



# Code of conduct

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# Code of Conduct

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2007



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

# Staff Code of Conduct 2007

## Preamble

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the “Federation”, which includes its Geneva headquarters and all field offices) is an international humanitarian organisation achieving its general object and carrying out its functions at all times respecting the seven Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Federation Staff are expected to be advocates and champions of vulnerable people everywhere and to act in accordance with the Fundamental Principles and this Code of Conduct.

Before acting, Staff must ask themselves the following questions:

- Ø Is this action in accordance with the Fundamental Principles?
- Ø Is this action in compliance with this Code of Conduct, the Federation Staff Rules, the Staff Regulations?
- Ø Is this action in compliance with all mandatory policies, processes, procedures, and guidelines?
- Ø Is this action legal under the laws of the country in which I am present?
- Ø Will this action reflect positively, and in fact not reflect negatively, on me and the Federation?
- Ø Is there an alternative action for which I could answer yes to each of these questions?

When in doubt about an action’s conformity with this Code of Conduct or its ethical implications, Staff shall seek advice from their line manager or Human Resources before acting.

# 1. Scope and application

This Code of Conduct applies to all Staff at all times during their service with the Federation – both during and after working hours. “Staff” in this Code refers to all Federation employees (Geneva-based, delegates and local staff), consultants, volunteers, and interns, as well as staff-on-loan and all individuals working under the Federation name and legal status.

This Code, whether signed or not, shall automatically form an integral part of all Federation contracts of employment and conditions of service for all Staff.

Geneva-based Staff and delegates (including staff-on-loan) are responsible for ensuring this Code is read, understood and abided by all accompanying family members covered under the Federation’s legal status. In case of any violation by an accompanying family member, the Staff may be held accountable and the Federation may take all appropriate measures to protect the organisation, including repatriation of the family member(s).

Violations of this Code are subject to disciplinary measures in accordance with the ***Disciplinary Measures*** or local staff regulations, as appropriate. In addition, the Federation reserves the right to recover from Staff all expenses incurred by the Federation as a result of any violation of this Code by them or their accompanying family member (including remedying harms, repatriation costs, etc.).

The obligations regarding the Protection of Information, Rules 21-25 below, continue after separation from service with the Federation.

The Federation is committed to ensuring that all organisations and individuals with whom it works reflect values consistent with those of the Federation – this applies in particular to individuals with whom the Federation has a close but indirect association, such as staff of partner organisations acting in close cooperation with the Federation, guards working for a security company or employees of a construction firm contracted by the Federation, etc. The Federation will take such actions as necessary and appropriate to discontinue its association with any organisation or individual whose actions, if carried out by the Federation’s own Staff would be considered serious breaches of this Code.

## 2. Implementation of the Code of Conduct

### **Staff responsibility:**

Staff are responsible for ensuring that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct. They also have a duty to inform beneficiaries of their service and those under their care of the code of conduct that Staff must adhere to, as well as how and to whom to report any misconduct or failure in the standard of their treatment.

Staff have a duty to report any breach of this Code to the appropriate person (*refer to **Contact information***). All reports and concerns raised will be properly considered and treated with discretion. The organisation will take all necessary steps against any form of retaliation suffered by Staff reporting possible breaches of this Code.

**Management responsibility:**

Managers shall lead by example and are responsible for creating a culture of compliance within their areas of authority. They shall inform the Human Resources Department of all reports or concerns of breaches of this Code that are raised to them.

Management/Staff relations shall be guided by mutual respect and understanding, for which continuous dialogue is indispensable. Managers shall make themselves available to Staff who wish to raise concerns in confidence and shall deal with such requests in an impartial and sensitive manner.

Managers are responsible for drawing the attention of the organisations and individuals with whom the Federation contracts to the Federation's values and the specific conduct that it considers unacceptable and inconsistent with these values. If the acts of any organisation or individual with whom the Federation is associated could be considered serious breaches of this Code, managers are responsible for taking appropriate action. Where possible, contracts should include provisions for replacement of individuals or termination in such cases – managers are invited to consult the Legal Department for assistance.

**Institutional responsibility:**

The Secretary General and Directors are responsible for putting in place effective mechanisms to ensure the highest standards of conduct are observed both in the Federation's service to the most vulnerable and in its internal and external professional relations.

### **3. Rules of conduct**

**All Staff shall:**

***Federation rules and regulations and applicable laws***

1. Comply with the Staff Rules, Staff Regulations, and all mandatory rules, policies, and procedures, and with the terms of their employment contracts and conditions of service.
2. Comply with the applicable laws of the country in which they are present, including the Federation's applicable status or headquarters agreements. In case of violation of any applicable law, the Federation may not provide any legal assistance to the individual and may waive any immunities enjoyed by him/her.

