



**Policy & Leadership**

# **Civil Connections Code of Conduct**

**2022**



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## **1. Introduction**

This document – The Code of Conduct of Civil Connections – holds the values and rules that Civil Connections and its staff or any other person acting in the name of Civil Connections, shall act by to uphold and safeguard the necessary professional and ethical standards of conduct that are a precondition for safeguarding and protecting the rights, safety, and integrity of the different stakeholders we work with. At its core, this Code of Conduct acts as a framework for identifying situations of potential power imbalances, and possible aspects of conduct that might manifest as misconduct, so as to avoid these for the safety and integrity of our staff and communities we work with.

### **1.1. Why do we need a Code of Conduct?**

- Our work at Civil Connections revolves around constant interaction with and among people – including from the top, government agencies, our funders, supporters, partners, our General Assembly. And most often, and as our central mission states – we interact regularly with local grassroots communities, and especially people in marginalized contexts – people that require our full and constant protection.
- Our capacity to ensure the protection and facilitating of our intended development benefits to these different stakeholders (“our communities”) depends on the ability of our staff to uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical conduct.
- Moreover, it is by our work’s nature that staff and the communities they work with are put in positions of unequal power relations, which further warrants the need and presence of a guiding framework for identifying, avoiding, and eliminating the exploitation of everyone.

### **1.2. Who this code of conduct is for:**

- This Code of Conduct applies to Civil Connections and to all its staff in relation to our local (in Denmark) and international programme activities that involve relations with people no matter their walks of life. Specifically, we current (December 2021) have all our staff and volunteers stationed at the secretariat in Copenhagen. This is the first batch of people that this code concerns. The next are our technical experts and free lancers that support our programs and projects. Our Executive Board, volunteers, and interns, as well as any person – formally or informally connected to Civil Connections that at any time delivers work on behalf of the organization.

### **1.3. The scope of this Code of Conduct in the organization’s management practice:**

- This Code of Conduct is not only a moral code that serves as an illustrative guide for Civil Connections and its staff to make ethical decisions in their professional lives, and at times in their private lives. It is also an integral part of their conditions of employment. This Code of Conduct is therefore an appendix to their individual employment contract.
- All Civil Connections 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 standard. Staff are also urged to encourage our partners and collaborators to adhere to these standards and to join us in upholding them.

- The leadership of the organization bear the responsibility to see to it that this code is upheld – where they both set frameworks and processes for ensuring that all connected staff and collaborators are aware of the standards and supportive frameworks for remembering to follow them. The leaders must also lead by or set a good example in regard to the code and regularly review it with all other stakeholders concerned.
- All Civil Connections staff are obliged to report to the organization’s leadership whenever they have or hear concerns or suspicions regarding criminal or unethical activities that conflict with this Code of Conduct, and which may compromise us.

#### **1.4. Implementation and interpretation**

- While acknowledging that local laws and customs may differ from one country to another, the Code of Conduct is based on international legal standards. Guidance on appropriate interpretation can be found in the Notes to the UNHCR Code of Conduct, in the UN Secretary-Generals Bulletin on Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13).
- All Civil Connections staff members are obliged to contact their leadership for guidance if they find themselves in a situation of doubt in relation to this Code of conduct.

## **2. Core values and guiding principles this code of conduct bases on:**

Civil Connections’ staff are committed to the following fundamental values and principles.

- 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 all.
- We shall actively promote adherence to the principles of international refugee law, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law.
- It is Civil Connections and its staff’s primary commitment to ensure the protection of and assistance to its persons of concern, in accordance with Civil Connections mandate.
- Civil Connections and its staff are committed to supporting the fullest possible participation of persons of concern – as individuals, families, and communities – in decisions that affect their lives.
- Civil Connections and its staff will respect the dignity and worth of every individual, will promote and practice understanding, respect, compassion, and tolerance, and will demonstrate discretion and maintain confidentiality as required.
- Civil Connections and its staff will aim to build constructive and respectful working relations with partners, will continuously seek to improve performance, and will foster a climate that encourages learning, supports positive change, and applies lessons learned.
- Civil Connections and its staff 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.
- Civil Connections and its staff will strive to remove all barriers to equality.
- Civil Connections and its staff will respect 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 directly contrary to an international human rights instrument or standard, Civil Connections and its staff will be guided by the applicable human rights instrument or standard.

