CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS FOR CARIBBEAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

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Caribbean Policy Development Centre

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PREAMBLE

The Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC), in its efforts to influence the design and implementation of policies that empower and improve the lives of Caribbean people, is cognisant of the need to promote good governance and public trust within the non-governmental sector. Towards this end, the CPDC advances this Code of Conduct and Ethics (hereinafter also referred to as the Code) for the guidance of members, contractors, staff and volunteers of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) throughout the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and wider Caribbean region.

The Code is aimed at fostering good relations between NGOs or CSOs and constituents, and ensuring that activities are conducive to the attainment of a high level of accountability in operations with respect to practitioners, beneficiary communities, donors, partners and governments. The Code is concerned with governance of NGOs and enhancing relations among NGOs at the local, national, regional and international levels including labour organisations, private sector organisations, political parties, the media and the general public.

The Code affirms the responsibility of development practitioners to serving the collective interests of the people of the region and to upholding and defending freedoms and human rights. As development practitioners, we are required to exercise good judgment in implementing programmes/ projects and cultivating strategic alliances with various partners.

Recognising that no Code of Conduct and Ethics can anticipate every situation, personal integrity and established practices should guide decisions and action initiated on behalf of non-governmental organisations. The success of the Code in fostering high standards of professionalism within the NGO sector is guaranteed in so far as each practitioner subscribes to the principles enshrined in the Code, and demonstrates commitment to

upholding its tenets, even in challenging circumstances. To this end, every signatory shall ensure inclusion in the organisational review of the Code, to ensure that personnel are knowledgeable of the contents of the Code and can apply them in the execution of operations.

The CPDC advances the Code of Conduct and Ethics for dissemination and ratification by NGOs in the Caribbean for guidance and to foster standardised practices in the conduct of affairs.

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DEFINITIONS

Act of Terrorism

For the purpose of this Code of Conduct and Ethics, an 'act of terrorism' refers to any act constituting a grave breach or hostility in a situation of armed conflict when it is intended to kill or seriously wound another party when, by its nature or context, this act is intended to intimidate a population or to compel a government, an international organisation or other entity to do or refrain from doing any act.

Civil Society Organisation

A private, not for profit organisation which operates autonomously of actors such as government, donors and businesses, that was formed to deliver services and/or represent the interests of citizens in matters affecting society. CSOs include a cross-section of constituents and seek to raise awareness of, and advocate on, matters in the public domain. These entities include non-governmental organisations, community groups and other civic interest groups.

Governing Principles

Statutes that are articulated in this Code of Conduct and Ethics which outline the governance and administrative structures for non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations, as well as relationships with various stakeholders, whether herein identified or implied.

Money Laundering

Criminal activity involving the relocation of money derived from illegal activities through legitimate channels such as banks and other financial institutions, in a manner that makes it appear that the funds were acquired by legitimate/legal means.

Non-Governmental Organisation

A private, not for profit organisation, which operates autonomously of actors such as government, donors and businesses, that is aimed at promoting sustainable cultural, economic, intellectual and social development of target groups. The umbrella term non-governmental organisations (NGOs) includes charities, associations, foundations, geographic or interest-based community and advocacy groups operating as an association of people or as an artificial legal entity.

1.0 GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

1.1 General Principles

The guiding and governing principles shall be translated into the internal rules of NGOs in the Caribbean.

a) Maintaining the principles of transparency, accountability, fairness, equity, social justice and non-discriminatory practices in operations.

b) Promoting participatory governance, monitoring and evaluation, ethical fundraising and autonomy in decision-making.

c) Respecting and maintaining human rights, universal freedoms, gender equity, cultural practices, religious practices and national traditions.

d) Responsiveness to the needs of members and stakeholders; practising responsible advocacy; providing quality service; encouraging professional development; and fostering positive relationships, partnerships and networks on the basis of solidarity, confidentiality and effective information exchange.

e) Exercising responsible and responsive management approaches to promote environmental sustainability and healthy eco-systems in the execution of programme/project activities.

2.0 HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY

2.1 NGOs commit to:

a) Upholding the fundamental human rights with which each person is endowed.
b) Recognising that all people are born free and equal in dignity.
c) Observance of the moral values, culture, religions, customs and traditions of the communities they serve.

3.0 GOVERNANCE

3.1 Governance within Caribbean NGOs shall be guided by 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 race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, age, disability or geographic location when executing programmes/projects and in staff relations.

