

Code of Conduct

The Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh (FNB)

15, Holy Lane, Shyamoli, Dhaka-1207

Tel: 8151920-1, Fax: 8122334

E-mail: fnb@bdmail.net

website: www.ngofederation.net

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The Code of Conduct for the Member NGOs of FNB

1. Background:

The Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh (FNB) is the only Federation that coordinates the NGOs in the country, the members of which have been working relentlessly for overall socio-economic development of the poor and the disadvantaged including implementation of various programs in the fields of Poverty Alleviation, Microcredit, Health, Family Planning, Women Empowerment, Child, Women & Adult Education and Rights, Establishment of Rights of the Disabled, Disadvantaged and Ethnic Minorities and their Development, Capacity Building, Disaster Preparedness and Management, Agricultural Development, Environment, Conservation of Bio-diversity, Human rights, Democracy and Good Governance and so on. FNB is registered under the Societies Registration Act. 1860 and is the representing federation of the NGO sector in Bangladesh.

Till December 2005 the number of total members of FNB reached 1053. FNB, in order to represent it at the grassroots, has its District Committees in a total of 57 districts under six divisions in Bangladesh.

FNB has a Central Council constituted with all its Member NGOs and Associate Members. All the members of the Central Council elect, through direct voting, a National Executive Board (NEB) comprised of 21 members, for two years. The 21-members National Executive Board is comprised of one Chair, two Vice-Chairs, one Treasurer and 17 members. District for FNB acts as ex-officio Member-Secretary in the National Executive Board. The District Committees of FNB are constituted in line with the NEB, each of which comprises a maximum of 17 members.

Furthermore, FNB is having a Metropolitan Committee also. The member NGOs in Dhaka Metropolitan Area elect the Metropolitan Committee on fulfillment of some specific conditions.

2. The Objectives of FNB :

FNB including its efforts for poverty alleviation and establishment of good governance, steadily endeavors with many activities that are carried out by its member organization for the overall socio-economic development of the poor and the disadvantaged communities in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of FNB are:

- Protect and ensure the lawful interests of the NGO community at all levels, in all matters and respects.
- Strengthen and support the programs undertaken by the member NGOs in Bangladesh.

- Inculcate in the members the spirit and ideals of development free from party politics and sectarianism of all kinds.
- Keep on good practices and develop the overall standard as well as the moral values among the member NGOs in order to ensure transparency and fairness in the NGO sector.
- Accelerate the national development by means of enhancement of discipline, unity and dynamism in the NGO sector through the promotion among its members NGOs of a Code of Conduct acceptable both at the national and international levels, composed on the basis of honor, equity, human rights and gender proactive values.
- Encourage gender proactive policies and programs in the greater interest of the poor, ethnic nationalities, minorities and the marginalized groups including the aged and the disabled.
- Strengthen among the NGOs at all levels a friendly relationship and a broad consensus in respect of the goals pursued.
- Initiate and lead organized direct and indirect actions in the greater interest of the NGO sector in the country.
- In order to strengthen NGO activities in the country collect and disseminate statistical and other information and take initiatives to spread technological, economic and management knowledge.

- Receive, in the greater interest of the organization, any vested/obtained property and responsibility, gift, donation, subscription and assets movable or immovable by means of will, contract or any other valid form if necessary and sell and purchase, distribute and develop the same and invest the same by ways of lease, mortgage, agreement/exchange or other valid modes and utilize the earning thereupon in achieving the goal(s) of FNB.
- Execute all the activities following legitimate means and as per approval of the Central Council, if necessary, in the greater interest of the organization.
- Establish a Human Resources Development Center to be run centrally by FNB aiming at developing the standard of the staff working in various programs of the member NGOs.
- Play effective role by the FNB Central and District Committees for inclusion of FNB members in the different NGO-networks formed at national and regional levels, for better implementation of the development programs.
- Play active role on behalf of the FNB Central Committee to establish communication and build relationship with the different national and international donor agencies.
- FNB's endeavor toward bringing positive changes upon the member organizations will be.

- Inspire member organizations to include more than 50% female members among the total direct beneficiaries in all member organizations.
- Inspire member organizations to recognize gender as one of the most important development-elements in all programs of their respective organizations.

