

## Code of Conduct

### I. Introduction

Wetlands International (WI) is committed to upholding the highest ethical standards in all its operations. This Code of Conduct applies to all employees of Wetlands International, including the Network Offices, volunteers, subcontractors, and partners who work for or on behalf of WI. It outlines the core values, principles, and detailed behavioural expectations that guide our actions and relationships.

Our organization strives to create a respectful, inclusive, and collaborative environment where equality, dignity, and mutual respect are fundamental. As a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization, WI acknowledges its responsibilities toward funders, beneficiaries, partners, staff, and the communities in which we operate.

### II. Core Values and Guiding Principles

#### Core Values

1. **Global Relevance:** Addressing issues of international importance.
2. **Science-Based Methods Incorporating Traditional Knowledge:** Basing actions on sound science while valuing traditional wisdom.
3. **Partnerships Across Sectors:** Collaborating with a diverse range of sectors.
4. **Respect for Traditional Values:** Honouring cultural traditions and practices.
5. **Transparency and Accountability:** Operating openly and being accountable for our actions.

#### Guiding Principles

- **Respect:** Honouring human dignity, privacy, identity, and freedom of choice of individuals and groups.
- **Openness:** Providing all stakeholders with relevant and clear information regarding our activities and finances.
- **Reliability:** Ensuring professionalism, accuracy, efficiency, and accountability in achieving our objectives.
- **Quality:** Striving for excellence, efficiency, and cost-consciousness in all activities.
- **Integrity:** Acting ethically, responsibly, and in accordance with applicable rules and social and ethical norms.

### III. Behavioral Guidelines

All individuals associated with WI are expected to adhere to the following detailed behavioural guidelines:

#### A. Respectful Interactions

##### 1. Respect for Individuals and Cultures

- **Honor Dignity and Privacy:** Treat all persons with dignity and respect their privacy and personal boundaries.
- **Respect Identity:** Acknowledge and respect the identity and choices of individuals and groups, including cultural, religious, and personal beliefs.
- **Freedom of Choice:** Support the voluntariness and autonomy of individuals and communities in decision-making processes.

##### 2. Prohibition of Undesirable Conduct

All forms of undesirable conduct are strictly prohibited, including:

##### a) Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes any unsolicited and unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal, or physical. Examples include:

- **Verbal Conduct:**
  - Ambiguous comments or jokes related to sexuality and intimacy.
  - Comments on someone's appearance or clothing in a sexual manner.
  - Requests for sexual favours.

- Sharing sexual stories or experiences without consent.
- **Non-Verbal Conduct:**
  - Displaying sexually explicit images or materials.
  - Sending unsolicited sexual messages via email, text, or social media.
  - Making sexual gestures or facial expressions.
- **Physical Conduct:**
  - Unwanted physical contact such as touching, hugging, kissing, or brushing against someone.
  - Blocking someone's path or invading personal space.
  - Sexual assault or rape.

#### **b) Aggression and Violence**

Aggression and violence encompass any form of psychological, verbal, or physical harassment, threats, or attacks. Examples include:

- **Verbal Aggression:**
  - Shouting or yelling at someone.
  - Using offensive or abusive language.
  - Threatening harm or retribution.
- **Psychological Aggression:**
  - Intimidation or coercion.
  - Blackmailing or undue pressure.
  - Spreading malicious rumours.
- **Physical Violence:**
  - Hitting, pushing, or physically assaulting someone.
  - Damaging personal property.
  - Threatening with a weapon.

#### **c) Bullying**

Bullying involves repeated negative actions intended to intimidate, offend, degrade, or humiliate a person. Examples include:

- **Direct Bullying:**
  - Mocking or ridiculing someone.
  - Constant criticism or belittling remarks.
  - Physical attacks or threats.
- **Indirect Bullying:**
  - Excluding or isolating someone from group activities.
  - Deliberately withholding information necessary for work.
  - Sabotaging someone's work or reputation.
- **Cyberbullying:**
  - Sending threatening or insulting messages online.
  - Sharing private information or images without consent.

#### **d) Discrimination**

Discrimination is the unequal treatment of individuals based on protected characteristics. This includes:

- **Protected Characteristics:**
  - Race, colour, ethnicity, or national origin.
  - Religion or belief.
  - Gender or gender identity.
  - Sexual orientation.
  - Age.
  - Disability or chronic illness.
  - Marital or family status.
- **Examples of Discriminatory Behaviour:**

- Making derogatory comments or jokes about a person's protected characteristic.
- Denying opportunities or promotions based on personal attributes.
- Implementing policies that disproportionately affect certain groups.
- Excluding individuals from meetings or communications.
- Retaliating against individuals who report discrimination.

#### e) Harassment/Stalking

Harassment or stalking involves persistent and unwanted attention that causes someone to feel unsafe or threatened. Examples include:

- **Persistent Contact:**
  - Repeated unsolicited phone calls, emails, or messages.
  - Following someone or appearing at their workplace or home uninvited.
- **Cyberstalking:**
  - Monitoring someone's online activities without consent.
  - Sending threatening or obscene messages via social media.
- **Threatening Behaviour:**
  - Making threats against a person or their loved ones.
  - Damaging personal property.
  - Using third parties to relay messages or threats.

