



# Code of Conduct and Ethics

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## INTRODUCTION

SOS Faim is a Belgian development NGO that has been actively fighting hunger and poverty in rural areas of Africa and Latin America since 1964.

**SOS Faim overarching aim is to fight hunger and poverty by supporting family farming in two main ways:**

- First, build the capacities of farmers in the South by providing them with **technical, organizational and financial aid** so that they can improve their food, economic and social situation themselves lastingly and ultimately become autonomous.
- **Second, raise awareness and mobilize people in the North** to influence, along with our partners in the South, policies that influence hunger and poverty in developing countries.

We do not have expatriate staff; we work together in collaboration with local partners such as farmers' organizations, producers' associations and micro-finance institutions. The choice we made to employ local staff instead of expatriate staff in the SOS Faim branches in Africa and South America is consistent with our choice of long term commitments with southern partners. We do not perform charity work - we support their own actions to **enable people in the South to become the agents of their own development.**

As we work with, and accompany partner organizations in 9 countries of Africa and South America, SOS Faim implements a number of principles and practices, based on an ambitious understanding of partnership:

- knowledge of the environment where we work
- mutual knowledge of the actors
- sharing common objectives and values
- fair relationships between the actors
- transparency and confidence
- sustainability and the sustainable nature of the relationships
- adjustment capacities

These principles and practices provide evidence of our long-term commitment with organizations which are well rooted in their social context, aiming to bring benefits for the local populations.

Considering the need to fight gender inequalities existing all over the world in practically all sectors of society, SOS Faim has also set up a gender policy, comprising of a charter and an action plan, different tools which are implemented by a working group composed of employees belonging to various services.

This code of ethics and conduct describes the standards required to be met by all the employees working with SOS Faim or representing the organization.

All SOS Faim collaborators (men and women), i.e.: employees, interns, volunteers, long term consultants, “chargés de mission” and members of the board of directors of SOS Faim accept to comply with the requirements described in this code. We also encourage our partners and other individuals representing us to respect the spirit of the code when they work with us. For this purpose, the Code of ethics is available on SOS Faim website.

## **STANDARDS**

### **STANDARD 1: compliance with laws, policies and regulations**

Regardless of the location where SOS Faim works, whatever the funding sources – both public and private - the SOS Faim collaborators are expected to comply with the laws, rules and regulations- on local, state and federal levels – of the countries where they work.

The collaborators of SOS Faim, i.e.: employees, volunteers, long term consultants, “chargés de mission”, and members of the board of directors of SOS Faim, will respect the rules and requirements of donors supporting our projects, as well as our policies and procedures. Wherever a clear conflict appears between different laws, rules and regulations, and if the employees face a dilemma as to which course of action they should take, they should refer to their boss. The members of the Board will refer to the General Assembly, and the volunteers will refer to the “mobilization officer”.

The Code is subject to the following laws and regulations:

#### Human rights

Overall, SOS Faim abides by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### Child protection

SOS Faim forbids its collaborators to engage in any form of violence, exploitation of and neglect against children, and subscribes to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

SOS Faim promotes control procedures to guarantee the safety of children and is working to reduce the risk of violence, exploitation or neglect against children, including hidden interactions with children, forbidden exposure to pornography, and compliance with the rules and practices related to photography, videos and other means to capture children's image. SOS Faim ensures that its collaborators are in a capacity to identify such behaviors of violence, exploitation or neglect towards children, and that they know how to report suspicious behaviors and / or obvious abuse.

#### Terrorism

SOS Faim is committed to, and takes the required steps, to assure that it does not provide support or material resources to an individual or a structure engaging or trying to engage in, supporting, facilitating or taking part in terrorist acts.

#### Exploitation of human beings

SOS Faim forbids the use of forced, bonded or illegal labor, the exchange of money for sexual favors, the use of involuntary labor in prisons, [involuntary] domestic servitude, forced child labor, use of children involved in armed conflicts, child sex trafficking, or any other forms of exploitation of human beings by our collaborators. Moreover, SOS Faim implements a zero-tolerance policy (immediate cancellation of collaboration or partnership agreements) on matters of exploitation of human beings by the participants in our projects or by the workers appointed by the partner organizations.

#### Anti-corruption and fraud policies

SOS Faim rejects the act of paying or offering counterparts to governmental representatives, or to private individuals or enterprises with the aim of obtaining or keeping a purchase contract or any privilege. Collaborators of SOS Faim will reject any form of corruption, bribes, gifts, or other corruption practices involving governments, local authorities of private individuals.

### **STANDARD 2: Financial resources management**

SOS Faim implements the highest standards in terms of managing donated funds (procedure guide, transparency of information, internal control, auditing and review of accounts).

Records, archives and accounts of SOS Faim are complete and accurately reflect the nature of the registered transactions; SOS Faim collaborators will appropriately and accurately account for all transactions of the organization.

All funds accepted by SOS Faim will be used for their agreed purpose only; financial reports as well as other reports (such as annual accounts) will be accurate and complete. An auditor will check, every year, the annual accounts to assure that they are reliable and reflect the assets, financial situation and the income of the organization.

### **STANDARD 3: Performing our work with equity and impartiality**

- as a good manager of its resources, SOS Faim implements fair, open and impartial decision-making processes in matters of supply and appointment. Collaborators shall avoid using their SOS Faim position, or organizational equipment or information for their own benefit.
- SOS Faim employees will avoid conflicts of interest, which arise when their personal interests interfere with the organization's interests, or the performance of their duties and responsibilities in an honest, objective and efficient way.

