

# International Media Support

## Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics serves to inform beneficiaries, donors and the public of the internal guidelines, whereby IMS maintains the highest standards of integrity, governance, financial management, partnerships and implementation of our mission.

This Code of Ethics consists of three parts:

- A brief introduction to IMS
- **Guiding Principles**; *principles must be adhered to, when in a business relationship with IMS.*
- **Code of Conduct**; *outlines mandatory courses of action for specific situations.*

The principles and the standards of conduct set out in this Code of Ethics must be adhered to by: *(List is non-exhaustive)*

- IMS staff
- Members of the board of IMS
- Entities and/or individuals partnering with IMS
- Consultants hired by IMS

Failure to comply may lead IMS to terminate the relevant business relationship.

The IMS Code of Ethics takes inspiration from the Code of Ethics adopted by the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations on 5 March 2005.

### **Introduction to IMS**

International Media Support (IMS) is a non-governmental and not-for-profit organization registered in Denmark, Copenhagen.

IMS supports local media in countries affected by armed conflict, authoritarian rule and political transition. Across four continents, IMS helps to promote press freedom, strengthen professional journalism and ensure that media can operate in challenging circumstances.

IMS is committed to safeguarding freedom of expression and related international human rights standards endorsed by the international community.

IMS is a support mechanism for professional peers, independent media and other media related institutions, where professional journalism can be promoted.

### **Guiding Principles**

IMS shall act in the public interest and maintain its independence from e.g. governments, for-profit corporations, donors and political organisations.

IMS shall not, in the course of its work, violate any person's fundamental human rights.

IMS shall be sensitive to the moral values, religion, customs, traditions, and culture of the communities it works in.

IMS aims to work beyond borders of politics, religion, culture, race and ethnicity and with organizations and individuals that share common values and objectives.

IMS strives to ensure that our media development initiatives are shaped by both international human rights standards and the priorities of each country we operate in. Founded on a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), our programmes are implemented in an accountable, inclusive and transparent manner in favour of marginalized groups. In every aspect of our work, IMS strives to be conscious of and responsive to gender inequalities hindering equal access to the media, both in terms of the production of media and the information disseminated by and through media.

IMS strives not to be affiliated with unethical journalism and promotes the role of the media in de-escalating rather than escalating a conflict.

## **Code of Conduct**

### **Accountability and transparency**

IMS shall be accountable toward donors and members of the public. Information provided about the organization to donors and the public shall be accurate, timely and balanced.

IMS shall make available to the public basic financial information, governance structure, names of its board members, listing of officers, description of activities, partnerships and joint ventures.

IMS shall seek to be transparent in all its dealings with the government, the public, donors, partners and beneficiaries. IMS shall protect personal matters and consider any information confidential in case it may endanger (the work of) any of its staff, partners or beneficiaries.

### **Anti-corruption, conflicts of interest and legality**

IMS shall not engage in any form of corruption, bribery, or other financial improprieties or illegalities. IMS shall never misuse funds; its staff and affiliates will behave honestly and never accept or pay bribes.

IMS shall have an internal business integrity management system to control procedures and prevent any wrongdoing. IMS shall take prompt corrective action whenever wrongdoing is discovered among its staff, contractors or partners.

IMS shall avoid any conflict of interest, also in relation to institutional affiliations. All potential or actual conflicts of interest shall be disclosed immediately. Such disclosure does not preclude or imply ethical impropriety, if all reasonable steps are taken to resolve the conflict of interest.

IMS shall respect the laws, customs and business practices of the countries in which it operates. IMS shall not commit or condone an illegal act or instruct an employee, partner or contractor to do so.

## **Equal opportunity**

Equal opportunity shall be ensured in recruitment processes and in decisions regarding staff development and/or advancement. Such decisions must be made based on performance and merit. Factors such as ethnicity, religion, gender, race, marital status, family responsibilities, etc. must be excluded from such decisions.

## **Sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse**

IMS has zero tolerance against sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is understood as unwanted non- verbal, verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature. Employees, partners, beneficiaries or others, who are subjected to sexual harassment, are encouraged to report according to the procedure in IMS anti-harassment policy. Clear policies and procedures must be implemented, to ensure professional handling of internal reports of sexual harassment.

If requested by IMS, participation in anti-harassment procedures and disclosure of any information relevant to the procedures is mandatory. Failure to participate in anti-harassment procedures, at the request of IMS, may lead IMS to terminate the relevant business relationship.

IMS prohibits sexual exploitation and abuse and considers such acts as serious misconduct, which may constitute grounds for disciplinary sanctions, including summary dismissal and criminal proceedings. Sexual Exploitation is defined as the abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. Sexual abuse is defined as the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

IMS forbids the exchange of money, employment, goods, assistance or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, regardless of whether such an activity (e.g. prostitution) is legal in the country of work.

IMS strictly forbids sexual activity with persons under the age of 18, regardless of the local age of consent. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not an acceptable defence.

Sexual relationships between IMS employees and members of IMS partner organizations are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics and might undermine the credibility of IMS. IMS employees engaged such relationships should report to the relevant line manager, to avoid potential conflicts of interest. When an IMS employee develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or abuse, by an IMS Employee or related personnel, such concerns must be reported via the established reporting procedures.

## **Wages and Benefits**

Wages and certain benefits shall be based on performance and merit. The wage of a staff member employed on a full-time basis, must be sufficient to cover basic necessities (food, water, housing, healthcare, transport). Caretakers shall be allowed some form of maternity and/or parental leave.

The imposition of overtime, where a staff member is unable to leave the work premises due to the employers' threats of e.g. abuse, dismissal or other sanction, is not allowed under any circumstances.

## **Efficiency, effectiveness and evaluation**

IMS shall organize its work efficiently and professionally and ensure that all activities are consistent with its publicly stated mission.

IMS shall critically examine its activities to determine their relevancy to the mission, their efficiency and effectiveness, the value of continuing the programmes or revising them, and the need for new programs.

Evaluations shall be honest and include input from a variety of stakeholders.

IMS shall have a quality management system with accompanying procedures to track the implementation of all its activities and as a methodology to continuously improve the organization.

## **Governance and staff**

IMS shall have an effective governance structure which reflects the core values, mission, and cultural standards of the organization.

IMS shall have an independent board to hold ultimate responsibility for all activities and (human and financial) resources of the organization. The functioning of the board (structure, term, duration, nomination process, grounds for cancellation, responsibilities, frequency, and mode of conduct) shall be laid down in the statutes and relevant by-laws.

IMS shall seek to employ capable and responsible staff, offer them proper supervision, treat them with fairness and equity, and provide them with avenues for individual growth and development.

IMS recruitment processes shall give equal consideration to applicants. Discrimination based on e.g. race, religion, gender or age is prohibited in accordance with the Danish Equal Treatment act.

## **Finances and use of funds**

IMS shall put in place financial and legal procedures to ensure that the funds are managed safely and in accordance with the stated mission.

IMS shall have its financial records audited regularly by a qualified and recognized auditing firm to certify that the organization is operating in full compliance with the law and in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.

## **Partnerships and networking**

IMS shall seek to coordinate its activities and form partnerships with like-minded organizations and collaborate to achieve shared goals, to reduce duplication and use of resources for competitive purposes.

IMS shall share information with non-governmental organizations with overlapping missions, values and target groups.

IMS shall network with other non-governmental organizations to promote the growth, effectiveness and efficiency of the media development sector and its ability to advance the public good.