

act:onaid

Code of Ethics

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INTRODUCTION

ActionAid is an independent and international organization that works daily with people, communities, groups and movements that wish to defeat the causes and consequences of marginalization and inequality.

ActionAid Switzerland is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that was established in Switzerland in 2013. The organization is a part of the ActionAid International network that exists in almost 50 countries and has a goal of building and restoring the balance of power in favour of marginalized people. This Code of Ethics follows the international Code of Conduct.

The organization works to fight social injustice wherever it exists. With this Code of Ethics (henceforth “Code”), ActionAid Switzerland (henceforth “ActionAid” or “the Association”) formally defines, clarifies and shares the recognized, accepted and shared set of values, as well as the rights, obligations and responsibilities of the subjects with which ActionAid interacts for purposes of their mission.

The Code of the Association has been prepared to present the founding principles of conduct for all Subjects, in order to clearly and transparently define the values that ActionAid aspires to in the execution of their work.

The Association, to protect its image and safeguard its resources, will not maintain relationships with any type of subject that does not intend to uphold strict respect for current regulations and/or that refuses to comply with the rules of conduct laid out in this Code. All those who work for or collaborate with ActionAid without distinction or exception must commit themselves to observing, supporting and enforcing the principles in this Code of Ethics.

In addition, the Code is an official document of the Association, approved by its assemblies, bearing the set of rights, obligations and responsibilities of ActionAid.

SUBJECTS

The Code contains ethical principles that members of the Members’ Meeting and the Members of the Steering Committee, the Chairperson, all those under their management and supervision, employees, consultants, collaborators, suppliers, volunteers, activists, partners who use the ActionAid brand, project partners and all those who work for and/or on behalf of the Association, without exception (henceforth “Subjects”) must respect.

Therefore, the principles and provisions of the Code are binding for all Subjects and provide illustrative stipulations of the general obligations of diligence, honesty and loyalty that must inspire the work they carry out.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS

All work carried out for and on behalf of ActionAid must be done with absolute respect for current national and international laws and regulations. ActionAid’s decisions and conduct are inspired by the concern they have for public interest.

Each Subject is committed to diligently acquiring the necessary knowledge of the laws and regulations that apply to the performance of their roles, in effect at that time.

Relations with Public Administration; Public Surveillance Authority; political and union organizations; national, international and city public institutions; as well as with public officials or public service representatives must be done in accordance with the principles of transparency, integrity, professionalism and full collaboration.

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Honesty and moral integrity, as well as values of fairness and good faith, represent the basic principles for all the activities of the Association and its initiatives, and they constitute essential values for the management of the Association. The relations that ActionAid maintains, at all levels, must be marked by criteria and conduct that is fair, collaborative, loyal, and mutually respectful.

INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY AND COMPLETENESS

Information that is spread by the Association is complete, transparent, understandable and accurate, so that third parties can make conscious decisions when interacting with the Association.

PRESERVATION OF THE ASSOCIATION NAME AND IMAGE

The good reputation and image of ActionAid are essential intangible resources.

All Subjects ensure that the image of the Association appears appropriate to the prestige and importance of the role that it has acquired in all the communities and environments in which it operates by acting in compliance with the articulated principles of this Code and in full respect for the name and image of the Association.

RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE COMMUNITY

ActionAid, conscious of its social role in the areas of reference, works on the economic and social development and the general wellbeing of the community with utmost respect for the local, national and international communities, directly supporting and promoting valuable cultural and social initiatives, as well as to encourage citizens to participate in public life and institutional accountability.

ETICA

The Association carries out its activities by following efficient and ethical reasoning and rejecting any conduct that would be collusive or abusive to the detriment of third parties.

The Association actively upholds policy measures against corruption, aimed also at increasing public awareness of it.

ActionAid additionally maintains esteem and recognition of the abilities of individuals and discourages all forms of favouritism.

PROMOTING RESPECT FOR INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY AND GENDER EQUALITY

ActionAid promotes and respects the fundamental rights of people, protecting their moral integrity and guaranteeing equal opportunity.

In both internal and external relationships, behaviour that is discriminatory towards the personal dignity, privacy or rights of individuals on the basis of political or union views, religion, race, nationality, sexual orientation, health status, or in general any other characteristic of an individual is not permitted.

The Association actively works to overcome any type of discrimination. Every Subject, thus, works with women and men of diverse nationalities, cultures, religions, sexual orientation and ethnicity. ActionAid promotes the dignity, equality and wellbeing of each individual, refusing any form of child or forced labour.

