



NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL

Code of Conduct for NRC Staff

Norwegian Refugee Council's capacity to ensure the protection of and assistance to refugees, IDPs and other persons of concern depends on the ability of our staff to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. The NRC staff are personally and collectively responsible for maintaining these standards and expected to act in accordance with the principles and values stated in NRC's Policy Paper and this Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct applies to all staff; international and national staff, trainees, volunteers, HQ staff and anyone representing NRC. Whether signed or not, the Code shall automatically form an integral part of all NRC's contracts of employment and conditions of service for all staff.

It is recognized that NRC's work often puts staff in positions of power in relation to own staff and our beneficiaries. Staff have an obligation not to abuse this power. This Code of Conduct is intended to serve as a guide for all staff in how to uphold the ethical foundation of the organisation's views and actions. It also aims to help staff to ensure that we protect the communities we work with and that our work does not put the people of concern at greater risk.

As an employee of NRC, we are "ambassadors" and will be seen as the organisation's representatives both during and outside working hours.

The NRC Code of Conduct is a binding document:

If you fail to adhere to any of the provisions set out in this document you can face disciplinary action, dismissal or even legal action.

You are obliged to read and fully understand the content of the document.
If you have any questions, please ask your supervisor for clarification.

You have a duty to report any breach of this Code to your supervisor or through NRC's established reporting mechanisms. NRC staff also have a duty to inform beneficiaries and others with whom NRC is working of the Code of Conduct that NRC staff must adhere to, including how and to whom they can report any misconduct or failure committed by NRC staff.

All reports and concerns will be properly considered and treated with discretion. NRC will take all necessary steps against any form of retaliation suffered by staff or others reporting possible breaches of this Code.

If you are a manager, you will have particular responsibilities to set a good example and to create a working environment conducive to upholding the standards in the Code of Conduct.

Adjustments:

2011 – Adjusted point 5 to include social media and the approval of publishing on social media.

2014 – Adjusted point 4 to include COTER.

2014 – Adjusted point 2 and 5: Online behaviour

1. RESPECT AND DIGNITY

- I will respect all persons equally and without any distinction or discrimination based on nationality, race, ethnicity, tribe, gender, religious beliefs, political opinion or disability.
- I will respect local laws, customs and habits of the local culture.
- I will always take into consideration the difficult experiences that IDPs, refugees and other persons of concern to NRC have faced and survived, as well as the disadvantaged position in which they may find themselves in relation to those who hold power or influence over certain aspects of their lives.
- I will always seek to care for and protect the rights of the most vulnerable: children, including orphans and separated children, women¹, single parents, elderly, disabled and chronically sick and particularly vulnerable minority groups. I will act in a manner that ensures that their best interests shall be the paramount consideration.
- I will keep myself informed about NRC's policies, objectives and activities and about displaced communities concerns. I will do my utmost to support NRC's protection and assistance work.

2. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- I will uphold the integrity of NRC and my personal and professional performance will always be based on a non-racist, non-discriminatory and gender sensitive conduct.
- I undertake not to abuse the power and influence that I have by virtue of my position over the lives and well-being of IDPs, refugees, staff members and other persons. I will never request or receive any service or favour from IDPs, refugees, staff members or other persons in return for protection or assistance. I will never engage in any exploitative relationships – sexual, emotional, financial or employment-related – with IDPs, refugees, staff members or other persons.
- I will observe local laws, will meet all my legal and financial obligations, and will not seek to take personal advantage of any privileges or immunities that have been conferred on me in the interest of NRC.
- I will uphold the same level of professional behaviour online as I would offline. This includes, but is not limited to, not posting abusive, defamatory, or libelous information about NRC, and avoiding any activities that would put our beneficiaries at risk.
- I will uphold the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity in my professional life. I will demonstrate truthfulness, dedication and honesty in my actions.
- I will be patient, respectful and courteous to all persons with whom I deal including colleagues, beneficiaries, local leaders and government representatives, representatives of operational and implementing partners, donors and other NGO and UN colleagues.
- I will dress in a manner appropriate to the assignment and the cultural setting.
- I will act in conformity with all NRC instructions and policies.

3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- I will perform my official duties and conduct my private affairs in a manner that avoids conflict of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in NRC.
- I will work to serve the mandate, objectives and values of NRC and ensure that personal views, behaviour and beliefs, including political and religious convictions, do not adversely affect official duties or activities performed on behalf of NRC.
- My actions will be free of any consideration of personal gain, and I will resist any undue political pressure in decision-making. I will neither seek nor accept instructions regarding the performance of my duties from any government or from any authority external to NRC². Any potential conflict of interest with a supplier, service provider, or business partner (such as family relations or shareholding) must be disclosed.

¹ E.g. in regards to the fact that women often are more exposed to sexual exploitation and abuse.

² This does not apply to staff contacts at the appropriate level with government officials which will promote good relations and will contribute to trust and confidence in NRC and promote our interests.