3. **Membership of FNB :**

- 3.1 Any non-profit organization (*one-profit organization is that which is not owned under any kind of private ownership and where the initiator(s) of the organization will not and cannot own any income generated through the activities of that organization in the form of profit or share of profit or bonus*) registered by the government under its relevant law(s) working actively for the socio-economic development and towards establishing rights of the poor and disadvantaged people of the country may be entitled for the membership (General Member/Associate Member/Honorary Member) of FNB, provided it will duly abide by the FNB Constitution.
- 3.2 No member of FNB will get involve with any party politics or activities of the political parties.

4. **Rationale of the Code of Conduct :**

The NGOs, besides the Government, in Bangladesh have been striving towards achieving overall socio-economic progress for the poor vis-à-vis the national development for the last three decades since independence. At present, the NGOs have collectively emerged as a significant and inevitable sector for the development of the country through their contributions in almost all aspects of national life with their multi-faceted programs in the fields of poverty alleviation, education, health, agriculture, environment, human rights, establishing and practicing democracy and good governance and so on. Time has come when, in order to uphold and continue the proud contribution and role of the NGO sector in all-out development and prosperity of the society and the country with a more time-befitting and effective impact in the national life, it is crucial to establish and maintain a strong unity, fraternity and understanding among the NGOs. At the same time it is also important to establish and efficient management for the programs the NGOs carry out for the welfare of the people and establish a broad-based effective coordination and understanding among the NGOs themselves and all their activities. Above all, a firm commitment combined with a collective effort is essential towards the establishment of an enlightened, secular, equitable and just society free from hunger, poverty and deprivation. With a view to strengthening the NGO

sector in such a way that it would be able to design, undertake and implement programs properly on the basis of the aforesaid realizations and objectives as well as play a more potential role in the whole development scenario of the country, an urgency for a Code of Conduct was felt which would compose rules to be compulsorily abided by the NGOs. We therefore, do hereby declare that to achieve the above-mentioned goals and ensure a high level of professionalism and transparency in our respective organizations, we henceforth, will undertake and conduct all our development activities in accordance with the code of conduct as follows:

5. **Code of Conduct :**

5.1.1 **Commitment to the State, its Poor People and the FNB and Actions Required**

- 5.1.1 Work as non-governmental, charitable, local/national/international development organization for the greater interest of the state and the nation.
- 5.1.2 Ensure sustainable development and welfare of the large number of poor people throughout the country and contribute to the overall national development.
- 5.1.3 Undertake various development programs to alleviate poverty in the country, promote awareness of the people, and achieve self-reliance as well as

keep the democratic practices alive at the grassroots. The programs are:

- *Education for All, Leadership Development, social Mobilization and Group Formation, Training, Micro-credit, Income and Employment Generation, Institutional Development, Infrastructure Development, Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock, Preservation and Regeneration of Forest Resources, Social Forestry, Protection of Environment and Biodiversity, Women's Empowerment, Human Rights, Establishment of Rights, Development and Rehabilitation of the Disabled and the Ethnic Nationalities & minorities, Health, Nutrition and Family Planning, Water and Sanitation, Disaster Preparedness and Management, Relief and Rehabilitation, Democracy and Good Governance, Practice, Preservation and Promotion of Folk Culture, etc.*

- 5.1.4 Receive resources and support from the different governmental and non-governmental legitimate sources, people of the country, development partners in and outside the country in order to implement the programs of the organization.
- 5.1.5 Remain active to generate resources through own initiatives for these purposes.

- 5.1.6 Utilize the resources and supports obtained not for self-gains but for development of the poor in the country.
- 5.1.7 Utilize the money obtained or generated for the purpose of development of the poor in proper manner for implementing the different development programs determined by the own respective organization.
- 5.1.8 Build own respective organizations as structures not dependent on any particular individual or the founder but as truly effective democratic institutions through ensuring the practice of true democratic ideals in every matter.
- 5.1.9 Recognizing, beyond any question, the independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh, conduct development activities for the wellbeing of the poor of the country irrespective of their ethnic identity, caste, creed, religion, race, community, language and culture, gender, age, physical or mental disability or other differentiating features.
- 5.1.10 Ensure wide participation of the poor in the development activities and the concerned policy making processes.