ActionAid rejects and prosecutes any form of harassment or violence towards women, whether it's physical, verbal or psychological, and supports awareness campaigns for staff and volunteers. It actively and consistently works to intervene in international, national and local policy, fighting for the rights of women, gender stereotypes and economic injustice.

In managing reporting lines, the Association requests that authority is used fairly, avoiding any behaviour that could in some way damage the personal dignity or professionalism of colleagues.

ActionAid is committed to guaranteeing respect for Privacy, especially with regard to information concerning the private sphere and the opinions of each of its employees, and more in general, all those who work with the Association.

ActionAid does not tolerate any kind of abuse, harassment or exploitation of children and is committed to protecting their wellbeing. In its work, the interests and safety of minors, equality and absence of discrimination, freedom of expression, respect for the opinion of minors in issues that concern them and their active participation are all considered an absolute priority.

DILIGENCE AND THE SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION

Each subject carries out his or her activities with the diligence required by the nature of their tasks and roles, employing maximum dedication in achieving the objectives assigned to them and assuming the responsibilities of their job. Each subject participates in the necessary activities to broaden and update their knowledge in their area of competence.

Mutual collaboration between involved subjects in whatever manner on the same project is a fundamental principle for ActionAid. Every Subject is, therefore, bound, through conduct, to contribute to the protection of such values, both in the workplace and outside it.

TRACEABILITY OF COMPLETED TASKS

Each Subject must preserve adequate documentation of every completed task, in order to permit and to be able to carry out in any moment verification of the reasons for and details of the operation, in phases of authorization, execution, registration and verification of the operation itself.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In the course of every activity, ActionAid avoids situations that might present real or even just potential conflicts of interest.

Subjects are compelled to carry out their activities for ActionAid in accordance with the general objectives and interests of the Association.

Any situation that could potentially present a conflict of interest or otherwise compromise the ability of the Subject to make decisions in the best interest of the Association, must be immediately communicated to the Governing Board and establishes, for the Subject in question, the obligation to abide by the decisions made and communicated by ActionAid, which are meant to govern the management of the specific case of a potential conflict of interest.

CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

It is explicitly forbidden to influence, in any form or by any means, the will of subjects called to respond to the court in order to not make statements or declare facts that do not correspond to the truth.

WELLBEING OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Through policy and best practice, ActionAid is committed to protecting the wellbeing of its human resources, a central component of the Association. The balance between work and private life is at the centre of its policies regarding staff management.

WORK SAFETY AND WORKER'S HEALTH

ActionAid is adapts thus to the current regulations on the subject of safety and hygiene in the workplace and to the provisions on the subject of international security, developing an efficient system of risk prevention and keeping in constant consideration the technological progress on the subject.

Each Subject must use the utmost care in carrying out their tasks, strictly observing all safety and prevention measures established and provided by the Association in order to avoid every possible risk to themselves, their colleagues and collaborators, and the community.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

ActionAid is sensitive and committed to safeguarding the environment. To this end, it orients its choices in a way that guarantees compatibility between economic initiatives and environmental needs, not only in compliance with current regulations but also taking into account the development of scientific research and the best experiences on the subject.

RULES OF CONDUCT

SUPPORTER RELATIONS

ActionAid recognizes the importance of the social commitment of its supporters as a fundamental base of its operations, and therefore, guarantees coherence, quality and reliability in actions undertaken. The Association provides supporters necessary information regarding donated resources.

ActionAid additionally stigmatizes any deceptive, misleading, fraudulent or disloyal practice implemented by Subjects.

SUPPLIER RELATIONS

In relations with suppliers, ActionAid takes inspiration from principles of transparency, equality and loyalty.

In particular, regarding the selection of suppliers for the purchase of goods and services, the Association guarantees that it is primarily inspired by objective parameters of social responsibility, ethics, sustainability, quality, convenience, price, capacity and efficiency, which makes it possible to set up mutual trust.

In managing supplier relations, the Association is bound to:

- Establish efficient, transparent and collaborative relations by maintaining an open and frank dialogue consistent with commercial best practices;
- Verify the identity of third party subjects with which the Association interacts.
- Adequately make all suppliers official and document the reasons for selections;
- Obtain collaboration with suppliers in consistently ensuring the most convenient relationship between quality, cost and delivery times.
- Not abuse its eventual position of advantage as clients to create intentional disadvantages for suppliers;
- Not pursue personal gain by accepting advantages or a particular convenience in procurement of operations;
- Demand application of imposed contractual conditions;
- Operate under current regulations and require precise respect for them.

ActionAid requires from its suppliers that the provided materials and products are not objects of previous illicit activities and respect the rights of people and the environment.