3.3 NGOs commit to:

a) Ensuring that activities conform to the expressed purposes, are in accordance with national laws and promote good governance.

b) Ensuring the participation of stakeholders in the identification, design and execution of policies, programmes/projects and procedures.

c) Implementing activities within the NGO sector that are conducive to public trust

d) Maintaining a position of political neutrality in operations. In keeping with the democratic traditions of the region, recognition is given to the office of duly elected governments.

e) Refraining from deliberate involvement in any activity which may bring the institution into disrepute.

f) Engaging in conciliatory solutions to conflicts occurring within the organisation or with third parties.

g) Demonstrating accountability for actions and decisions, primarily to project beneficiaries and staff, as well as donors and governments.

h) Avoiding conflicts of interest in the conduct of affairs of the organisations by fostering high service standards and integrity in operations.

i) Building the capacity of leadership, staff and members to enhance participation and contribution to the attainment of the organisation's mission, goals and objectives.

j) Requiring board members to give the best service as directors acting in the best interests of the organisation.

k) Promoting good relations among and between board members, members, staff and beneficiaries.

l) Ensuring that serving board members operate on a voluntary basis and shall not receive a salary for work or act as paid consultants to the organisation, except that this work is offered in a strictly professional capacity for which reimbursement or a stipend may be agreed.

m) Maintaining confidentiality of the personal information of staff, clients, donors and other stakeholders, unless an individual

waives this right or disclosure is required by law. Propriety or confidential information regarding donors or donations shall not be disclosed to unauthorised parties without the authority of the specific donor.

4.0 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

4.1 NGOs commit to:

a) Exercising high standards of financial propriety in the management of funds and adhering to national and/or universally accepted accounting principles and procedures.

b) Accountability for financial resources received from donors, government, members, other partner organisations or self-generated activities.

c) Ensuring that contributions are utilised as outlined or implied in fundraising appeals and as specified in the contribution agreement.

d) Ensuring that information on fundraising activities is truthful and accurate, avoiding the use of high-pressure tactics[1] in soliciting donations.

e) Carrying out due diligence checks on individuals and companies proposed as donors, to avoid damage to the reputation of the organisation.

5.0 MONEY LAUNDERING AND ANTI-TERRORISM

5.1 NGOs shall take a zero-tolerance approach to money laundering and terrorist financing activities. We therefore commit to implementing and enforcing effective internal controls to counter such activities. NGO's policy is to apply, at a minimum, the standards set out in this Code of Conduct and Ethics.

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.

5.2 NGOs commit to:

a) Identifying and verifying donor identity through due diligence checks.
b) Documenting donated or granted sums in accordance with general accounting and donor management principles.
c) Undertaking an interview/assessment (or adequate review measures) where a donor requires that privacy be maintained.
d) Continuously monitoring funds donated or granted and maintaining proper records of all payments made and received in accordance with general accounting principles and/or donor management principles.
e) Reporting any suspected money laundering or terrorism financing activities to the appropriate national authorities.

6.0 RELATIONS WITH BENEFICIARIES

6.1 NGOs commit to:

Working with beneficiaries in the pursuit of a just and humane society.

a) Ensuring that relationships with beneficiaries are based on mutual trust, openness and respect for autonomy and independence.
b) Giving priority to strengthening the capacity of vulnerable groups, towards achieving autonomy and promoting self-reliance.
c) Assisting persons at-risk without any discrimination.
d) Ensuring that communication is respectful of people in every sense.
e) Fostering meaningful participation of beneficiaries in identifying community needs and programme/project design.

7.0 RELATIONS WITH OTHER NGOS AND CSOS

7.1 NGOs commit to:

a) Treating persons within the organisation, other non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations with respect as it relates to the areas of focus, expertise and diversity in approaches.

b) Striving for autonomy and protection of the rights of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs).

c) Seeking to cooperate and collaborate with other NGOs and CBOs in the implementation of programmes/projects, to the benefit of target groups and the wider society where possible.

d) Seeking to develop strategic partnerships with the aim of minimising duplication and optimising use of resources.

e) Encouraging transparency in sharing information on programmes/projects and objectives, where possible.

f) Promoting solidarity with campaigns and actions of other parties, where these are consistent with the NGO's institutional purpose.

g) Acting 'in concert' to promote the growth and effectiveness of the sector.

