

APPENDIX 1

UNHCR Code Of Conduct

Introduction

UNHCR's capacity to ensure the protection of and assistance to refugees and other persons of concern depends on the ability of its staff to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. We, the staff members of UNHCR, are personally and collectively responsible for maintaining these standards. Managers have a particular responsibility to uphold these standards, to set a good example, and to create a working environment that supports and empowers staff.

It is recognised that UNHCR's work often puts its staff in positions of power in relation to its beneficiaries. Staff have an obligation not to abuse this power.

This Code of Conduct is intended to serve as an illustrative guide for staff to make ethical decisions in their professional lives, and at times in their private lives. It is a moral code that does not have the force of law. It is designed to assist staff to better understand the obligations placed upon their conduct by the Charter of the United Nations and the Staff Regulations and Rules, which remain the only legal instruments that determine acceptable conduct in UNHCR. Signing the Code does not take away any acquired rights of UNHCR Staff.

While acknowledging that local laws and customs may differ from one country to another, the Code of Conduct is based on international legal standards. For example, children are defined as those under the age of 18. Guidance on appropriate interpretation can be found in the Notes to the Code of Conduct.

The Code applies to all UNHCR staff members, who will be requested to sign it. Persons holding a UNHCR consultant contract and interns will also receive the Code and be requested to confirm that they uphold its standards as far as applicable to their status. Governmental and non-governmental organisations and companies which, through their employees, work for UNHCR, will be requested to make the principles contained in the Code known to those persons in an appropriate manner.

All UNHCR staff are responsible for encouraging, advocating and promoting the dissemination of the Code of Conduct. They also have a role in implementing, monitoring and enforcing its standards. Staff are also urged to encourage partners to adhere to these standards and to join UNHCR staff in upholding them.

CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

UNHCR staff are committed to the following fundamental values and principles:

- As staff working within the United Nations system, we will ensure that our conduct is consistent with and reflects the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations: respect for fundamental human rights, social justice and human dignity, and respect for the equal rights of men and women. We will assist UNHCR to actively promote adherence to the principles of international refugee law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We will be guided by the core values of the United Nations system, including professionalism, integrity and respect for diversity, and will maintain an international perspective at all times.
- As UNHCR staff, our primary commitment is to ensure the protection of and assistance to refugees and other persons of concern, in accordance with the mandate of the Office. We are committed to supporting the fullest possible participation of refugees and other persons of concern – as individuals, families and communities – in decisions that affect their lives.
- We will respect the dignity and worth of every individual, will promote and practise understanding, respect, compassion and tolerance, and will demonstrate discretion and maintain confidentiality as required. We will aim to build constructive and respectful working relations with our humanitarian partners, will continuously seek to improve our performance, and will foster a climate that encourages learning, supports positive change, and applies the lessons learned from our experience.
- We will show respect for all persons equally without distinction whatsoever of race, gender, religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, disability, political conviction, or any other distinguishing feature. We will strive to remove all barriers to equality.
- We will respect the cultures, customs and traditions of all peoples, and will strive to avoid behaving in ways that are not acceptable in a particular cultural context. However, when the tradition or practice is considered by the relevant organ of the United Nations to be directly contrary to an international human rights instrument or standard, we will be guided by the applicable human rights instrument or standard.

Commitment to UNHCR Code of Conduct

As a staff member of UNHCR, I commit myself to:

1. ***Treat all refugees and other persons of concern fairly, and with respect and dignity.***

I will always seek to understand the difficult experiences that refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR have faced and survived, as well as the disadvantaged position in which they – particularly on the basis of gender, age or disability – may find themselves in relation to those who hold power or influence over aspects of their lives.

I will always seek to care for and protect the rights of children, and act in a manner that ensures that their best interests shall be the paramount consideration.

If my job involves direct work with refugees or other persons of concern, I will meet with them regularly, in order to fully understand their experiences and needs, and to explain the role of UNHCR and the scope of its work.

I will keep myself informed about UNHCR's policies, objectives and activities and about refugee concerns, and will do my utmost to support the Office's protection and assistance work.