The Association only establishes relations with subjects that maintain a respectable reputation, that are committed to correct lawful activity, and whose ethics are equivalent to that of ActionAid.

COLLABORATOR RELATIONS (PROFESSIONALS, CONSULTANTS AND PARTNERS)

ActionAid identifies and selects its collaborators (professionals, consultants, project partners and partners using the ActionAid brand) with absolute impartiality and independent judgment.

In the matter of collaborator relations, the Association is bound to:

- Carefully evaluate the opportunity to resort to the services of external collaborators and partners and select counterparts of suitable professional qualification and reputation;
- Justify the choice of negotiated counterparts;
- Establish efficient, transparent and collaborative relations, maintaining open and frank dialogue;
- Obtain collaboration with professionals, consultants and partners in consistently ensuring the most convenient relationship between quality of services and economic investment;
- Demand application of imposed contractual conditions;
- Operate under current regulations and require precise respect for them.

In selecting collaborators, the Association guarantees that it is primarily inspired by objective parameters of quality, capacity and efficiency, which makes it possible to set up mutual trust.

In selecting partners, the Association guarantees that it is inspired by principles of transparency, effectiveness, capacity and shared values that inspire the work of the Association.

RELATIONS WITH INSTITUTIONS, PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

Relations with Public Administration and with local, federal and international public institutions, as well as towards public officials or public service representatives, in other words, authorities, representatives, agents, spokespeople, members, employees, consultants, officials appointed for public roles or services, public administrations, public and private authorities, even economic or that of public institutions or companies, local or federal (“Civil Servants”), or as Associations or political and union organizations, must be maintained with maximum transparency, fairness and integrity, avoiding conduct that might give the impression of wanting to inappropriately influence decisions of counterparts or request favours. Relations with the subjects mentioned above are limited to the appointed and duly authorized services, in compliance with the most strict observance of the provisions of the law and can not in any way compromise the integrity and reputation of the Association.

To this end, the Association is committed to:

- working, without any type of discrimination, through communication channels to those appointed with spokespeople from local, federal and international Public Administration;
- represent the interests and positions of ActionAid in a transparent, strict and coherent way, avoiding behaviour of collusive nature.

In addition, the following behaviours are prohibited:

- offering or promising, as well as accepting or receiving, directly or through intermediaries, monetary sums or other means of payment (except for donations or benefits of moderate value or that complies with ordinary commercial practice) to public employees / public officials / public service representatives / private spokespeople, with intention to influence their activity in fulfilment of their obligations and ensure advantages of any type for the Association. The aforementioned rules can not be eluded by resorting to other forms of assistance or contribution, including roles, consultations, advertising, sponsorships, employment opportunities, commercial opportunities or that of any other kind;
- granting other advantages of any kind to public employees or public officials or representatives of public service;
- falsifying, altering or omitting data and/or information in order to obtain an unfair advantage or any other benefit for ActionAid;
- allocating sums received from Public Administration as disbursements, contributions or funding, for purposes other than those for which they were given;
- offering, supplying, promising or granting to public employees, public officials or representatives of public service, as well as accepting or receiving from them, directly or indirectly, gifts, benefits or other advantages (also in the form of monetary sums, goods or services) that were not authorized.

In this regard, it is clear that permitted gifts are only those of moderate value and that are directly attributable to a matter of courtesy, and, in any case, do not engender, in the other or in an unrelated and impartial third party, the impression that such gifts are intended for the purpose of acquiring or granting unfair advantages, or such that create the impression of illegality or immorality.

RELATIONS WITH JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES

Regarding eventual requests of any nature by the Judicial Authorities and in general for any contact with it, the Association is committed to providing full cooperation and making accurate statements that represent the facts, refraining from behaviour that may cause hindrance, in full compliance with laws and in accordance with principles of loyalty, fairness and transparency.

In addition, all Subjects involved in judicial proceedings must offer effective cooperation and make accurate and transparent statements that represent the facts.

It is explicitly forbidden to:

- implement any activity that can favour or damage one of the parties involved, in the course of proceedings;
- influence, in any form or by any means, the will of subjects called to respond to the court in order to not make statements or declare facts that do not correspond to the truth;
- promise or offer money, gifts or other benefits to subjects involved in judicial proceedings or to those close to them.

AUDITOR RELATIONS

In relations with the Auditor, each Subject involved in the process abides by the provisions of this Code, in accordance with various institutional roles.

The requests for compliance and documentation must be promptly handled, with clear understanding of the full responsibility for truthfulness, fairness, completeness and accuracy of provided information.

