

A Code of Conduct for Civil Society in Kuwait: A Template

The Code of Conduct Template sets out recommended standards that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Kuwait can adopt and adapt to improve transparency and accountability within their organizations and across the sector as a whole. The following five components were selected during a two-day workshop held on May 29-30, 2016 with 14 different CSOs working in Kuwait.

1. Misconduct, Harassment, and Whistleblower Protection

Misconduct includes improper professional behavior, abuse of office, bribery, nepotism and violating the law. Harassment, whether verbal, physical or sexual will not be tolerated as it interferes with an individual's performance and creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. We expect that all members of the organization treat each other with courtesy, dignity, and respect. To achieve this, the following measures should be implemented:

1.1 Mechanisms for preventing and identifying misconduct, harassment, and ensuring whistleblower protection will be developed, explained and reviewed in regular training and audits of the organization.

1.2 The organization encourages and enables its members to raise any concerns by reporting misconduct to a designated ombudsman or trusted colleague immediately where confidentiality will be upheld.

2. Transparency and Accountability

The organizations/members should aim to explain actions to their stakeholders and the public, and make available critical data about the organization. As the civic sector in Kuwait takes on an increasingly prominent role as an enabler of development, accountability and transparency to the public improves legitimacy and should be expressed by (but not limited to) the following:

2.1 Publishing annual reports, which are searchable online and disclose sources of funding and amounts thereof.

2.2 Submitting timely narrative and financial reports to donors, ideally ensuring their compliance with [International Financial Reporting Standards](#) (IFRS).

2.3 Regularly engaging and receiving feedback from stakeholders and beneficiaries to inform future programs and improve accountability.

2.4 Publicly disclosing information about the organization's management and Board of Directors and having a clear conflict of interest policy. A conflict of interest policy should (a) require those with a conflict (or who think they may have a conflict) to disclose the conflict/potential conflict, and (b) prohibit interested board members from voting on any matter in which there is a conflict.

2.5 Developing, publishing and following a comprehensive Code of Conduct.

3. Equal Opportunities

As CSOs, we welcome a diverse organizational culture and recognize the value and benefits of an inclusive team. This is highlighted by the commitment to provide equal

opportunity in employment, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, family status, marital status and citizenship status. Equal opportunity should be achieved by the following:

- 3.1 Members of the organization must complete training on equal opportunity and how to identify discrimination as part of the recruitment process.
- 3.2 If any form of discrimination occurs, victims and coworkers have a responsibility to report the incident to the assigned ombudsman. For larger organizations, an HR representative or a member of the Board may be appointed for this purpose as well according to the protocol.

4. Sustainability

Sustainability encompasses financial, organizational and community engagement aspects that ensure the continuation and growth of a CSO's projects/initiatives. The organization should have a strategy in place, which includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- 4.1 Creating and implementing a sound financial plan.
- 4.2 Providing professional growth opportunities including trainings, workshops and conferences to maximize each individual team member's potential.
- 4.3 Designing programs that incorporate stakeholders in program development and gather feedback to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability.

5. Confidentiality

All organizations should respect the privacy of their members, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Any information shared in confidence is privileged, and will not be disclosed without authorization.

References:

Examples of International Codes of Conduct:

- Code of Ethics and Conduct for NGOs. The World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations, WANGO. (2016). Retrieved June 2, 2016. www.wango.org

Country specific Codes of Conduct:

- Botswana NGO Code of Conduct. Retrieved June 2, 2016. <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/ethics-and-accountability-nonprofits>
- Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct. Retrieved June 2, 2016. <https://acfid.asn.au/content/read-code>

Organization specific Codes of Conduct:

- Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Retrieved June 2, 2016. <http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct/>
- InterAction's Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Standards. Retrieved June 2, 2016.

https://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/PVO%20Standards_Dec%202014.pdf

Additional reading material:

- Charity Navigator. How Do We Rate Charities' Accountability and Transparency. Retrieved June 2, 2016. <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=content.view&cpid=1093>
- Chene, M. (2013). Key Features of NGO Accountability Systems. Retrieved June 2, 2016. http://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/358_Key_features_of_NGO_accountability_systems.pdf
- Corruption Prevention Department. Independent Commission Against Corruption. Sample Code of Conduct for Non-Governmental Organizations. Retrieved June 2, 2016. http://www.had.gov.hk/file_manager/docs/public_services/code_of_conduct_e.pdf
- Council of Nonprofits. Ethics and Accountability for Nonprofits. Retrieved June 2, 2016. <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/ethics-and-accountability-nonprofits>
- Foundation Center. Topical Resource Lists – Nonprofit Organizations- Accountability. Retrieved June 2, 2016. <http://foundationcenter.org/getstarted/topical/account.html>
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- Hailey, J. (2014). Models of INGO Sustainability: Balancing Restricted and Unrestricted Funding. Retrieved June 2, 2016. <http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/827/NGO-SUSTAINABILITY-Hailey-INTRAC-Briefing-Paper-41-2014.pdf>
- National Council of Nonprofits. Code of Ethics for Nonprofits. Retrieved June 2, 2016. <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/code-of-ethics-nonprofits>
- The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited. (2011). Section Fifteen, Code of Conduct and Equal Opportunities. Retrieved June 2, 2016. http://www.hshgroup.com/en/~/_/media/Files/HSHGroup/Corporate_Governance/Code%20of%20Conduct.ashx
- Transparency International. (2013). Features of NGO Accountability Systems. Retrieved June 2, 2016. http://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/answer/key_features_of_ngo_accountability_systems