

VALUES, ETHICS AND CORPORATE CONDUCT POLICY

1. Introduction

Action on Poverty (AOP) is an independent, secular, not for profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO). Founded in Australia in 1968, AOP was incorporated in the state of New South Wales in 1983. AOP works with partners and communities in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

AOP is committed to supporting work that is of the highest standard, and in doing so, holds full accreditation with the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). AOP is a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct, which requires high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management to be in place.

AOP Vision: For all people to transcend the injustice, indignity, and inequality of entrenched poverty.

AOP Mission: Empowering changemakers to break the cycle of poverty.

2. Purpose

The integrity of AOP is crucial to our reputation and performance. To retain community and partner confidence, AOP must maintain the highest standards of probity in our operations. AOP Management is committed to having a good ethical framework and culture in place so that staff understand and support our good public standing now and into the future. This policy provides that framework.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all AOP activities.

3.2 This policy applies to all board members, employees, and volunteers.

3.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- AOP's Staff Manual
- Ethical Guidelines on Engagement with For-Profit Enterprises
- Human Rights Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Safe Workplace Policy
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- Conflict of Interest Policy

4. Policy

4.1 AOP strives to be an ethical organization. This concept acknowledges that “ethics” is not simply an individual responsibility; it is also an organizational responsibility.

4.2 AOP's Ethics and Corporate Conduct are derived from its Vision, Mission and Values. AOP's Values include:

- upholding the dignity and human rights of every individual
- dealing truthfully, honestly and transparently at all times
- supporting communities to help themselves
- undertaking activities that address the needs and interests identified by the people with whom we are working
- being accountable to all our development partners
- operating with a spirit of collaboration in achieving common objectives

- maximising the impact of donor contributions
- respecting the environment
- providing challenging, supportive and safe work environments where people can improve their skills and knowledge

4.3 AOP's corporate and professional conduct will embody these values.

4.4 AOP does not engage with for-profit enterprises involved in the trade of drugs, weapons or pornography. (See the Ethical Guidelines on Engagement with For-Profit Enterprises for more information.)

4.5 AOP will abide by all relevant laws in the areas in which it works, including international laws.

4.6 AOP will provide a safe and equal opportunity workplace that is free from bullying, sexual harassment or discrimination.

4.7 AOP will comply with the ACFID Code of Conduct.

4.8 When engaging in Research and Evaluation, AOP will do so with reference to and in accordance with ACFID's Principles and Guidelines for Ethical Research and Evaluation in Development, and the approval of the AOP Ethics Committee.

5. Policy Application

5.1 Every staff member is responsible for upholding AOP's ethical values and reputation. All staff need to be aware of and carry out their work in a way that demonstrates a commitment to the principles contained in the code below and in compliance with AOP's other Policies and guidelines. Equally, AOP Staff each have a duty to report potentially unethical or corrupt practices using the established mechanisms to do so.

5.2 This policy is not an absolute statement of what is right or wrong in all circumstances. No statement can adequately perform this function as ethical dilemmas are often vague and correct courses of action are not always obvious. AOP Personnel are encouraged to seek guidance from sources identified in this document or speak to the AOP CEO if they have any work-related ethical dilemmas. The AOP Board Ethics Committee can be convened if the need arises.

5.3 The AOP Board and AOP Executive are responsible for:

- Establishing and maintaining ethical policies, systems and procedures for all aspects of AOP's work;
- Ensuring that staff practices are fair, equitable and safe;
- Ensuring that mechanisms for responding to potentially unethical circumstances are in place;
- Ensuring that areas of work which are inherently higher risk in terms of ethics and corruption are identified and preventative strategies are in place.

