations shall strive to be inclusive regarding the abilities of staff, volunteers, members and partners.

3.9.2 Organizations shall recognize and make best efforts to accommodate full participation for all, regardless of ability. This includes ensuring accessibility of space, programs, and information.

3.9.3 Organizations shall strive to take into consideration the varied needs of those with disabilities and the specific impacts that their programming may have on disabled individuals.

### **3.10 Evaluation**

3.10.1 Organizations will complete periodic reviews of policies, programs and projects and identify areas for improvement.