***Respect for persons***

3. Respect all persons equally and without any distinction or discrimination based on nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class or political opinions; and act at all times in accordance with the Fundamental Principles and the humanitarian and organisational values as defined by the Federation. These are: respect for diversity, cultures, structures and customs of the

communities, solidarity with the community, integrity and accountability, as well as mutual understanding and non-discrimination are essential elements to preserve human dignity.

4. Take into account the sensitivities of peoples' customs, habits, and religious beliefs and avoid any behaviour that is not appropriate in a particular cultural context.
5. Ensure that the portrayal of individuals and their circumstances is fairly represented 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.
6. Abstain from all acts which could be considered harassment,<sup>i</sup> abuse, discrimination or exploitation (*refer to **Anti-harassment guidelines***). This applies to all people of all ages, especially to children and to people exposed to stigma, including those living with HIV (*refer to **International Federation secretariat HIV in the workplace directive***).

### ***Independence***

7. Discharge functions and act only with the interests of the Federation in view.
8. Neither seek nor accept instructions from any government, National Society, or any authority other than the Secretary General (or his/her designate) in connection with their official functions. Staff are considered neutral and independent officials of a global membership organization and are fully and solely accountable to the Federation's Secretary General.
9. Respect the emblems of the red cross, the red crescent and the red crystal, using them only as consistent with the applicable rules (as set out in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Regulations on the use of the Emblem of the Red Cross or the Red Crescent by the National Societies and any other mandatory policies, processes, procedures, and guidelines), and report any misuse.

### ***Integrity***

10. Conduct all official duties with integrity, free from any taint of dishonesty or corruption, including not engaging in any act of favouritism, nepotism, cronyism, or bribery.<sup>ii</sup> This includes not accepting from any external source (including National Societies, governments, corporations or others) without authorisation, any honour, decoration, gift, remuneration, favour or economic benefit which is more than a "token gift". Examples of token gifts include cheap pens, desk diaries, trinkets, etc.
11. Not benefit improperly or allow a third party to benefit improperly (whether directly or indirectly) from association with an enterprise that engages in any business or transaction with the Federation (including association with the management or the holding of a financial interest). Any potential conflict of interest with a supplier, service provider, or business partner (such as family relations or shareholding) must be disclosed.
12. Not intentionally misrepresent their official functions or title to any entities or persons.
13. Not act in any way likely to bring the Federation into disrepute.

### *Neutrality*

14. Not publicly express any opinions on events connected with political affairs or engage in political activities that could reflect adversely on the impartiality, neutrality or independence of the Federation, e.g., public support of a political party.
15. Not accept or exercise any public appointment, outside employment, or activity that could be regarded as inconsistent with, or reflecting adversely upon, their impartiality, neutrality, or independence, or that would result in a conflict of interest without previous agreement of the Secretary General.
16. Dress in a manner appropriate to the assignment, careful to avoid giving the impression of having any military affiliation or status.

### *Sexual abuse and exploitation*

17. Not commit any act of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual violence.<sup>iii</sup> This prohibition extends to all forms of sexual abuse or exploitation and includes not reporting concerns or suspicions regarding any violation by a co-worker (whether fellow Staff or an individual working for a partner organisation).
18. Not engage in any sexual activity with persons (adult or child) that look to or benefit from the Federation's protection or assistance, or with any persons under the age of 18 years, regardless of the age of majority or consent locally (mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence). Sexual activity includes all forms of activity and abuse of a sexual nature, with or without physical contact and whether or not either party is aware of such abuse.
19. Not exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. This prohibition extends to any use of sex trade workers.
20. Not produce, procure, distribute or use pornographic material<sup>iv</sup> in Federation offices or on Federation equipment, including reading/surfing pornographic websites or message boards or sending pornographic emails.

### *Protection of information*

21. Exercise the utmost discretion in regard to all matters of official business and handle all confidential and sensitive information with the greatest care (*refer to **Information and communications technologies acceptable use policy***).
22. Not disclose sensitive information of individuals we serve where there is a risk of adverse consequences to the individuals if their identities are revealed. All efforts must be made to protect the identities of beneficiaries, including their names, faces and geographical locations. Disclosure may be made only where silence puts the individual, those we serve or Staff in danger, and then informing the source in advance and protecting his/her identity to the extent possible.