2. Uphold the integrity of UNHCR, by ensuring that my personal and professional conduct is, and is seen to be, of the highest standard.

I will demonstrate integrity, truthfulness, dedication and honesty in my actions. I will be patient, respectful and courteous to all persons with whom I deal in an official capacity, including refugees and other persons of concern, representatives of operational and implementing partners, governments and donors.

I will observe local laws, will meet all my private 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 the United Nations. I will do my utmost to ensure that the conduct of members of my household does not reflect unfavourably on the integrity of UNHCR.

3. Perform my official duties and conduct my private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in UNHCR.

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, including my national authorities, or from any authority external to the United Nations.

In accordance with Staff Regulations and Rules, I will not accept any honour, decoration, favour gift, remuneration, from any government; nor will I accept these from any other source external to the United Nations without prior authorisation. 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, or participate in certain political activities such as standing for or holding public office.

I will avoid assisting private persons or companies in their undertakings with UNHCR 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.

4. *Contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding.*

I will show respect to all colleagues, regardless of status or position, and will allow all colleagues the opportunity to have their views heard, and to contribute from their knowledge and experience to team efforts. I will communicate openly and share relevant information (subject to confidentiality requirements) with other colleagues, and will endeavour to respond in a timely manner to queries.

I will respect my colleagues' privacy, and avoid misinformation. I will seek to resolve differences and solve problems when they arise. I will contribute to building constructive dialogue, guided by mutual respect and an open, positive approach, between management and staff representatives.

As a manager/supervisor I will be open to the 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.

5. *Promote the safety, health and welfare of all UNHCR staff as a necessary condition for effective and consistent performance.*

I will remain aware of and comply with all instructions designed to protect my health, welfare and safety. I will always consider the safety of staff in operational decisions. If I have doubts regarding an instruction that I consider threatening to my safety or the safety of other persons, I will bring this immediately to the attention of my supervisor.

As a manager/supervisor, I will endeavour to ensure that the health and well-being of staff and their families are not subjected to undue risk. I will promote a healthy work-life balance for staff, and will respect staff entitlements.

6. *Safeguard and make responsible use of the information and resources to which I have access by reason of my employment with UNHCR.*

I will exercise due care in all matters of official business, and not divulge any confidential information about refugees, colleagues and other work-related matters in accordance with the staff regulations and rules and current guidelines.

I will protect, manage and utilise UNHCR human, financial and material resources efficiently and effectively, bearing in mind that these resources have been placed at UNHCR's disposal for the benefit of refugees and other persons of concern.

7. *Prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of refugees and other persons of concern.*

I undertake not to abuse the power and influence that I have by virtue of my position over the lives and well-being of refugees and other persons of concern.

I will never request any service or favour from refugees or other persons of concern in return for protection or assistance. I will never engage in any exploitative relationships – sexual, emotional, financial or employment-related – with refugees or other persons of concern.

Should I find myself in such a relationship with a beneficiary that I consider non-exploitative and consensual, I will report this to my supervisor for appropriate guidance in the knowledge that this matter will be treated with due discretion. I understand that both my supervisor and I have available to us normal consultative and recourse mechanisms on these issues.

I will act responsibly when hiring or otherwise engaging refugees or other persons of concern for private services. I will report in writing on the nature and conditions of this employment to my supervisor.

8. Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the image and interests of UNHCR.

I will neither support nor take part in any form of illegal, exploitative or abusive activities, including, for example, child labour, and trafficking of human beings and commodities.

As UNHCR is committed to the highest standards of protection and care for children, I am aware that I am expected not to engage in sexual activities with any person under the age of 18. (Further guidance is given in the Notes to this Code of Conduct).

9. Refrain from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation or favouritism in the workplace.

I will not engage in or tolerate any form of harassment in the workplace, including sexual harassment and abuse of power.

As a manager/supervisor, I will not solicit favours, loans or gifts from staff, nor will I accept unsolicited ones that are of more than token value.

I recognise that there is an inherent conflict of interest and potential abuse of power in having sexual relations with staff under my supervision. Should I find myself in such a relationship, I will resolve this conflict of interest without delay.