

CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS FOR CARIBBEAN NGOs

Preamble

Cognisant of the need to practise good conduct at all times in carrying out the role and functions of the non-governmental sector, the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC) promotes this Code of Conduct and Ethics (hereinafter also referred to as The Code) for the guidance of all members, volunteers and staff of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) throughout CARICOM and the wider Caribbean region. The Code is aimed at fostering good relations between NGOs and the constituents that they serve and at ensuring that all NGO activities are conducive to the attainment of a high level of respect among practitioners, beneficiaries, donors and partners. It is concerned with: the governance of NGOs; relations among NGOs at local, national, regional and international levels; NGO relations with beneficiary communities, donor partners, and government; NGO relations with labour, private sector, political parties, media, and the general public.

The Code affirms the responsibility of social development practitioners to serve the collective interests of the people of the region and to upholding and defending their freedoms and human rights; as practitioners, we are required to exercise good judgment in implementing our programmes and in cultivating relationships with various partners.

Recognising that since no Code of Conduct and Ethics can anticipate every situation, personal integrity and honour should guide every decision and action carried out in the name of the non-governmental sector. The success of the Code in maintaining high standards of professionalism among NGO practitioners is guaranteed in so far as each person subscribes to the principles enshrined in the Code and is committed to upholding them even in particularly challenging circumstances. To this end, every signatory shall ensure that all its personnel are adequately acquainted with the standards of the Code and operate by them.

The CPDC advances this following Code of Ethics and Conduct for the dissemination among and adoption by Caribbean NGOs for their guidance and to ensure best practise in the conduct of their affairs.

1. Definitions

1.1 A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is a private, not for profit, organization, autonomous and independent of all actors such as government, donors and businesses and which is aimed at promoting sustainable cultural, economic, intellectual, and social development of specific interests of target groups. The umbrella term NGO includes charities, associations, foundations, geographic or interest-based community and advocacy groups operating as an association of persons or as an artificial legal entity.

1.2 Governing Principles mean the principles that are articulated in this and which govern a NGO's governance and administrative structure as well as how it conducts its relationship with various stakeholders whether or herein identified.

2. Governing Principles

2.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

The guiding and governing principles shall be translated into the internal rules of organizations.

NGOs commit to:

- a) Maintaining the principles of transparency, accountability, fairness, equity, social justice and non-discrimination.
- b) Promoting participatory governance, monitoring and evaluation, ethical fundraising and autonomy in decision-making.
- c) Respecting and maintaining cultural and religious traditions, human rights, universal freedoms and gender equality.
- d) Continuing to be responsive to the needs of members and stakeholders, practise responsible advocacy, provide quality service, encourage professional development and construct positive relationships, partnerships and networks on the basis of solidarity, confidentiality and information exchange.
- e) Continuing to exercise a responsible and responsive management approach to the environmental sustainability and the eco-system in all activities.

3. Governance

3.1 Governance within Caribbean NGOs shall be guided by good governance principles of equity and inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability

3.2 In keeping with the Human Rights based approach articulated in the principles of this Code, NGOs shall refrain from discrimination on the basis of age, class, gender, sexual orientation, minority, geographic location, race, religion or disability in all programmes and staff positions.

3.3 NGOs shall:

- a) Ensure that their activities conform to their stated purposes.
- b) Ensure the participation of stakeholders in the identification, design and execution of the policies, programmes and projects.
- c) Implement organizational activities conducive to public trust within the NGO sector.
- d) Ensure that they and their staff maintain a position of political neutrality in their operations and respect the office of all duly elected governments in keeping with the democratic traditions of the region.
- e) Refrain from deliberate involvement in any activity which might bring the institution into disrepute.
- f) Exhaust conciliatory solutions to conflicts internally and with third parties
- g) Be accountable for the actions and decisions, not only to donors and governments but primarily to project beneficiaries and staff.
- h) Commit themselves to building the capacity of its directors, staff and members to enhance their participation and contribution to the attainment of the organization's missions and goals.
- i) Ensure that no conflict of interest exists between members of the board or members of the staff in the conduct of the affairs of the organizations and that these persons demonstrate high moral values and integrity.
- j) Require board members to give the best service as directors at all times acting in the best interest of the organization.
- k) Promote good relations among and between board members, members, staff and beneficiaries.
- l) Ensure that serving board members shall not receive a salary, for work or act as paid consultants to the organization except that this work is offered in a strictly professional capacity for which a reimbursement or stipend may be agreed
- m) Maintain the confidentiality of personal information on staff, clients and others, unless the individuals waive this right, or disclosure is required by law. Privileged

or confidential information regarding donors or donations shall not be disclosed to unauthorized parties without the authority of the specific donor.