8.0 RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL NGOS AND DONOR PARTNERS

8.1 NGOs commit to:

a) Fostering an environment for effective consultation on key issues amongst sector members, in order to ensure fair representation of the NGO sector.

b) Striving to develop policy agendas through engagement with members and target communities; and impressing this policy on donor partners and international NGOs.

c) Working to address global issues of concern 'in concert' with donor partners and international NGOs, on a basis that such does not compromise the integrity of the NGO.

d) Informing members of collaborative initiatives with international NGOs and donor partners.

e) Striving to ensure that modes of collaboration with donor partners reflect good sector practices that ensure respect for autonomy, independence and diversity of approaches.

f) Ensuring NGO representation in national, regional and international fora, based on the organisation's primary mandate and programme/project focus.

g) Facilitate reporting from representatives to international fora to the NGO community on the outcomes of missions.

9.0 RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

9.1 NGOs commit to:

a) Maintaining partnerships with governments based on the processes outlined in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and the CARICOM Charter of Civil Society, and acting in adherence to the principles herein outlined in this Code of Conduct and Ethics.

b) Ensuring that government partnerships are undertaken in alignment with the policy agenda and on the basis of mutual respect for the independence, autonomy and diversity of approaches of partners.

c) Participate, where appropriate, in dialogue and cooperation with government agencies towards advancing sustainable human and social development

10. RELATIONS WITH LABOUR, PRIVATE SECTOR, MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTIES

10.1 NGOs commit to:

a) Maintaining neutrality and professionalism in operations with private sector organisations, labour representatives, media organisations and political parties.

b) Respecting the role of the private sector organisations, labour representatives, media organisations and political parties in the pursuit of national and regional development initiatives.

c) Respecting the role of the media as a stakeholder group and as a communication channel to support inclusivity in programme/ project activities.

d) Taking into consideration the role of political parties in promoting the democratic traditions of countries.

e) Exploring opportunities for cooperation and striving for optimal developmental partnerships with the private sector, labour representatives, the media and political parties, being guided by the values and principles of this Code of Conduct and Ethics.

11.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES

11.1 NGOs commit to:

a) Formalising monitoring and evaluation tools to gauge performance in relation to established goals and objectives.

b) Developing and promoting clear and measurable impact indicators for programmes/ projects.

c) Providing feedback to partners on the findings of assessments or evaluations on partnership initiatives.

12.0 UPHOLDING THE CODE

12.1 The Code contributes to the recognition of non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations in supporting sustainable human and social development; and will provide for registration and general operations in CARICOM countries.

12.2 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 positive engagement between policy makers and practitioners, in the interest of sustainable human and social development in the Caribbean.

12.3 In the pursuit of excellence in all areas of operations within the development sector, NGOs shall implement policies to support good governance and observe the principles of the Code. This Code is applicable to members and prospective members of the CPDC; any persons and organisations seeking to benefit from CPDC's programme and any other NGO willing to sign on.

12.4 The CPDC initiated the formulation of the Code to assist in standardising practices within NGOs and CSOs. Members of the CPDC and individuals or groups who act for, and/or on behalf of the signatory organisations are encouraged to adopt and apply this Code at each biennial CPDC Assembly, with provisions existing to amend the Code in alignment with good practices. Members may indicate adoption of the Code in promotional materials.

12.5 Signatories will be required to function as the primary agents through whom adoption of the Code will be advanced. Signatories to the Code commit to observing, upholding and promoting the standards of this Code, towards fostering membership awareness and engagement.

13. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

13.1 Signatories to the Code shall:

a) Endeavour to monitor and evaluate implementation of the code in terms of the impact on service delivery. Specifically, NGOs and CSOs shall monitor the execution of programme/ project activities in light of the requirements of the Code of Conduct and Ethics.

b) Ensure that results emanating from monitoring and evaluation activities are reviewed collaboratively amongst management and staff.

c) Communicate severe breaches of the Code to the attention of the CPDC, providing accurate reporting on such matters.

d) In the event of a complaint being brought against an organisation under the terms of the Code, signatories to the Code shall co-operate with the CPDC's Board to achieve reconciliation and maintain the integrity of the Code.

14.0 AMENDMENTS TO THE CODE

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

AGREEMENT

Code of Conduct and Ethics for Caribbean

Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society Organisations

As signatories, we recognise that our organisation is accountable to our communities, stakeholders and societies. We pledge to observe and abide by the terms and values of the Code of Conduct and Ethics.

By signing this agreement, we commit the organisation to upholding good governance standards and practices, fully accepting the authority of the Code as the designated body of rules to guide policies, procedures and practices.

_____

NAME OF ORGANISATION
(PLEASE PRINT)

_____

_____

ADDRESS
(PLEASE PRINT)

_____

NAME OF DESIGNATED OFFICIAL
(PLEASE PRINT)

_____

TITLE OF OFFICIAL
(PLEASE PRINT)

_____

SIGNATURE

_____

DATE

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