- 5.1.11 Remain vigilant so that no activities of the own respective organizations harmfully affect the national interest.
- 5.1.12 Practice and comply with the following universal and ever-cherished values and ideals while conducting development activities:
- *Peace, Equality, Fraternity, Social, Justice, Solidarity and Feeling of Universal Brotherhood, Respect for Human Rights, Gender Equality and Compassion, Respect towards Ethnic, Religious and Cultural Diversity, Tolerance towards different Opinions, Rational Understanding/Agreement, Respect for Human Dignity and Individual Difference/Diversity, Respect for Democratic Conducts and Ideals, Honesty and Righteousness, Secular Ideals, Respect for Accountability and Transparency etc.*
- 5.1.13 Remain active in removing all the hindrances towards establishing social equality and justice.
- 5.1.14 Refuse in any situation to work directly or indirectly to meet any particular political or religious interest through the activities of own respective organizations.

- 5.1.15 Undertake any lawful and democratic means including protest, lawsuit, and advocacy, lobby, etc. with the political parties, government, donor agencies and all others concerned to mitigate any situation detrimental to the interest of the NGO sector caused by any political party, government or agency.
- 5.1.16 Conduct development programs being completely free from the influence of any political party or the objectives of any political party.
- 5.1.17 Refrain in any situation from using the programs of the organization directly or indirectly for supporting any objective of any religious group or political party or the political party itself.
- 5.1.18 Ensure that the personal loyalty or faith in any political party or ideology or religion of any individual does not in any way influence the organization, its development activities or other development organizations.
- 5.1.19 Conform at all time with the objectives, goals, ideals and policies (present and introduced from time to time) of FNB.

- 5.1.20 Submit progress report of the organization to the FNB Central Office on a yearly basis. However, FNB will reserve the right to ask, when it deems necessary, any of its member organizations to submit special/specific report for any activity-period.
- 5.1.21 Audit the Activities and financial transactions of the own respective organizations on regular basis.
- 5.1.22 Refrain from becoming involved in any program or activity detrimental to the interest of FNB vis-à-vis the NGO sector.
- 5.1.23 Stay alert at all time so that no policy in undertaken or on activity is carried out against the interest of the NGO sector either at national or international level.
- 5.1.24 In case such a situation arises, stand firmly in support of FNB at all time.

5.2 Relations with the Government and Actions Required

- 5.2.1 Support without any political and ideological reservation all the development activities conducted towards overall socio-economic development of the poor of the country.

- 5.2.2 Play complementary role to the development programs undertaken by the Government/State through the development programs of own respective organizations.
- 5.2.3 Inspire the concerned actors for further expansion of the pro-poor national development activities.
- 5.2.4 In order to ensure financial transparency and accountability of the organization declare all the accounts of income and expenditure relating to programs and others with due transparency and procedures to the Government and the general people.
- 5.2.5 With the objective of strengthening the GO-NGO relationship in all the fields of development activities continue efforts so that the existing arrangement of relationship and cooperation between the two takes a more constructive and dynamic shape both at local and national level.
- 5.2.6 Exchange all kinds of information on development of the poor people with the Government on the basis of mutual transparency and respect.
- 5.2.7 Encourage timely exchange of information and opinion as all well as the advice between the Government and the NGOs concerning the issues of development aid/cooperation, objectives/purposes, etc. of the donor communities.

- 5.2.8 Remain active in building a relationship of cooperation and partnership about the development programs undertaken by the Government.
- 5.2.9 Continue advocacy with and put pressure on the Government for involving NGOs in all the development programs with the objectives and methods of implementation of which the Government and the NGOs share an agreement of opinion.
- 5.2.10 Confirm with the concerned registration authority of the Government the transparency and accountability of the organization's goals, objectives and Constitution.
- 5.2.11 Run own respective organizations appropriately as per Constitution of the organization submitted to the Registration Authority concerned.

5.3 NGO-NGO Cooperation and Actions Required

- 5.3.1 Remain always active to strengthen the mutual harmony and solidarity among the NGOs with the objectives of building an efficient, dynamic, integrated, prospective and strong NGO sector.
- 5.3.2 Extend mutual support in any affair by the respective organizations to achieve the above-mentioned goals.

- 5.3.3 Inspire all the NGOs whether they are FNB members or not, to become united under the leadership of FNB.
- 5.3.4 Contribute in enhancing the solidarity and strength of the NGO sector by means of mutual communication, discussion and exchange of resources, information, skills and experience among the NGOs on different aspects of development of the poor.
- 5.3.5 Ensure the highest standard of professionalism and practice of transparency and honesty in all activities of the respective development organization by preventing inefficiency, incapability, misuse, gender discrimination and all forms of violence and indignity against women, biasness, dishonesty, hypocrisy, nepotism, and any other form of irregularity, communalism and narrow-mindedness.
- 5.3.6 Continue efforts and inspire other development organizations so that they also govern and guide themselves in accordance with the ideals mentioned above as well as this approved Code of conduct.
- 5.3.7 Consolidate the unity of the NGO sector on the basis of mutual understanding abandoning conflicts of opinion among individuals or personality clashes, foul competition, wrangle, discord and confrontation.
- 5.3.8 Refrain from any effort to control or influence, either personally or by means of own respective

organization, any other development organization or discard such mentality.