4. Financial Management

4.1 NGOs shall:

- a) Exercise high standards of financial propriety in the management of finances and adhere to all national and/or international and universally accepted accounting standards and procedures.
- b) Be accountable for financial resources received from donors, government, members, other partner organizations or self-generated activities at all times.
- c) Ensure that contributions are as promised and implied in the fundraising appeal and as specified in the contribution agreement.
- d) Carry out due diligence checks when dealing with individuals and companies acting as donors to avoid damage to the reputation of the organization.
- e) Ensure that fundraising will be truthful; avoiding the use of high-pressure tactics¹ in soliciting donations.

5. Relations with Beneficiaries

5.1 NGOs shall:

- a) Work with beneficiaries in the pursuit of a just and humane society.
- b) Ensure that relationships with beneficiaries should be based on mutual trust, openness and respect for their autonomy and independence
- c) Give priority to strengthening the capacity of vulnerable groups to achieve autonomy and self-reliance.
- d) Foster meaningful participation of beneficiaries in identification of community needs and design of programmes;
- e) Assist those at risk without any discrimination;
- f) Ensure that all communications shall be respectful of people in every sense

6. Relations with CBOs² and other NGOs at local, national and regional levels

6.1 NGOs shall:

- a) Treat each other and all other civil society organizations with respect to their areas of focus, expertise, and diversity of approaches.
- b) Be encouraged to share information on programmes and objectives where possible;
- c) Seek to cooperate and collaborate with other NGOs and CBOs in the implementation of programmes to the benefit of target groups and the wider society where possible;
- d) Seek to develop partnerships with the aim of minimizing duplication and maximizing efficient use of resources
- e) Strive for the autonomy and protection of the rights of civil society organizations;
- f) Be encouraged to express solidarity with campaigns and actions of other organizations where these are consistent with the ngo's institutional purpose;
- g) Act in concert to promote the growth and effectiveness of the sector.

¹ High pressure tactics refer to the use of any illegal threat and include but are not limited to: the use of manipulation; force; fear; physical intimidation; aggression and fraud

² Community Based Organization (CBO)

7. Relations with International NGOs and Donor Partners

7.1 NGOs shall:

- a) Ensure adequate consultations among the sector members on key issues in order to ensure fair representation of the NGO sector's views.
- b) Strive to have their agendas set by members and target communities and shall impress this policy on donor partners and international NGOs;
- c) Work on global issues of concern in concert with donor partners and international NGOs on a basis that does not compromise the integrity of the NGO;
- d) Subject its collaboration with international NGOs and donor partners to the scrutiny and evaluation of its members;
- e) Strive to ensure that modes of collaboration with donor partners reflect the best practices of good partnership, ensuring respect for autonomy, independence and diversity of approaches
- f) Ensure that NGO representation in national, regional and international fora will always be based on an organization's primary mandate and programme focus.
- g) Insist that NGO representatives to international fora have an obligation to report back to the NGO community on the outcomes of their mission.

8. Relations with Governments

8.1 NGOs shall:

- a) Seek partnerships with Governments based on the processes outlined in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas as well as the CARICOM Charter of Civil Society and acting in adherence to the principles outlined in the Code Ethics and Conduct
- b) Ensure that Government partnerships shall be undertaken on the basis of mutual respect for the independence, autonomy and diversity of approaches of all partners
- c) Participate where appropriate in dialogue and cooperation with Government agencies towards the attainment of sustainable human development.

