

## **SEEDS Code of Business Conduct**

### **The Organisation**

Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS) is a non-profit voluntary organization working to make vulnerable communities resilient to disasters. SEEDS adopts a multi hazard locally based approach seeking to empower communities through awareness, training and education. SEEDS continues to advocate and involve with communities across Asia to ensure safer and sustainable world.

### **Code of Conduct**

The Code of Conduct (CoC) reflects the principles, values, standards, or rules of behaviour including those mentioned in clause 7 of H.R Manual that guide decisions, procedures and systems of SEEDS in a way that contributes to the welfare of its key stakeholders and respects the rights of all constituents affected by its interventions. It refrains from acts of any misconduct and violation of any set rules and regulations of the organisation. SEEDS co-founders will be responsible to ensure that CoC is implemented, monitored and evaluated. All reporting officers are required to make sure that staff working with them are well informed and understood the CoC.

### **Scope of CoC**

This Code of Conduct applies to all individuals who are employed, full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid including Consultants, Volunteers, Interns and Partners in all countries and regions of SEEDS' intervention during the entire period of their association with SEEDS; whilst on duty, on off and on leave. It sets out the rules applicable in matters of professional ethics and behaviour and is to be read in conjunction with HR and Financial Manuals and other Regulations. The code of conduct also applies by extension, and insofar as their contracts so provide, to third parties who have entered into contracts to provide services to SEEDS.

SEEDS Code of Business Conduct comprises the following ten principles.

#### **1. Follow organisational vision, mission and guiding principles**

The vision, mission and guiding principles of the organization shall be followed in letter and spirit while conceptualizing, designing and implementing the humanitarian projects.

***Vision:*** Resilient Communities

***Mission:*** Equipping the most vulnerable with appropriate tools and technologies, sharing knowledge and skills, and promoting linkages among stakeholders to prevent loss of life and suffering.

***Guiding Principles:***

- Prompt in action
- Identify and reach out to the most vulnerable
- Facilitate community participation in decision making
- Adapt to local and cultural environment
- Non-discriminatory in approach
- Focus on individual
- Promote Excellence

**2. Be humanitarian**

‘Humanity’ shall be the first and foremost universal code of conduct. In the service to the mankind, disaster victims shall be recognised as dignified human beings. They will be treated with utmost respect and care. We shall not try to be a party to profit from the miseries of the community. All members of the community shall be treated with equal respect and in a polite manner. The community shall be involved in all stages of project implementation as much as possible.

The intentions of the intervention and the project design shall be made clear to the community in the beginning. All efforts shall be made to fulfil the commitments made in the project; but if for some reasons beyond our control our commitments could not be met, the same is communicated to the communities properly. Community’s feedback shall be taken seriously; action taken report shall be communicated.

Local capacity of community shall be assessed, and necessary activities shall be included in the intervention to build their coping capacity to make them more resilient during any future disasters. Local culture and customs shall be respected. Project activities shall be designed keeping in mind the sentiments of the communities.

**3. Be inclusive**

Humanitarian intervention shall be designed after careful assessment of the needs of the community. Real needy persons and the most vulnerable shall be identified to benefit from the intervention. The needs of women, elders, children and persons with disability shall be considered. Views of every section of the community shall be considered for designing the project, as the communities have local wisdom, and they know more about the local context. Local / indigenous knowledge and community coping mechanisms and coping capacities shall be identified, and the intervention shall be built on that.





#### **4. Be impartial**

Humanitarian intervention shall be designed and implemented in a non-discriminatory basis, without any bias of class, creed, religion, or political consideration. Impartiality shall be practiced at all levels – at the organisational level as well as while implementing humanitarian interventions. All activities of staffing and project implementation shall be free from favouritism and nepotism, thereby providing equal opportunities to all.

The organization shall follow the policy of neutrality and be free from taking sides in hostilities or influence of any political party. Organisation's conduct shall preclude any activity that could be interpreted as mutual dependence / favour with any political body or person and shall not offer. Thus, the organisation shall act only under the authority of the organisation's governing body and in accordance with its vision, mission and guiding principles.

#### **5. Follow business and professional ethics**

Ethical principles shall be followed with all stakeholders while designing, developing project proposals as well as while implementing projects. Principles of openness, collaboration, mutual trust & trustworthiness, authenticity, proactive, and autonomy shall be followed in all business dealings. Partners shall be considered as equals. Mutual respect shall be shown to them and their contribution shall be given due credit. Association with local partners shall be based on common policy and with a motive to avoid clash. Any dispute between partners shall be resolved amicably.

All agencies working for the community shall be respected and their role in serving the community shall be recognised. Available limited resources shall be shared with all for a larger common goal. Any difference shall be avoided, gaps shall be bridged, and relationships shall be strengthened.

Design and implementation of interventions shall be done professionally with due consideration of all scientific and technical issues in a systematic manner. All professional guidelines and codes shall be applied in implementing project activities.

Respectful and a uniform image of the organisation shall be maintained in front of all stakeholders. Even adverse situations shall be dealt with patiently in a clam manner. The trust placed by the organization on the individual employee shall be valued.

Professional treatment shall be given to the local partners while implementing humanitarian activities. However, if a partner is found drifting away from Code of Conduct, the same shall be pointed out and corrected.

Contractual employees shall not work for any other organisation for monetary benefit or on voluntary service. In case of consultants who are already giving consultancy to other organisations and those who wish to give consultancy service to other organisations during their consultancy tenure with SEEDS need to inform the same to the Director in writing through H.R Department.