- 5.3.9 Refrain from any effort in any situation to influence any development activity of and take any personal privilege from other organizations.
- 5.3.10 Work actively to build region-specific strong NGO networks for carrying out social issue base activities. Such issues are: Prevention of Women and Child Trafficking, Prevention of Violence against Women, Prevention of Dowry, HIV/AIDS, etc.
- 5.3.11 Inspire and grow a relationship of fellow-feelings, fraternity, tolerance, cooperation, respect and honor among all member NGOs of FNB, no matter how big or small they are, among their workers irrespective of what titles or responsibilities they hold and among all the beneficiaries of these NGOs.
- 5.3.12 Everybody is accountable to each other-uphold this notion of mutual accountability with regard to development activities.
- 5.3.13 Remain active in building a work-friendly environment on the basis of respectful and constructive relationship with all the partners and stakeholders of development activities.
- 5.3.14 Continue to generate among the NGOs an inspiration and a desire for the enhancement of the standard of activities, mutual learning, creation of

opportunities for utilizing experiences and bringing upon positive changes.

- 5.3.15 Consider carefully the programs and activities of other NGOs working in an area before undertaking programs in the same area in order to avoid any duplication of programs or locations in the same working areas and any conflicts arising from duplication.
- 5.3.16 Failing to reach any mutual understanding on the matter described above, call on the concerned FNB District Committee or the National Executive Board if necessary, as the mediator to resolve the dispute.
- 5.3.17 Stand by and extend support to any Member NGO that faces trouble while running its programs being free from the influence of any political ideology or without any religious bias.
- 5.3.18 Accelerate the reciprocal development of the NGOs through extending all sorts of organizational support to each other.
- 5.3.19 Remain bound to obey the decision of the National Executive Board of FNB in case of settling disputes relating to duplication of any program or working area.

5.4 Relations with the Donors and the Actions Required

- 5.4.1 Take initiatives to establish good relationship with the donors on the basis of mutual trust and honor.
- 5.4.2 Try sincerely, besides the Government, to attract grants and support from the donors so that the greater number of poor people in the country can be brought under development efforts.
- 5.4.3 Remain alert about the aims and objectives of the donors also and remain cautious so that the image of the NGO sector and the country does not become stained by any grant or support so received.
- 5.4.4 Refrain from accepting any grant or support from any donor that is deemed to be harmful for the interest of NGO sector vis-a-vis for the nation.
- 5.4.5 Present a precise picture of the vision and objectives of the own respective organizations to the donors and utilize their grants in proper manner in line with the vision and objectives of the respective organizations.
- 5.4.6 Make an effort to have a proper understanding of the realities at domestic and international arena that are instrumental for the donors to take decisions of channeling their funds and support in many cases.

- 5.4.7 Ensure a transparent and lawful use of the funds received following the formal agreement with the donors.
- 5.4.8 Provide necessary information to the donors on the initiatives and programs undertaken with their funding for the development of the poor as per rules mutually agreed by both the parties.
- 5.4.9 Try sincerely to attract grants and support from the donors by means of designing new innovative and pro-poor programs that would match with local needs and realities.
- 5.4.10 Abstain from using the funds received from the donors in any program or sector other than what is contained in the concerned agreement.
- 5.4.11 Refrain from using the funds in programs that damages the goodwill of the donors and the NGOs.

5.5 **Welfare of the Staff and the Actions Required from the Organization**

- 5.5.1 Provide the staff of the own respective organizations with salary and allowances, service-related benefits

and other legitimate dues regularly and ensure their rights and welfare as per law.