23. Protect the confidentiality of the Federation's internal information, and not communicate to any person any internal correspondence or information known to them by reason of their official position which has not been made public, except in the course of their official duties or by authorisation of the Secretary General. Staff shall not at any time use the Federation's internal information to private advantage.
24. Immediately inform the Secretary General and follow his/her instructions in the event that they are called upon by authority of law to give evidence or information known to them by reason of their official position.
25. Not publish any work (including writings, photographs, video footage, etc.) that has been produced in connection with, or that is related to, their assignment and functions with the Federation without prior approval of the Secretary General. Staff hereby transfer to the Federation all intellectual property rights in any work published in violation of this obligation, as well as any income derived from such publication.

### *Security*

26. Comply with the Minimum Security Requirements and the Security Regulations for the country in which they are present, as well as any other security procedures or instructions that may be issued.
27. Abide by the Fleet Manual and the Driver Rules and Regulations for the country when operating a Federation vehicle. In particular, Staff are prohibited from driving Federation vehicles under the influence of any alcohol or mind altering substance (proportionate disciplinary action will be taken for any violation).
28. Comply with local traffic laws and regulations at all times, including drinking and driving laws, whether driving Federation vehicles or their private vehicles. Staff facing penalties or criminal charges for drunk driving should not expect any legal assistance from the Federation or to be covered by any immunities.
29. At no time use or have in their possession any drugs prohibited under local law.
30. Ensure that no firearms or ammunition of any kind are brought to or kept in Federation vehicles or Federation offices or premises (including residences provided by the Federation).

### *Federation property*

31. Administer the funds and supplies entrusted to them with the utmost care and be accountable for their use. Staff are prohibited from stealing, misappropriating, or misusing funds or property of the Federation.
32. Not commit the Federation financially unless officially authorised to do so.
33. Return upon the end of their employment or service with the Federation all property issued to them by the Federation, including Federation or other identity cards and insignia.



## Endnotes

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- i. “Harassment” includes any improper and unwelcome conduct that has or that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another. Harassment may be present in the form of words, gestures, or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, or cause personal humiliation or embarrassment to another or that causes an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.
- ii. The terms “favouritism”, “nepotism”, “cronyism”, and “bribery” include such conduct as unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice, support or favour shown to friends and family (especially in making of appointments), and acceptance, offer, or consideration of any improper personal benefit.
- iii. The following common definitions of “sexual abuse”, “sexual exploitation” and “sexual violence” have been agreed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance:

“Sexual abuse” is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

“Sexual exploitation” is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

“Sexual violence” is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including, but not limited to, home and work. Sexual violence takes many forms, including rape, sexual slavery and/or trafficking, forced pregnancy, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or abuse, and forced abortion.

(refer to the *Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Emergencies: Focusing on Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence (2005)*).

- iv. “Pornographic material” includes all sexually explicit material intended to cause sexual arousal, including photographs, videos, and writings. However, if local law provides a stricter definition of pornography than provided here, Staff must comply with local law.

## Referenced documents

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- Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
- Staff Rules

- Staff Regulations
- Disciplinary Measures
- Minimum Security Requirements
- Security Regulations
- Fleet Manual
- Driver Rules and Regulations
- Information and Communications Technologies Acceptable Use Policy
- International Federation Secretariat HIV in the Workplace Directive
- Anti-Harassment Guidelines
- Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Emergencies: Focusing on Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence (2005)

*All referenced documents are available on FedNet or by request to Human Resources.*

## Contact information

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**Ø The Federation is in the process of developing a more detailed reporting system. Until the new system is in place, all general inquiries on the Code of Conduct and its interpretation, reports and allegations of breaches of the Code, and requests for mediation services on work-related issues should be directed to:**

***In Geneva:***

- § Human Resources Department at: [codeofconduct.support@ifrc.org](mailto:codeofconduct.support@ifrc.org)
- § Your line-manager OR
- § A senior manager representing your delegation or Zone.

***In the field:***

- § Human Resources staff in the delegation or relevant Zone Office
- § Your line-manager OR
- § A senior manager in the delegation or relevant Zone Office.

**Ø You may also seek advice and support from the Secretariat's Staff Association:**

International Federation Staff Association at:

E-mail: [staff@ifrc.org](mailto:staff@ifrc.org)

The IFRC encourages anyone with concerns that the Staff Code of Conduct has been breached to report them immediately. All reports will be respected with confidentiality and the safety of personnel reporting will be a priority.

**Staff Code of Conduct 2007  
Acknowledgment**

I \_\_\_\_\_, confirm that I have read and understood this Staff Code of Conduct, and I agree to abide by its terms, which form part of the conditions of my employment/service with the Federation.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

