

CODE OF ETHICS AND OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

A tradition of mutual responsibility for ethical practice

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) was one of the first networks of civil society organizations in the world to adopt a *code of ethics* that included a collective statement of “*Principles of Development*” and a “*Code of Conduct*”. The *Code of Ethics* demonstrated CCIC members’ organizational commitment to ethical practice when it became the Council’s peer accountability framework in 1995. A further decade of experience and reflection resulted in a revised *Code of Ethics* in 2004 that incorporated sections on working in partnership with southern civil society organizations. In 2009, the code was once again updated and is now known as the *Code of Ethics and Operational Standards*. This document more clearly outlines the ethical principles that CCIC and its Member Organizations must accept and promote. A set of operational standards, which includes a compliance procedure, guides practices.

The *Code of Ethics and Operational Standards* is the core element of a broader ethics program that includes advice, learning events and resources to support CCIC and its Member Organizations understanding and improvement of development and operational practices.

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The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) is a coalition of Canadian voluntary sector organizations working globally to achieve sustainable human development. CCIC seeks to end global poverty and to promote social justice and human dignity for all.

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CODE OF ETHICS

C1. PREAMBLE

- C1.1 The Code of Ethics sets out the basic ethical principles that CCIC and its Member Organizations must accept and promote.
- C1.2 For CCIC, development is a social, cultural, economic and political process that leads to the fulfillment of fundamental human rights. These rights have been enshrined in the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and subsequent core treaties and instruments including the *United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*.
- C1.3 Development must give primacy to fulfilling the rights, needs and aspirations of the world's poorest and most marginalized peoples; it must promote the peaceful management of conflict; and it must safeguard the health, diversity and resilience of the natural environment.
- C1.4 While recognizing that the primary responsibility for the protection and promotion of human rights rests with governments, CCIC and its Member Organizations support the fulfillment of these rights through their development and advocacy activities.
- C1.5 As part of Canadian civil society, CCIC and its Member Organizations promote and support the advancement of a flourishing civil society in Canada and abroad. The strengthening of people's organizations, voluntary agencies and other socially beneficial institutions is integral to the practice of development.
- C1.6 Based on CCIC's collective experience, establishing and strengthening relations with civil society organizations on the basis of partnership is key to achieving development outcomes.
- C1.7 Since CCIC and its member organizations influence the public perception of the international co-operation community, they share a significant responsibility to act in ways that enhance public trust in their activities.

C2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- C2.1 *Human Rights*— In all of their activities, CCIC and its Member Organizations should respect and promote the human rights and dignity of all people.
- C2.2 *Accountability*— CCIC and its Member Organizations should be accountable to their international partners, to their staff, to their donors, to the Canadian public and to each other for their contributions to international development and their stewardship of resources.
- C2.3 *Transparency*— CCIC and its Member Organizations should communicate freely and accurately with their partners, donors, the public and each other.
- C2.4 *Fairness*— CCIC and its Member Organizations should practise and promote equity and justice in all their activities.

- C2.5 *Co-operation*— CCIC and its Member Organizations should co-operate with each other in order to promote Canadian involvement in international development.
- C2.6 *Sustainability*— In all of their activities, CCIC and its Member Organizations should take appropriate measures to promote environmental sustainability.

C3. ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES

CCIC and its Member Organizations should ensure that these General Principles are incorporated into their structure, governance and operations.

C4. DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

Development should foster and promote the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms. To reach this goal, development should:

- C4.1 Satisfy basic human needs;
- C4.2 Be people-centred in both its purposes and the distribution of its benefits;
- C4.3 Address the root causes, and not merely the symptoms, of global inequality;
- C4.4 Promote social justice through the equitable distribution of power, wealth and access to resources;
- C4.5 Enable poor, oppressed and marginalized people to organize and improve their situation;
- C4.6 Reflect the concerns, perspectives and experience of women and enable women to realize their full rights;
- C4.7 Respect indigenous peoples and their rights to self-determination and to sovereignty over their own territories;
- C4.8 Respect the cultural and spiritual integrity of all peoples;
- C4.9 Ensure the full participation of marginalized individuals and groups;
- C4.10 Be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, and should protect the well-being of future generations;
- C4.11 Recognize the hazards of militarism and promote peaceful solutions to international, national or local conflict; and
- C4.12 Promote a global movement that links shared interests and issues.

C5. PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

For the purpose of this section, “partnership” refers to relations between CCIC Member Organizations and civil society organizations – not individuals or governments – where a mutual agreement has been established committing each Organization to a set of agreed principles and actions over an extended period of time. While these principles may not apply to other types of relationships that CCIC members enter, they may be helpful to guide such relationships.