It is explicitly forbidden to hinder or obstruct monitoring activities legally entrusted to auditors or other corporate bodies or to influence the independent judgment of said subjects for the purpose of misrepresenting the Association's economic, financial or asset situation.

EMPLOYEE AND LOCAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Association actively promotes and offers equal opportunities for professional growth, excluding arbitrary discriminations, orienting all relations to principles of equality, fairness and loyalty, based on merit-based criteria.

Relations between employees, regardless of the level of responsibility, are conducted with loyalty, fairness and respect, without prejudice to roles or responsibilities. Managers exercise power connected to the position with objectivity and balance, ensuring the professional growth of his or her collaborators. Each employee is cooperative, fulfilling his or her tasks with responsibility, efficiency, diligence and in full respect of the values of the Association.

The selection and hiring of staff must occur in strict compliance with the HR Global Standard defined by the International Federation and must be oriented to criteria of transparency, in evaluating the requirements for competence, professionalism, skills and individual potential. In addition, it is forbidden to use hiring or the compensation system to grant direct or indirect advantages to public employees and/or public officials.

Hiring staff occurs on the basis of regular contracts and no form of work relationship is allowed that doesn't comply with or in some way eludes current regulations. In addition, the Association does not employ workers without valid resident permits.

The Association, aware of the value of Unions and their representatives, supports dialogue between employees and union representatives, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of its own workers, offering itself as a round table between social partners.

The on-going relationship with the Community is the foundation of ActionAid's work. Therefore, the Association respects and contributes to the development of the economic and social fabric of the Local Community in which it works.

ActionAid does not contribute in any way to the financing of political groups whose representatives or candidates run for public office.

SOCIAL MEDIA RELATIONS

ActionAid supports research regarding innovations in information. A permanent, transparent and constructive open dialogue with communities and their people is at the foundation of the organization's mission and it also makes use of social media.

In light of the resonance and impact that information can have, ActionAid ensures and recommends paying careful attention when considering content and materials that will be shared.

It is forbidden to use the organization's systems in violation of the law, against the freedom, integrity and dignity of others, or in a way that could create undue intrusion or damage to information systems.

ACCOUNTING AND INTERNAL AUDIT

ACCOUNTING RECORDS AND TAX SYSTEM

ActionAid believes that the transparency of accounts as well as account recordkeeping according to principles of truth, completeness, clarity, precision and accuracy that conform to current law, are the fundamental prerequisite for effective monitoring for correct social communication.

Accounting records are kept according to principles of transparency, truth, completeness, clarity, precision and accuracy and conform to current law. The documentation of every operation must be preserved, which allows easy bookkeeping, reconstruction of operations and identification of eventual responsibility.

Bookkeeping is based on generally accepted accounting principles and systematically records the events that derive from the management of the Association.

Administrative-accounting documentation must be easily retrievable and archived according to appropriate criteria that allow it to be easily consulted by both internal and external monitoring authorities.

Responsible parties are bound to cooperate with correct and prompt accounting registration of every management activity and to work so that the facts of management are represented correctly and promptly, in order to permit the administrative-accounting system to carry out its objectives.

Responsible parties are bound to promptly report both the existence of errors or omissions in the process of accounting data collection of managerial facts.

ActionAid respects the current law with regards to the tax system, in Switzerland and in foreign countries in which it works, and is committed to the prompt communication to the Financial Administration all information required by law, according to terms... in order to guarantee the correct determination of taxes.

INTERNAL CONTROLS

ActionAid imposes a system of internal controls (instruments, activities, procedures, organizational functions) oriented to monitoring, verifying and guiding the organization, as well as guaranteeing the application of the provisions of law and that of regulations.

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING

ActionAid carries out its activities in full compliance with current laws on money laundering and provisions issued by the competent Authorities, and it is committed to avoiding implementation of suspicious transactions for fairness and transparency.

Additionally, it is forbidden to acquire, substitute or transfer money, goods or other benefits in full awareness of their illegal origin, or carry out other transactions regarding them, in a way that obstructs the identification of their illegal origin.

DATA PROCESSING AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

PRIVACY PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The Association protects the privacy and confidentiality of information and data, concerning employees, collaborators, suppliers and businesses, collected for or in the event of work activities, and every Subject, in performing their roles, is bound to comply with such principles and with current laws.

All information obtained by Subjects regarding their employment and collaboration relationship is the property of ActionAid. By information property of the Association is meant:

- Personal Data of Subjects and third parties. Any information concerning a physical or legal person, company or association, identified or identifiable, even indirectly, through reference to any other information, therein involving a personal identification number is considered “personal data.”
- Confidential Information is any information of confidential nature related to Third Parties, which, if divulged in an involuntary or unauthorized way, could damage the subjects. Information, for example, to be considered private includes knowledge of a project, a proposal, an initiative, an event, a negotiation, an agreement, a task, a pact, affairs or actions, even if future or uncertain, regarding the area of activity of ActionAid, which is not under public domain.