- I will not accept any honour, decoration, favour gift or remuneration from any authority; nor will I accept these from any other source external to NRC without prior authorisation, except for minor token items of appreciation.
- I will not engage in any outside occupation or employment without prior authorisation. I will not accept supplementary payments or subsidies from a government or any other source.
- I will not assist private persons or companies in their undertakings with NRC where this might lead to actual or perceived preferential treatment. I will never participate in activities related to procurement of goods or services, or in human resource activities, where a conflict of interests may arise. I will act in conformity with all NRC policies, guidelines and instructions.
- I will not receive or provide bribes, including kick-backs³ of any kind.

4. FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

- I will safeguard and make responsible use of the information and resources to which I have access by reason of my employment with NRC.
- I will handle NRC's financial and material resources with the utmost care, safeguard these at all times against theft or other damage, keep and maintain them properly, and ensure that unauthorized and unethical use of NRC funds or private misuse does not occur.
- I will conduct all official duties with integrity, free from any taint of dishonesty or corruption, including not engaging in any act of favouritism, nepotism or bribery. 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"⁴.
- I will not use offices, NRC property or knowledge gained from functions with NRC for private gain, financial or otherwise, or for the private gain of any third party, including family, friends or those they favour⁵.
- I will exercise due care in all matters of official business, and not divulge any confidential information about IDPs, refugees, persons of concern to NRC, colleagues and other work-related matters.
- I will protect, manage and utilize NRC human, financial and material resources efficiently and effectively, bearing in mind that these resources have been placed at NRC's disposal for the benefit of IDPs, refugees and other persons of concern to NRC.
- I will work to prevent or mitigate the risk of intentional and/or reckless diversion of NRC funds and assets to armed groups (and in particular those groups or individuals designated as terrorist by the UN Security Council).

5. MEDIA, INFORMATION AND IT

- I will ensure that 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.
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- Although NRC has an open and positive attitude towards the media, I will refrain from making comments to the media or to journalists on behalf of NRC without prior agreement with the Country Director or Director External Relations Department in Oslo.
- I am aware that journalists are to be considered as such also after working hours. I must clarify my

³ Kick-back: To give back (a portion of money received as pay, commission, etc.), often as a result of coercion or a previous understanding.

⁴ Examples of token gifts include desk diaries, pens, trinkets etc.

⁵ Examples of misuse of office assets include the use of NRC's vehicles for private purposes without authorization, carry out (excessive) private matters during working time, use of office equipment for private purposes, or have staff and/or contractors provide unremunerated private services.

role as media spokesperson before I pass on information other than general information on NRC's mandate and programmes, when meeting journalists in informal settings.

- I will exercise necessary caution and discretion in regards to political or military matters in official or private communications, including telephone calls, radio messages, e-mails and letters.
- I am responsible for maintaining electronic files and archives in a responsible manner. Information that may be considered illegal, offensive or inappropriate must under no circumstances be processed, downloaded, stored or disseminated.
- I will not issue statements online, to the press or other agencies of public information or submit articles, books or other material for publication if such statements are not in line with NRC public advocacy messaging and policies. I will not make statements on behalf of NRC without prior approval from the Country Director and the Director of the External Relations Department in Oslo.
- I am committed to, both while working for and after leaving NRC, not to reveal any confidential information I have obtained while working for NRC to any third party. I am aware that the breach of professional secrecy both while employed and after leaving the organization, might lead to a claim for compensation and/or prosecution.
- I declare that I will not use or in any other way disclose to others⁶ personal information that I have accessed/ or that otherwise is made known to me for work related purposes by NRC. I will at all times exercise proper safeguards to prevent any breach of confidentiality or privacy in regards to personal information entrusted to me by NRC.

6. ALCOHOL, CRIMINAL AND UNETHICAL ACTIVITIES

- I will have no involvement in criminal and unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the image and interest of NRC.
- I will exercise care with alcohol and will refrain from/avoid using intoxicating substances, including alcohol while on duty.
- I will neither support nor take part in any form of illegal, exploitative or abusive activities, including, for example prostitution, child labour, trafficking of human beings, commodities and intoxicants.
- I will under no circumstances drive a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or any other illegal intoxicants⁷. Any knowledge of staff handling any kind of motorized transportation means under such influence should be reported and will be dealt with as a breach on the Code of Conduct and security regulations, and lead to consequences for the individual's contract.
- The only situations where a staff might be exempted of repercussions due to breaching these regulations will be in a situation where there is a life threatening situation, and all other options have been left out/explored! Any claim to have utilized this clause, will be thoroughly investigated to clarify the circumstances.

7. SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELFARE

- I will promote the safety, health and welfare of all NRC staff as a necessary condition for effective and consistent performance.
- I will remain aware of and comply with instructions designed to protect my health, welfare and safety. I will always consider the safety of staff in operational decisions.
- I will follow the set safety and security regulations/procedures for the area of operation. Any breaches should be reported, and staff who becomes familiar with colleagues that do not comply and put their own or others safety in jeopardy, will have an obligation to report this through the security management system either in country, or directly to security office in Oslo.
- I have made myself familiar with the NRC security policy, and will conduct my work accordingly, bearing in mind that common sense always prevail, and each situation is dealt with individually.

⁶ All other persons than NRC staff in explicit need of access to the information to perform their task, such as individuals within salaries, security, ICT and other HR personnel.

⁷ Any staff being involved in an accident under influence of such could result in not being covered by insurance policy.

8. WORKING ENVIRONMENT

- I will treat my colleagues fairly, with courtesy, dignity and with respect for different customs and cultures.
- I will not under any circumstances carry out any harassment act⁸.
- I will contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding.
- I will seek to resolve differences and solve problems when they arise.

9. PROHIBITION AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

- Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate universally recognised international human rights standards, are a criminal offence in many countries and have always been unacceptable behaviour for NRC personnel. Sexual relationships between NRC personnel and beneficiaries of assistance undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of NRC and are prohibited.
- Where an NRC staff member develops serious concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he/she must report such concerns via his/her supervisor and/or established reporting mechanisms.
- NRC staff members and management are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promote the implementation of the Code of Conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.
- The term 'sexual exploitation' is here defined as any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Similarly, the term 'sexual abuse' means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.
- In order to protect the most vulnerable populations in humanitarian crises, especially women and children, staff must declare and accept the following:
 - I will not commit any act of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual violence⁹.
 - I will not engage in any sexual activity with persons (adult or child) that benefit or look to benefit from NRC's protection or assistance, or with any persons under the age of 18 years¹⁰, regardless of the age of majority or consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
 - I will 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.
 - I will not produce, procure, distribute or use pornographic material in NRC's offices or on NRC's equipment, including reading/surfing pornographic websites or message boards or sending pornographic emails.

⁸ It is harassment when one or several people repeatedly, and over time, are subjected to negative actions from one or several other people. Harassment may, for example, include unwanted sexual attention, continual bothering, freezing out, deprivation of work tasks, or hurtful joking and teasing. Furthermore, there will normally be an imbalance in power relations that makes it difficult for victims of harassment to defend themselves. Conflicts between two persons of approximately equal strength are not considered harassment, nor are isolated conflict episodes. The power relation between the parties is not necessarily about formal positions in an organisation. The way we usually apply the term, a person can be exposed to bullying from managers as well as peers. See also NRC-117558 "Bullying and harassment in the working place".

⁹ This includes towards colleagues, beneficiaries, people of concern and others.

¹⁰ This does not apply where a staff member is legally married to someone who is under the age of 18, but over the age of majority or consent in their country of citizenship. Different considerations may also arise regarding the enforcement of this principle for NRC staff hired from the beneficiary community if they are in consensual and proper sexual relationships with persons over the age of majority consent. The above mentioned standards are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Other types of sexually exploitative or abusive behaviour may be grounds for disciplinary measures.

10. ESPECIALLY FOR MANAGERS

- As a manager I have particular responsibilities to set a good example when it comes to my behaviour both on and off duty.
- I will not engage in or tolerate any form of harassment in the workplace, included but not limited to bullying, sexual harassment and abuse of power. All managers are obliged to prompt actions when harassment is alleged.
- As a manager/supervisor I will be open to views of all team members. I will provide timely feedback on the performance of each team member through guidance, motivation and full recognition of their merits.
- As a manager I will endeavour to ensure that the health and well-being of staff are not subject to undue risk.
- As a manager, I will not solicit favours, loans or gifts from staff, nor will I accept unsolicited ones that are of more than token value.
- I recognize that there is an inherent conflict of interest and potential abuse of power in having sexual relations with NRC staff and volunteers. Should I find myself in such a relationship, I will advise my manager immediately and resolve this conflict of interest without delay.

11. FOR ALL:

I have a duty to inform beneficiaries and others with which NRC works, of the Code of Conduct to which NRC staff must adhere, including how and to whom they can report any misconduct or failure committed by NRC staff or anyone representing NRC. I will report any information received indicating a situation where any of the above agreements are broken through one of the following reporting channels¹¹:

- 1) Through line manager or any senior manager
- 2) Through appointed focal points or Staff Representatives
- 3) Through HR Manager in the field or HR Adviser in Oslo¹²

I am aware of the fact that any breach of this Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary action, dismissal or even legal action and that intentionally false accusations and reports are seen as a breach of the Code of Conduct and will be subject to disciplinary action.

Place:

Signed:

Date:

Employee's name in capital letters:

¹¹ For more information, please see NRC's reporting and whistle blowing routines.

¹² Staff working in country offices may report to HR Manager or FAM, while staff working in Oslo or employed by HQ may report to HR Adviser in Oslo.