Building on the Development Principles in Section C4, CCIC and its Member Organizations are committed to the following additional principles applying to partnerships:

- C5.1 Partnerships should be vehicles for long-term accompaniment that support the right of peoples to determine and carry out activities that further their own development options, through their civil society organizations;
- C5.2 Partnerships should advance and exemplify the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, social justice, equitable distribution of global wealth and environmental sustainability;
- C5.3 Partnerships should be built on shared visions and goals for society which imply mutual support and solidarity beyond the implementation of specific programs and projects;
- C5.4 Partnerships should be formed in a spirit of inclusiveness that respects and promotes the value of diversity;
- C5.5 Partnerships should embody equity. Acknowledging that inequalities often exist as a result of power dynamics, especially in funding relations, partners should strive for equitable partnerships;
- C5.6 Partnerships should be dynamic relationships built on respect and honesty, in which partners strive for better understanding and appreciation of one another;
- C5.7 Partners should be transparent and accountable to one another;
- C5.8 Partners should respect one another’s autonomy and constraints and strive to foster a climate of mutual trust in all their partnership activities; and
- C5.9 Partners should endeavour to learn from one another and facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

S1 PREAMBLE

In order to provide guidance to CCIC and its Member Organizations on implementing the principles of the CCIC *Code of Ethics*, this document outlines standards of practice and compliance procedures.

S2 PARTNERSHIPS

For the purpose of this section, “partnership” refers to relations between CCIC Member Organizations and civil society organizations – not individuals or governments – where a mutual agreement has been established committing each Organization to a set of agreed principles and actions over an extended period of time.

Partnerships with civil society organizations should be established based on the CCIC *Code of Ethics* and may be enriched by additional development principles proposed and agreed upon by common accord.

S2.1 Initiating a partnership

- a) Partnerships shall be based on a sense of common cause built on an understanding of each Organization’s values, beliefs, goals, objectives and constraints.
- b) Partnerships shall be backed by mutually acceptable signed agreements, demonstrating that all parties have negotiated objectives, expectations, roles, responsibilities, and contributions to the partnership.
- c) Agreements between partners shall ensure shared responsibility for attaining the negotiated goals, objectives and stated outcomes.

S2.2 Maintaining and strengthening a partnership

- a) Strong partnerships include action to address inequalities due to power imbalances. Partners shall identify and attempt to adopt concrete measures to enhance equitable relations.
- b) 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.
- c) Respect for differences – including cultural, religious, socio-economic and political differences – shall be a hallmark of every partnership.
- d) 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.

- e) Organizations shall give credit to their partners' contributions, respect their intellectual property rights and acknowledge appropriate ownership of products and results arising from partnership initiatives.
- f) Healthy partnerships are strengthened by prompt and constructive responses to differences of opinion that may arise between Organizations. Partners shall proactively agree how conflicts shall be handled.
- g) Partnership agreements shall specify timelines for evaluating whether and how the partnership shall continue.
- h) When a transfer of funds occurs 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.
- i) In the event of catastrophic circumstances, such as a major shortfall in funds available within a funding partnership, all parties shall promptly implement a mutually negotiated and agreed upon contingency plan.

S2.3 Ending a partnership

- a) Terms, conditions and appropriate procedures for ending the partnership shall be included in the partnership agreement.
- b) In the event of unforeseen circumstances, all partners shall endeavour to maintain the same standards of conduct when winding down the partnership as were agreed upon for the operations of the partnership.

S3 GOVERNANCE

- S3.1 Each Organization shall be governed fairly and responsibly by an independent, active, and informed governing body (e.g. Board of Directors).
- S3.2 All voting members of the governing body shall serve without compensation, except for reasonable expenses incurred to fulfill their organizational duties.
- S3.3 Each Organization shall establish and periodically review a governance framework suitable for fulfilling its mandate. The structure shall enable the Organization to make timely decisions and to meet its responsibilities. The framework shall include an appropriate governance structure and operations; relationship of senior staff and the governing body; and decision-making processes.
- S3.4 The Organization's governing body shall review and approve the Organization's annual budget, significant policies, key financial transactions, compensation practices, plans and programs and hold officers, committees and staff accountable for actions taken and results achieved under delegated authority.
- S3.5 The Organization shall adopt a policy preventing and effectively managing conflict of interest situations.
- S3.6 The Organization shall have policies prohibiting discrimination and promoting gender equality and participation of disadvantaged groups at all levels of the Organization. This does not supersede the right of the Organization to self-define when it is done in compliance with the law.

- S3.7 The governing body shall periodically reassess the Organization's governing documents and objects, vision, mission, goals, priorities, alignment of resources and effectiveness through consultation and collaborative planning.

S4 ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY

- S4.1 The affairs of the Organization shall be conducted with integrity and transparency. The Organization shall make full, open, and accurate disclosure to the public of relevant information concerning its goals, programs, finances, activities, results, effectiveness and governance. Exceptions are personnel matters, legal matters, proprietary information and ethical and legal requirements of personal privacy.
- S4.2 The Organization shall ensure that complaints are dealt with in a timely manner and impartially, respecting the rights of involved parties for confidentiality and disclosure.
- S4.3 The Organization shall comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations as well as laws and regulations of provinces or municipalities in which it is based or operates. Each Organization conducting activities outside of Canada shall be aware of foreign laws and regulations governing its activities.
- S4.4 The Organization shall oppose and shall not be a participant to any wrongdoing or financial impropriety. It shall take prompt and firm corrective action whenever and wherever wrong-doing of any kind has been committed by any member of its governing body, employee, or volunteer.