The Association guarantees, in compliance with the provisions of law, the privacy of information that it has in possession and requires that all Subjects use such exclusively for purposes related to the performance of their professional activities.

ActionAid respects also the principles of equality of access and transparency in divulging private information, in full respect of the law.

CIRCULATION OF INFORMATION

In carrying out their work, ActionAid ensures the transparency of choices made. The circulation of information must be managed according to criteria of truth, accuracy and punctuality. To this end, staff reports, intended for both internal and external destination, must be scrupulously drawn up and in compliance with such principles as well as the current laws.

MANAGEMENT OF PRIVATE INFORMATION

Whoever, in the course of their duties, becomes aware of private and/or confidential information is bound to privacy.

ActionAid protects private information that emerges in the course of carrying out their work. It additionally prohibits its employees and collaborators from obtaining, with disloyal or unfair means, both confidential information regarding businesses, suppliers, organizations and partners, and information owned by them.

Any form of manipulation, exploitation for economic purposes or investment, whether direct or via intermediaries, of Private information is against the law, and therefore, strictly prohibited.

USE OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Association uses computer resources appointed exclusively for the fulfilment of its work, in full respect of the laws on the subject of the use and management of information systems and of defined corporate procedures.

In no case is it permitted to use computer or network resources for purposes that go against the law, public policy or public decency, or in any way intended for racial intolerance, the promotion of violence or violations of human rights, as well as to commit or provoke the committing of offences, to damage or alter information systems or the information of private or public third parties or to illegally obtain private information.

No employee is permitted to install software without a license on Association computers or use and/or copy documents and materials that are protected by copyright (audio-visual, electronic, paper or photographic recordings or reproductions) without authorization expressed by the holder.

Finally, it is explicitly prohibited to illegally download or transmit to third-party subjects content that is protected under copyright law.

FULFILLMENT OF ETHICS CODE

The Code of Ethics has been drawn up for the purpose of clarifying the fundamental principles and promoting awareness of the regulations contained within it. The Association provides thus:

- Maximum diffusion of the Code to its Subjects, requiring that it be followed;
- Interpretation and clarification of the provisions;
- An update of the provisions regarding needs that arise from time to time.

All Subjects are bound to cooperate for the effective fulfilment of the Code of Ethics, within the limits of their own role and duties.

The Code shall be disclosed to third parties that receive work from ActionAid or that have an enduring relationship with the Association.

REPORTING

Every Subject is responsible for reporting eventual illegal acts or anomalies, for example:

- Grave procedural and financial negligence including that related to maladministration;
- Misappropriation of funds;
- Actual or alleged fraud;
- Abuse of power.

The organization protects the privacy of those who report anomalies.

Reports must be sent to the following email account, whistleblowing@actionaid.org, run by the Head of Internal Audit at ActionAid International.

PENALTY SYSTEM

ActionAid, through bodies and roles assigned to them, shall impose, with coherence, impartiality and uniformity, sanctions according to the respective violations of this Code and in compliance with current provisions on the subject of regulating employment relationships.

The observance of the regulations in this Code must be considered an essential part of the contractual obligations of the employees of ActionAid as well as that of any other type of relationship that is regulated *ex lege* or contractually.

Violation of the ethical standards and/or internal procedures constitutes a breach of the primary obligations of the job and/or negotiations with every consequence of law or contractually regulated and except reimbursement of damages caused by ActionAid.

Detection of infringements, disciplinary proceedings and the application of fines will occur in compliance with the law, contracts and regulations.

All conduct from consultants, collaborators or suppliers connected to ActionAid through independent work contracts and, in any case subject to direction or surveillance, that is in violation of the Code could result, in the event of more severe cases, in the dissolution of the contract, without prejudice to the eventual request for reimbursement if such behaviour causes damage to the Association.

The violation of ethical standards by administrators carries the activation of appropriate procedures regarding the assessment of their behaviour, also so that appropriate measures may be taken.

Also fined are actions and omissions intended in an unambiguous way to violate the rules established by ActionAid, even if the action is not completed or the event is not verified for any reason.

ENTRY INTO FORCE AND COORDINATION WITH ASSOCIATION PROCEDURES

This Code has been adopted with the approval of the Governing Board of ActionAid Switzerland with immediate effect.

The Code does not replace any actual and future procedures of the Association that continue to have effect in the case that they do not contradict that of the Code.