- Civil Connections and its staff will not tolerate any form of sexual exploitation or abuse and are aware that misconduct is ground for disciplinary measures including immediate dismissal and legal actions against the perpetrator.

### **3. Staff members' commitment**

As a Civil Connections staff member, I commit myself to the following:

#### **3.1. Preserving fairness and dignity:**

- To treat all persons of concern fairly, and with respect and dignity.
- I will always seek to understand the difficult experiences that persons of concern have faced and survived, as well as the disadvantaged position in which they 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 persons of concern, I will strive to fully understand their experiences and needs, and to explain the role of Civil Connections scope of work.

#### **3.2. Upholding integrity:**

- To uphold the integrity of Civil Connections, 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 observe local laws, will meet all my private legal and financial obligations, and will not seek to take personal advantage of any privileges that have been conferred on me in the interest of Civil Connections.

#### **3.3. Desisting from conflict of interest and search for personal gain:**

- To perform my official duties and conduct my private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving public confidence in Civil Connections.
- 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 give nor accept any honour, decoration, favour gift, remuneration, or bribe, to/from any partner or collaborator including government representatives, without prior authorization. It is, however, allowed to give or accept small tokens of appreciation that are exchanged in accordance with local practices provided that it cannot compromise the integrity of Civil Connections.
- 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 without prior authorisation.
- I will avoid assisting private persons or companies in their undertakings with Civil Connections where this might lead to actual or perceived preferential treatment.

### **3.4. At staff level:**

- To 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 rules) with 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, and will contribute to building constructive dialogue, guided by mutual respect and an open, positive approach.

### **3.5. At staff leadership level:**

- As a leader 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.
- To promote the safety, health, and welfare of all Civil Connections 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, I will endeavor 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.

### **3.6. Confidentiality and protection of organizational assets:**

- To safeguard and make responsible use of the information and resources to which I have access by reason of my employment with Civil Connections.
- I will exercise due care in all matters of official business, and not divulge any confidential information about persons of concern, colleagues, and other work-related matters in accordance with the terms of employment and current guidelines.
- I will protect, manage, and utilize Civil Connections human, financial and material resources efficiently and effectively, bearing in mind that these resources have been placed at Civil Connections disposal for the benefit of the persons of concern.

### **3.7. Protecting the people, we serve and collaborate with:**

- To prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of the people we serve.
- I undertake not to abuse the power and influence that I have by virtue of my position over the lives and well-being of the people we serve.
- I will never request any service or favour from communities in return for assistance.

- I will never engage in any exploitative relationships, emotional, financial, or employment-related with the people we serve.
- I will act responsibly when hiring or engaging the people we serve for private services.
- I will not engage in sexual activity with children under the age of 18. Mistaken belief in the age of the child does not constitute a defence.
- I will not engage in sexual exploitation or abuse of the people we serve, and I have a particular duty of care towards women and children.
- I will neither solicit nor engage in commercial exchange of sexual services as such relationships may undermine the credibility and the image of Civil Connections.
- I am aware that Civil Connections strongly discourages sexual relationships between its staff members and the communities we serve, although these relations are not exploitative or abusive. Such relationships may undermine the credibility and the integrity of Civil Connections and of the staff members involved. Should I find myself in such a relationship with a person of concern 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.

### **3.8. In relation to criminal actions, discrimination, and harassment:**

- To refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise our work.
- I will neither support nor take part in any form of illegal, exploitative, or abusive activities, including, for example, child labour, and trafficking of any sort.
- To 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 leader/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 intimate and sexual relations with staff under my supervision. I am aware that Civil Connections strongly discourages such relations. Should I find myself in such a relationship, I will resolve this conflict of interest without delay.