### B. Commitment to Stakeholders

#### 1. Responsibilities to Funders

- **Quality Assurance:** Perform all activities with the aim of achieving the highest quality and impact.
- **Transparency:** Provide complete, honest, and clear accountability regarding the use of resources and activities performed.
- **Financial Integrity:** Ensure accurate financial reporting and prudent management of funds.

#### 2. Responsibilities to Beneficiaries

- **Respect and Dignity:** Treat all individuals and communities with respect, honouring their culture and traditions.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Provide services and support without discrimination based on any protected characteristic.
- **Participation:** Actively involve beneficiaries in identifying needs, setting priorities, and implementing programs.
- **Capacity Building:** Strengthen local capacities and resources to promote sustainability.
- **Neutrality:** Refrain from promoting any political or religious agendas.

#### 3. Responsibilities to Staff and Volunteers

- **Fair Employment Practices:** Observe standards of good employment, including fair wages, benefits, and working conditions.
- **Safe Work Environment:** Provide a workplace free from harassment, discrimination, and unsafe conditions.
- **Recognition and Appreciation:** Acknowledge and value the contributions of staff and volunteers.
- **Professional Development:** Support opportunities for training and career advancement.
- **Equal Opportunities:** Promote diversity and inclusion, acting as an equal opportunities employer.

#### 4. Responsibilities to Partner Organizations and Peers

- **Mutual Respect:** Engage with partners and peers in a respectful and professional manner.
- **Collaboration:** Foster open communication and collaboration on shared interests and goals.
- **Coordination:** Coordinate efforts to maximize impact and avoid duplication of work.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Exchange information, best practices, and lessons learned.

## 5. Responsibilities to Communities and Societies

- **Environmental Responsibility:** Employ environmentally friendly practices and minimize negative impacts.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage with community groups and stakeholders regarding WI's activities.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Respect local customs, laws, and cultural practices.
- **Social Contribution:** Contribute positively to the social and economic development of communities.

## IV. Conflict of Interest

All individuals must avoid conflicts of interest that could compromise WI's integrity or reputation.

### 1. Disclosure Requirements

- **Mandatory Disclosure:** Disclose any personal, financial, or other interests that may conflict with WI's objectives.
- **Timing:** Disclosures should be made promptly to Management Team of Wetlands International, via the Complaints Coordinator.
- **Examples:**
  - Financial interests in entities that may benefit from WI's activities.
  - Personal relationships influencing professional decisions.
  - External commitments interfering with job responsibilities.

### 2. Prohibited Actions

- **Unauthorized Activities:** Do not engage in activities or transactions creating a conflict of interest without explicit authorization.
- **Misuse of Resources:** Do not use WI's assets, information, or influence for personal gain.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information obtained through your role.

## V. Corruption Prevention

WI defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for illegitimate individual or group benefit, including both financial and non-financial gains.

### Forms of Corruption

- **Bribery:** Offering or accepting something of value to influence decisions.
- **Embezzlement:** Theft or misappropriation of WI's funds or assets.
- **Extortion:** Obtaining something through threats, force, or undue demands.
- **Favoritism and Nepotism:** Unfairly favoring individuals, especially relatives or friends, in professional matters.

### Employee Responsibilities

- **Integrity:** Act ethically and responsibly in all dealings.
- **Vigilance:** Be alert to signs of fraud or corruption.
- **Reporting:** Promptly report any suspicions or incidents to your line manager or higher authorities.
- **Cooperation:** Assist in investigations by providing information and participating in interviews.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain confidentiality during and after investigations.

## VI. Whistle-Blower

WI encourages the reporting of unethical or illegal activities without fear of retaliation.

## VII. Concluding Provisions

Wetlands International ensures a clear and structured approach for reporting undesirable behavior, misconduct, or other issues within Wetlands International. It outlines how staff and other stakeholders working for/ with Wetlands International can raise concerns and provides guidance on who to approach depending on the nature of the issue.

**Acknowledgment**

By adhering to this Code of Conduct, all individuals associated with WI contribute to an ethical, transparent, and accountable organization dedicated to the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands.

**Agreement**

All employees, stakeholders, external contacts, volunteers, subcontractors, partners and network offices staff and are required to read, understand, and comply with this Code of Conduct. By participating in WI's activities, you agree to uphold these standards and contribute to a positive and ethical work environment.

**Colophon**

Wetlands International  
P.O. Box 471  
6700 AL Wageningen  
The Netherlands

Email:	post@wetlands.org
Website:	www.wetlands.org
Document:	Wetlands International Code of Conduct
Author:	Director of Resources
Modified:	March 2025
Available at:	<a href="http://www.wetlands.org">www.wetlands.org</a>
Adopted by:	Management Team / Supervisory Council