9. Relations with Labour, Private Sector, Media and Political Parties

9.1 NGOs shall:

- a) Be as neutral and professional as possible
- b) Respect the special roles of Trade Unions and the Private Sector in the pursuit of national and regional development;
- c) Respect the media as both a stakeholder group and as a channel of communication;
- d) Note the important role of political parties in promoting democratic traditions of our countries.
- e) Explore all opportunities for cooperation and strive for optimal developmental partnerships with the media, private sector, trade unions and political parties, being guided by the values and principles of this Code of Ethics and Conduct.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation of Programmes

10.1 NGOs shall:

- a) Develop and promote clear and measurable impact indicators for all programmes and projects undertaken in order to gauge their relevance and effectiveness.
- b) Formalise various monitoring and evaluation tools to gauge performance in relation to established objectives goals of activities.
- c) Provide to the public the findings of any assessments or evaluations of projects.

11. Upholding the Code

The Code contributes to the recognition of NGOs as Social Partners in Development and providing for their registration and general operations in CARICOM countries. Enforcement of the Code is within the authority of the NGO Commission provided for in the NGO Act. The Code affirms the values and principles of the CARICOM Charter for Civil Society and is offered as a civil society pledge of good faith in the positive engagement between policy makers and practitioners in the interest of sustainable human development in the Caribbean. In the pursuit of excellence in all areas of operations within the development sector, NGOs shall observe the stated good practices.

This Code is applicable to: all members and prospective members of CPDC; any persons and organizations seeking to benefit from CPDC's programme and any other NGO willing to sign on.

Members of the CPDC and all individuals or groups who act for and/or on the behalf of the signatories are expected to adopt, sign this Code of Conduct and Ethics at each biannual CPDC Assembly and may indicate in their promotional materials that they subscribe to the Code. These Signatories will be the primary agents through which adherence to the Code will be promoted among NGOs. Each signatory to the Code is charged with observing, respecting and upholding the standards of this Code and with assisting other NGOs to adopt and maintain the Code.

12. Governance of the Code

12.1 The NGO Commission

- a) The NGO Commission³ shall oversee the implementation and management of the Code. The Commission shall be chaired by the Secretariat of the Code, the CPDC and it shall comprise four (4) democratically elected⁴ NGO representatives and (1) non-NGO member representing an independent agency.
- b) The NGO Commission shall be responsible for creating awareness of the Code among NGOs and other stakeholders; ensuring the mainstreaming of this Code in all Caribbean NGO operations and functions; monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process; facilitating the management of conflict resolutions; receiving and hearing complaints from NGOs and other stakeholders in relation to the Code of Conduct and thereafter recommending action to be taken by the complainant and the NGO itself; and proposing any revisions to the Code.

³ The NGO Commission derives its authority from the NGO Act of the country where the NGO is based and/or operating in.

⁴ The election and selection processes for sitting on the NGO Commission is provided in the NGO Act.

c) 13. Monitoring and Evaluation

13.1 Signatories to the Code shall:

- a) Monitor and evaluate the ways in which the Code impacts peoples' behaviour and organizational culture. Specifically, NGOs shall monitor how the organization conducts business in light of the requirements of the Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- b) Individually and collectively shall be responsible for monitoring themselves and their performance in relation to the requirements of the Code of Conduct.
- c) Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of the compliance to the Code is shared between management and staff.
- d) Be charged with the responsibility of bringing to the attention of the NGO Commission breaches of the Code. In the event of a complaint being brought against an organization under the terms of the Code, signatories to the Code shall co-operate with the NGO Commission to achieve reconciliation and maintain the integrity of the Code.

14. Amendments to the Code

a) Amendments⁵ to the Code shall be finalised with the approval of two thirds of the signatory organizations attending the special session of the biannual General Assembly of the CPDC. Amendments should be submitted to the CPDC six (6) months prior to this event to facilitate circulation and prior discussion.

15. Agreement⁶

We recognize that our organization is accountable to our communities, our stakeholders and our society. In return for their trust, we pledge to observe and abide by the terms and values of the **Caribbean Policy Development Centre Code of Conduct and Ethics**.

NAME OF ORGANISATION

ADDRESS

NAME OF OFFICIAL

TITLE OF OFFICIAL

DATE

⁵ All amendments are made during the General Assembly of CPDC.

⁶ By signing this agreement, you are committing your organization to upholding good governance standards and practices; fully accepting the authority of the Code as the designated body of rules to guide its operations.