5.4 AOP Executive and Senior Management level positions are responsible for:

- Demonstrating leadership where AOP's Values, Ethics and Corporate Conduct are concerned;
- Monitoring their workplaces to identify if situations are raising ethical dilemmas;
- Ensuring that staff are not placed in situations where they could be compromised;
- Providing support to staff who require guidance on ethical dilemmas;
- Fostering a work environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, victimisation, corruption, maladministration and waste, and unsafe work practices;
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of AOP Policies in relation to Ethical behaviour;
- Supporting and protecting staff who report, in good faith, instances of potentially unethical or corrupt practices;
- Ensuring that staff are treated fairly and in accordance with relevant legislation and policy.

5.5 All AOP staff have a duty to:

- Act with Integrity:
 - Ensure that the activities they undertake are in line with AOP's mission, vision and values and contribute positively to the development process.
 - Act ethically, lawfully and in accordance with AOP Policies and Procedures as outlined in the AOP Operations Manual.
 - Report potentially unethical or corrupt practices via established mechanisms outlined in relevant AOP Policies.
 - Be impartial and honest in their dealings with stakeholders.
 - Promote human rights principles and will not knowingly contribute to violations of human rights.
- Act Professionally: AOP employees are highly visible and commonly viewed as representatives of Australia when overseas. As such, they are expected to maintain high standards of professional and ethical conduct and personal demeanour.
 - Work should be undertaken safely. Unsafe spaces practices and incidents should be reported immediately.
 - Work shall be undertaken with due respect for the customs and aspirations of the people with whom we are working.
 - AOP decision-making processes should be flexible, but decision-making processes should be transparent, impartial, participatory and well documented. Decisions should be made in appropriate consultation with stakeholders, providing opportunity for input and feedback to be given.
 - Do not procure sex workers or erotic dances, or visit venues where these services can be purchased. By doing so, you are exposing both yourself as well as AOP to unacceptable risk.
 - AOP employees are expected to devote their full time, energy and skills to AOP business during working hours and refrain from participating in personal activities while at work.
- Be respectful: AOP staff should be respectful of other cultures and customs.
 - AOP staff should be respectful of Aboriginal people in their day-to-day work in Australia.
 - AOP staff will not discriminate against anyone based on their religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, physical appearance, age, marital status physical or intellectual impairment or ethnicity.
 - AOP staff should do their best to ensure that our work promotes the principle of "do no harm".
 - AOP staff should not use behavior that is intimidating or threatening in the workplace under any circumstances, and must refrain from bullying or sexual harassment.
 - AOP staff must strive to use our resources transparently and efficiently.
 - AOP staff must not disparage AOP, partners, or any ACFID member organisation.
- Uphold the law: AOP staff members are required to act in accordance with the laws of New South Wales and the Commonwealth of Australia. If there is a situation where a staff member feels complying with the law requires them to behave in an unethical manner they need to bring it to the attention of the CEO.
 - AOP staff will not use AOP funds for any unlawful purpose or in any manner other than as defined in the documents supporting payment. Falsifying corporate or project accounts for any reason is strictly prohibited.
 - AOP staff will comply with Child Protection legislation and act in accordance with the AOP Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Avoid or Declare Conflicts of Interest: AOP staff must abide by AOP's Conflict of Interest Policy and ensure that they, their immediate family or friends shall not enter into any arrangement where they, their family or friends could benefit. This includes receiving cash, loans, services, travel, personal discounts, and gifts of more than nominal value.

- AOP does not prohibit usual, reasonable and customary business courtesies, nominal gratuities or hospitality of nominal value given or received in connection with the usual conduct of business affairs. However, AOP personnel shall strive to exercise due prudence and judgement in any matters related to money, financial reward, gifts and other related matters.
- No AOP personnel shall take financial advantage of their position as an AOP member, Director or employee.
- All gifts to personnel in their capacity as AOP employees shall be declared. If unsure, further clarification may be sought from the AOP Conflicts of Interest Policy or from the CEO.

Review History:

Values, Ethics and Corporate Conduct Policy approved: November 1999, August 2005, December 2015, April 2018, May 2021

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