#### **6. Respect laws of the land**

Humanitarian intervention cannot be done without due permissions of the government authorities. All required information shall be provided to the concerned authorities and necessary permissions shall be secured before project implementation. All government laws, rules and regulations shall be followed. No attempt shall be made to bypass these. No work shall be attempted that may be detrimental to the national interest.

#### **7. Shun fraudulent and corrupt practice**

No corrupt or fraudulent practice shall be practiced or tolerated by the organization at any stage of the project. No fund or property shall be used for bribing or for any other illegal purpose. Employees or members of their family shall neither solicit nor accept loans, fees, services, or gifts of any kind from beneficiaries, suppliers, customers, or others dealing with the organisation. They may accept unsolicited non-monetary gifts or entertainment that conform to customary business practices and are not of significant value. Should they accept such gifts or entertainment, they shall not give the person or entity offering such gifts or entertainment any preferential treatment. Any corrupt behaviour of any employee shall be reported to the concerned official, Compliant Redress Committee (CRC) and the management as deem necessary

#### **8. Practice dignified behaviour**

The employees shall behave in a dignified manner with all colleagues, their family members and friends and others in the society. Proper decorum and professional work environment shall be maintained. Employees are encouraged to demonstrate a spirit of cooperation in good faith. Every one's time shall be respected. Misinformation or withholding of information, unwarranted refusal to collaborate with colleagues as well as, in general, obstructive behaviour or systematic denigration, firmly discouraged at all levels. Harassment and bullying of any kind are unacceptable. Victims of any harassment or bullying may bring the matter to the attention of the management.

Female colleagues shall be given due respect. The organisation strongly disapproves any form of sexual harassment including any unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature. Employees who have been subjected to sexual harassment or have witnessed sexual harassment should report such incidents to their supervisors/unit head or head of Human Resource Management or Compliant Redress Committee (CRC) If any employee is uncomfortable reporting the incident to designated authorities he or she should contact any other senior of the organisation who shall appropriately communicate the same to designated authorities.





Respectful and supportive behaviour shall be shown towards any persons with any kind of disadvantage, such as persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS, and persons from socially excluded sections of society.

Supervisory staff shall ensure that the tasks assigned to their units are performed properly. They shall also be expected to foster an atmosphere conducive to good working relationship and to prevent personal conflicts. Subordinates must be treated and assessed with respect and without any favouritism. Criticism must be expressed openly and honestly, without innuendoes or veiled threats. Should serious problems arise with subordinates in the performance of their assigned tasks, the management shall be promptly informed.

Employees shall respect the authority of their superiors and carry out faithfully the tasks assigned to them, if these are compatible with their duties. They are welcome to offer suggestions and constructive criticism. Any employee, who, in the performance of their assigned tasks, encounters serious problems with the superior, is entitled to inform the Human Resources Department accordingly, without incurring reproach.

During the contract period or thereafter one shall not share with or divulge to any person or persons or third party any of the Organization's affairs without written authorization from SEEDS.

Employees shall refrain from consuming alcohol and illicit drugs while on duty, while driving and while in organization's premises.

#### **9. Be transparent and accountable**

Conduct of the organization as well as the actions of employees shall be transparent in communication, sharing of information and in all other matters related to work objectives, finances, procurement, recruitment and other activities. Beneficiaries shall be listened to and informed of criteria and concepts adopted in the project, plans, activities and schedule. Donors and other stakeholders shall be provided with periodic reports in a transparent manner. Highlights of interventions shall be displayed during and after the project for ensuring effective visual transparency.

Processes adopted in the projects shall be transparent, easily replicable and meeting recognised minimum standards for the well-being of the people in need of humanitarian assistance or protection and paying proper attention to their safety and the safety of the staff. All expenditures shall be properly accounted for. Organization and employees shall be accountable to the donors and beneficiaries for all their activities.

## 10. Adherence to Code of Conduct

Specific violation of Code of Conduct shall be reported to the Compliant Redress Committee (CRC) as and when noticed. Complaint Response Mechanism (CRM) shall be simple and easily accessible to all stakeholders to enable them to raise complaints without any fear at the earliest. Mechanisms for receiving complaints and resolving them shall be made in the good knowledge of the staff, communities and all stakeholders. Complaints received from any member of the community or any other stakeholders shall be seriously addressed, and appropriate actions taken.

Employees who reasonably suspect any illegal activity and action which leads to negative impact on the well-being of any stakeholder will have, grave misconduct and/or violations of Organization's policies or guidelines, including but not limited to the Code of Conduct, must, without delay, bring the relevant facts to the attention of the management. Employees shall also report any illegal activity or misconduct of any of the partners that violates the underlying principles of the Code of Conduct. Identity of the person who makes such complaint shall be protected and no retaliatory action shall be taken against such person. On the other hand, disciplinary action will be taken against staff for retailing against a colleague who reports concerns or otherwise cooperates with an investigation, for maliciously and falsely reporting misconduct and for not cooperating with an investigation. Delay or negligence in reporting of any illegal activity or misconduct also will deem as misconduct and will lead to disciplinary action.

### Agreement

I hereby acknowledge that I have read and understood the Code of Conduct of Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS). I understand that it is my responsibility to consult the Human Resource Department if I have any questions regarding the provisions of the Code. I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to promote the application of this Code. I am also aware that following the Code of Conduct is a pre-condition to my contract with SEEDS and breaches of any above principles of the CoC can lead to disciplinary action unto and including cease of my contract with SEEDS.

Reviewed on October 08, 2018

Approved by

  
**Manu Gupta**  
(co-founder)

  
  
**Anshu Sharma**  
(co-founder)