## **Summary**

- We hope that this document gives a comprehensive framework/start point and guidelines towards systematizing a professional and usable Code of Conduct in Civil Connections.
- This Code shall be interpreted as a dynamic document that shall live through all the other strategies that Civil Connections makes from time to time, as well as being integral to design and implementation of projects and activities.
- The Code is not our copyright – we envision that it is a framework that can be used by other directly or that can be based on for inspiration by actors that wish to develop their own Codes of Conduct.



# Civil Connections Community Foundation

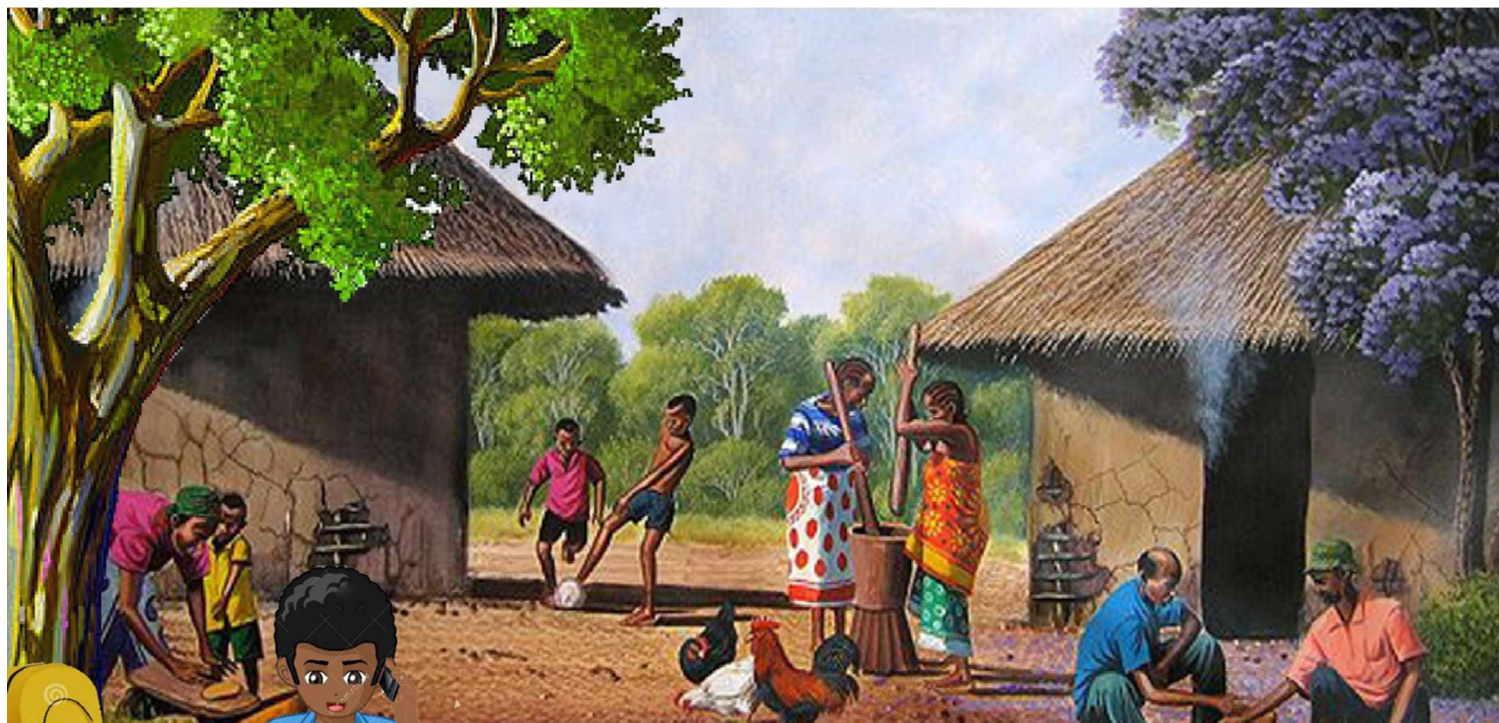
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