- Fraud is the act of intending to deceive, aiming to keep something of value for oneself at the expense of somebody else. Deception can include falsehoods, false statements or concealment of facts. Some examples are false statements of expenses, theft, acceptance or giving of bribes.
- SOS Faim employees will avoid situations where someone (friend, wife/husband, family member, professional relationship, colleague, etc.) endeavors to influence a decision involving a contract or a purchasing decision.
- SOS Faim employees will not offer or accept any advantage with an intent to influence a decision. Such advantages include monetary gifts, tips, hospitality, entertainment, travel and transport, favors, contracts or appointments. SOS Faim employees should pay attention to situations involving Belgian or foreign governmental representatives, local authorities, enterprises, individuals, as well as other non-governmental organizations' representatives.

#### **STANDARD 4: Respecting diversity**

SOS Faim is a multicultural organization, which benefits from diversity among its employees. SOS Faim treats all people with respect, regardless of sex, race, age, skin color, religious belief, language, handicap, origin, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. SOS Faim promotes gender equality, non-discrimination and human rights in the organization's image, behavior and culture, as well as in its approaches, deliverables, and achievements. SOS Faim seeks to appoint employees coming from different social backgrounds and to live by the principles of equality of opportunities in its hiring procedure.

#### **STANDARD 5: Commitment to health and safety**

The organization commits to educating, training and motivating its staff to maintain a safe and healthy environment for its employees, its partner organizations and hosts visiting the work place/ environment. SOS Faim expects from its staff that they demonstrate personal responsibility, learn and comply with the safety management plans of the organization, and actively contribute to creating a working environment that will be safe, free of violence, of threat of physical or verbal abuse, of harassment, intimidation or any other abusive behavior. SOS Faim will promote a healthy balance between the professional and private life of its employees, and to maintain tobacco- and drug free working environments

#### **STANDARD 6: The Protection of confidential and sensitive information**

SOS Faim values, respects and protects the confidentiality of its staff, Board members, clients, partners, beneficiaries and donors. Employees and Board members regularly have access to confidential information concerning individuals: salary, performance, level of contribution, health status, competitive strategy, tenders and personal data. Therefore, our staff must keep confidential

all sensitive and/or personal information and disclose such information only to those who demonstrably need it to serve the objectives of SOS Faim. Our organization also asks consultants to sign a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement.

#### **STANDARD 7: The respect of intellectual property**

- SOS Faim recognizes and respects intellectual property rights and commits to comply with the related legal and ethical obligations. Employees must protect SOS Faim intellectual assets and must not infringe on any intellectual property rights of its collaborators (co-contractors, academic institutions, local partners, donors and enterprises).
- SOS Faim authorizes the dissemination, use and modification of its deliverables to non-commercial ends in so far as the organization has agreed, and as the intellectual property item is returned.
- all reports, documents / records and articles drawn up, written or prepared as a result of employment with SOS Faim are to be considered as intellectual property of the organization.

#### **STANDARD 10: The management of natural resources and the environment**

When carrying out their activities, SOS Faim will seek to minimize the impact on the environment and on climate change. SOS Faim seeks to reduce the environmental impact and to create a working environment in which consumption of energy and production of waste are minimized. In line with SOS Faim environmental policy, such commitment includes making reasonable choices in terms of means of transportation, recycling, cutting water and energy consumption, as well as paper products, appropriate disposal of waste, including computers and other digital tools.

### **BREACHING THE CODE OF ETHICS / OF CONDUCT**

SOS Faim commits to take swift, fair and appropriate action to handle breaches of the present Code. Any breach of these standards may result in disciplinary action including dismissal and/ or to criminal prosecution.

### **REPORTING**

- Each member of staff, and of the Board of Directors is required to report allegations of breaches, and to express his/ her concerns about ethical practices. If an employee feels he/she may have witnessed unethical behavior or malpractice, he / she must inform the line

management immediately. The management will immediately report any complaint about inappropriate conduct or malpractice to the SOS Faim ethics advisor<sup>1</sup>.

- If an employee does not feel comfortable to discuss the incident with the senior staff or is not satisfied with the results of the conversation, she /he should directly contact the ethics advisor. In the case that concerns arise among the staff, they should be reported confidentially to the SOS Faim ethics advisor.
- If it appears that the initial procedure described above will not satisfactorily or appropriately address the case, the employee can contact the President of the Board of Directors<sup>2</sup> who has been appointed as the ethical conduct contact within the Board of SOS Faim.
- SOS Faim employees can use this contact confidentially and without fear of retribution, to report doubts about the inappropriate conduct of a staff member. They will receive an answer as quickly as possible.
- Any person filing a complaint must act in good faith and have reasonable grounds to believe that a breach of the code of ethics has occurred.

## **MODIFICATION AND UPDATING OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

SOS Faim reserves the right to modify this Code of conduct if necessary. The most recent version of the Code is available on SOS Faim website.

## **CONCLUSION**

SOS Faim values of partnership, innovation, learning and responsibility serve as the foundation of the organization's ethical practices. This Code of ethics is designed as a guide for internal ethical decision-making but is not necessarily exhaustive of all ethical issues that may arise. The reputation and success of SOS Faim as an organization relies on the daily conduct of individuals which work for, and represent the organization. SOS Faim seeks to attract and retain individuals with high ethical standards. The employees and members of the board of directors must act with integrity to defend these standards and serve as guarantors of the good reputation and values defended by SOS Faim.

## **ACCEPTATION**

By accepting any post of director, an employee, consultant or volunteer contract, everyone accepts to conform to SOS Faim present Code of conduct and ethics.

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