S5 FINANCES

- S5.1 The Organization shall conduct its finances in such a way as to ensure appropriate use of funds and accountability to donors. It shall operate according to a budget approved by its governing body and have sound internal controls and documented financial policies and procedures.
- S5.2 The Organization shall ensure that there are sufficient resources for effective administration and appropriate fundraising.
- S5.3 The Organization shall have annual audited financial statements and shall make them easily accessible to the public.
- S5.4 The Organization shall ensure that it (and, if applicable, its affiliates) manage its funds prudently. Any Organization with available assets for investment shall have and follow an investment policy.
- S5.5 Each Organization that is a registered charity shall file its Registered Charity Information Return within six (6) months of its fiscal year end and such returns shall be complete and accurate.

S6 FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNICATIONS TO THE PUBLIC

- S6.1 Fundraising solicitations shall be truthful, shall accurately describe the Organization's identity, purpose, programs and need, shall only make claims which the Organization can fulfill, and shall treat donors and potential donors with respect. There shall be no misleading information or

images (including material omissions or exaggerations of fact), nor any other communication which would tend to create a false impression or misunderstanding, and no use of high-pressure tactics in soliciting donations.

- S6.2 The Organization shall ensure that:
- a) the public is informed of the way the Organization intends to use donated resources;
 - b) when members of the public are invited to support a specific project or purpose, they are informed if donations may be reassigned and they are given an explanation of these planned alternative uses;
 - c) the public is informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees or hired solicitors of the Organization;
 - d) its donors are encouraged to ask questions when making a donation and they are given prompt, truthful and forthright answers; and
 - e) its donors receive appropriate acknowledgment but are not publicly identified without their consent.
- S6.3 The Organization shall have policies and procedures to ensure that it accepts only those donations which will not compromise its ethics, program focus or other interests.
- S6.4 The Organization shall ensure that images and text included in all communications to the public:
- a) respect the dignity and rights of the individuals portrayed and their way of life;
 - b) are accurate, balanced, truthful and representative of reality and do not generalize and mask the diversity of situations;
 - c) portray local communities as active agents in their own development process and do not fuel prejudice or foster a sense of Northern superiority; and
 - d) encourage a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence between the Canadian public and the people shown in the image or discussed in the text.
- S6.5 The Organization shall control all fundraising activities conducted on its behalf. It shall not, directly or indirectly, pay finder's fees, commission or percentage compensation based on contributions. When external fundraisers are used, the Organization shall have a written fundraising contract and shall avoid disproportionate private gain by those external fundraisers.
- S6.6 The Organization shall seek the participation of its partners in the formulation of communications to the public.
- S6.7 The Organization shall consider the cumulative impact on the public's perception arising from its own communication messages (through images and text) and those of others. The Organization shall ensure that its messages do not undermine the goal of building support for long-term sustainable development.
- S6.8 When the Organization carries out an activity that involves both fundraising and programming there shall be appropriate allocation of fundraising and program expenses.
- S6.9 The Organization shall make its most recent financial statements, annual report, and a current list of members of its governing body easily accessible to the public (e.g. in a visible and public section of their website).

S7 MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Each Organization shall:

- S7.1 Endeavour to follow sound management and operational practices appropriate to its mission, operations and governance structure;
- S7.2 Provide employees and volunteers with job descriptions or duties that detail the Organization's expectations;
- S7.3 Have clear, well-defined, written policies and procedures relating to its employees and volunteers (including host country nationals and expatriates) and a process for communicating these policies and procedures; and ensure that the policies clearly define and protect the rights of these individuals;
- S7.4 Clearly describe and communicate compensation and benefits to each employee, and make financial arrangements to honour its financial commitments;
- S7.5 Respect the right of employees to organize into unions or associations and bargain collective agreements; and
- S7.6 Educate employees and volunteers on the *Code of Ethics* and *Operational Standards*.

S8 ACHIEVING COMPLIANCE

- S8.1 A new Member Organization of CCIC shall submit within one year of membership acceptance a completed self-assessment form indicating current *status of compliance*. The Organization shall have three years from membership acceptance to provide CCIC with certification from its governing body of full compliance or explanation of non-compliance. Any indication of non-compliance with any standard shall be reviewed and a decision made by CCIC.
- S8.2 Each Organization shall return a renewal of compliance every three years.
- S8.3 Upon written request from CCIC, each Member Organization shall, within the timeframe set out by CCIC in its request, submit any documents related to the CCIC *Code of Ethics* and/or compliance with the *Operational Standards*.
- S8.4 A Member Organization that has a question or concern about the conduct of another Member Organization relating to the *Code of Ethics* and/or *Operational Standards* shall directly discuss it with the Organization in question or with staff at CCIC. If there is not a satisfactory response from the Organization then the issue should be raised with the CCIC Ethics Review Committee before discussing it publicly.
- S8.5 No Organization shall discredit or give out misinformation about another Member Organization or CCIC in its public communications.