- 5.5.2 Pay the just salary (following the Labor Law) to the staff and in order to maintain the transparency of the organization pay the salary through bank accounts.
- 5.5.3 Promote recruitment of female staff in the organization.
- 5.5.4 Treat corruption and violence against women and children as grave offence for dismissal from service and that should be part of service conditions during appointment of an employee.
- 5.5.5 Incorporate and implement the following elements in order to give the organization institutional shape in its true sense:
 - *Governance Policies, Service Rules, Gender Policy, Human Resources Development Policy; Financial Management Policy; Utilization of Resources and Sale and Procurement Policy, Office Management Policy, Staff Welfare Policy, etc.*
- 5.5.6 Carry on a sustained practice of transparency and democratic values in the internal processes of the organization and use and preserve all the registers and documents as per rule.
- 5.5.7 Inform and update the staff properly about the vision, objectives and ideals of the organization,

benefits that the staff is entitled for during his/her service period, their prospects, responsibilities and behavior as well as about the problems, prospects, plans and progress of the organization.

- 5.5.8 Provide the staff organizationally with the opportunities and privileges necessary for his/her self-development.
- 5.5.9 Regard the staff working in different NGOs small or big, as important colleagues/associates in promoting the NGO sector.
- 5.5.10 Ensure decent and supportive behavior towards and other aspects of human dignity for the staff of respective organizations which they are entitled to.
- 5.5.11 Refrain essentially from such intent that provokes to separate the organizational interest and dignity from the interest and donor of the staff, through treating the staff merely as "paid workers" and through the practice of nepotism.
- 5.5.12 In order to judge a staff his/her education, skills, sense of decency, uprightness, and other human qualities will be taken as measuring method and not

how big or small salary a staff in paid or the level of his/her social connections.

- 5.5.13 Remain active in order to add dynamism in accelerating the pace of development of the organization and in achieving its goals by taking every staff or worker as an honored fellow-activist.
- 5.5.14 Be equally active to ensure overall development and welfare of both the staff of the organization and the targeted poor community in all development activities as well as improve the standard of life of both.
- 5.5.15 Uphold the notion that the wellbeing of the targeted poor community and the wellbeing of the staff are not two contradictory interests; rather they are two complementary goals of the organization.
- 5.5.16 Remain cautious so that the financial security or human rights of the staff and any member of the families dependent on them are not jeopardized as a result of focusing only on the interest of the target beneficiary community or that of the organizational programs.

5.6 Obligations to Obey the Code of Conduct and the Actions Required

- 5.6.1 Put signature at the appropriate place by the Chief Executive of the organization agreeing to abide by the above-mentioned rules for the greater interest of discipline, unity and welfare of the NGO sector.
- 5.6.2 Refrain from giving any explanation of the said Code of Conduct different from or negative to its fundamental objectives.
- 5.6.3 Abstain from provoking any politics, conflict, division and chaos among the NGOs or NGO staff/other development partners/beneficiaries by capitalizing any obscurity in meaning of any word/sentence mentioned in the Code of Conduct, and refrain from instigating anyone else to do so.
- 5.6.4 Bound to accept the explanation rendered by the National Executive Board of FNB regarding any linguistic obscurity.
- 5.6.5 Remain liable toward abiding by this Code of Conduct by all the member organizations of FNB individually and collectively, and in advising and encouraging others to do so, in undertaking its

publicity, implementation and monitoring as well as in upholding the ideals depicted in the Code of Conduct.

- 5.6.6 FNB will audit all the activities and accounts of financial transactions of all its District Branches, on a regular basis.
- 5.6.7 This Code of Conduct described above will be applicable to all the member organizations of FNB and all the signatory organizations must follow the Code of Conduct.
- 5.6.8 The member organizations of FNB will also inspire other organizations registered as NGOs but not member of FNB to follow the Code of Conduct.
- 5.6.9 The National Executive Board of FNB may take proper disciplinary action against the member organizations accused of breaching the Code of Conduct and may cancel the membership of the accused, if necessary.
- 5.6.10 Acceptance of this Code of Conduct by putting signature on it will by on means mean deprivation/dissociation of the signatory organization from the rights mentioned in the

Constitution of FNB and other Rules and Regulations.

- 5.6.11 The signatory organization will be able to enjoy accordingly all the other rights described in the Constitution of FNB and in other Rules and Regulations.
- 5.6.12 The National Executive Board of FNB reserves the right to take necessary disciplinary measures against any organization found guilty of committing any act not mentioned in the Code of Conduct but that is detrimental to the interest of the NGO sector, the poor people or the country.

NB: Since the original Code of Conduct is in Bangla, if in case any controversy arises on meaning, interpretation of any word or clause between the Bangla text and the English, the Bangla text will prevail.
