



# Aqua for All

## CODE OF CONDUCT

Final version dated 28 January 2021

Effective per 1 February 2021

### Introduction

Aqua for All is a Dutch not-for-profit organisation operating in Africa and Asia. For almost two decades, we have worked towards catalysing a sustainable and inclusive water and sanitation economy worldwide. We believe that innovation, scalable solutions, and public and private capital are needed to bridge the service and financial gap to achieve SDG 6 - Water and Sanitation for All.

The underlying document contains the full text of Aqua for All's revised Code of Conduct. The world around us continues to change and Aqua for All is moving too. As of July 2019, Aqua for All has started a five year programme called Making Water Count in collaboration with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs based on a new strategic plan and targets for 2019 - 2024. Hence, the necessity to update the Code of Conduct of the organisation (as set in 2009) in line with these changes whereas the conduct is sharpened on issues of integrity.

To us the Code of Conduct is about always acting in a professional, transparent and uncorrupted manner based on clear motives and values. It also means treating each other with respect and being open to constructive criticism. It's about creating a safe and supportive environment in which people are

not afraid to speak frankly about behaviour where necessary.

In order to protect our integrity, we must always be aware of the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Legislation offers a set of basic rules, but that is not always enough. There are also grey areas, where we must all take individual responsibility for applying Aqua for All's ethical standards. This Code of Conduct should help. It explains the basic concepts underpinning ethical behaviour and it broadly defines not only the conduct the organisation expects from its staff, consultants and associated partners, but also what they can expect from Aqua for All.

### Scope and Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to continue to guarantee and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability, integrity and effectiveness of Aqua for All's work and that of our partners.

To that effect, we consider it to be crucial that all Aqua for All staff, consultants and associated partners act with integrity and high standards of practice. We must be mindful that each action in the respective context can have repercussions for the fate of many. Via our funding and service

agreements, this Code of Conduct also applies to associated partners, consultants and organizations receiving funding from Aqua for All. Hence, this Code of Conduct sets out the conduct expected of all its staff (permanent and temporary), local representatives, consultants, any other individuals representing Aqua for All as well as our associated partners receiving funding from Aqua for All. It is directed at the prevention of misconduct including corruption, fraud, (sexual) exploitation and abuse.

We want to make sure that Aqua for All provides a safe and reliable environment for our staff, our partners, staff of partners and clients or any other person we work with. An environment in which inappropriate behaviour and breaches to this Code of Conduct can and dare to be reported, provides protection to informers and reporters, takes reports seriously, carefully and accurately handles these reports and provides clear and appropriate sanctions in case of inappropriate behaviour.

## Organisational embedding

Aqua for All's integrity system is directed at prevention, signalling misconduct, enforcement, learning and improving the process. This is embedded in the organisation at three levels:

Firstly, Aqua for All does its work based on a number of values as explained in this document. These values underpin our standards of behaviour.

Secondly, the underlying Code of Conduct sets out concrete standards for conduct and unacceptable behaviour for the organisation, all its staff, representatives and associated partners. It also entails consequences of misbehaviour. Aqua for All takes a zero-tolerance and transparent approach toward all forms of misconduct including any form of harassment, corruption or fraud. A complaints procedure is in place which includes a dedicated confidentiality advisor

('vertrouwenspersoon') and integrity officer within the organisation.

Thirdly, a safe reporting mechanism is in place: victims are enabled to report abuses in a safe way and with safety for themselves and family. This is guaranteed in the complaints procedure.

## Values

The Code is underpinned by a set of values which inform the behaviours of all staff, partners and consultants all of the time. These values are:

**INTEGRITY** We act with honesty and humanity, and are guided by ethical and moral principles in all that we do.

**ACCOUNTABILITY** We take responsibility for our actions and are accountable to all our stakeholders, and in particular primary stakeholders, for our performance and integrity.

**TRANSPARENCY** We openly share information about our organisations and our work to all our stakeholders and to the public.

**RESPECT** We recognise the value and diversity of every person and are committed to treating others with due regard for their rights, dignity and integrity.

**EFFECTIVENESS** We strive to deliver outcomes that bring about positive change in the lives of people living in poverty.

**EQUITY** We are committed to overcoming prejudices and disadvantage and promoting fair and just access to resources and opportunities.

**COOPERATION** We work with and alongside others in a spirit of neutrality and mutuality, respecting diversity and difference in the pursuit of common goals.

## Standards of Behaviour

To uphold and promote the highest ethical and professional standards, Aqua for All and partners staff<sup>1</sup> shall at all times:

- A. Respect and promote fundamental human rights without discrimination and act with integrity.
- B. Respect and abide by national and international laws.
- C. Treat all our partners and their staff fairly and with respect and deliver the highest possible quality and professionalism.
- D. Respect local cultures and customs and refraining from any discrimination and misuse of power.
- E. Positively represent Aqua for All.
- F. Be aware of the use of social media when travelling to areas with security issues.
- G. Maintain an environment that prevents misconduct and promotes the implementation of this Code of Conduct.
- H. Actively avoid conflict of interest related to other employment and business.
- I. Promote safe and confidential reporting of serious concerns about suspected misconduct following Aqua for All guidelines.
- J. Report immediately any knowledge, concerns or substantial suspicions of breaches of this Code of Conduct following Aqua for All guidelines or to her/his line manager.
- K. Cooperate when requested with any investigation into alleged breaches related to this Code of Conduct.

## Misconduct

Any breach of this Code of Conduct is a form of misconduct, and, if substantiated, will lead to disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment or funding agreement and/or legal action if required.

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<sup>1</sup> This Code of Conduct is applicable to all Aqua for All staff, hired consultants and partners receiving funding. Consequently, where in this document

## 1. Violations of Rules or Regulations

Aqua for All and partners staff must not violate any internal rules or regulations, including but not limited to the following:

### Staff must:

- A. Refrain from using or carrying about their person or in their luggage any weapons or ammunition.
- B. Use IT technology and social media for the appropriate professional or private use, ensuring not to violate this Code of Conduct.
- C. Protect and safeguard any personal information collected from partners or communities that could put them at risk by following the Aqua for All safeguarding systems.
- D. Obtain written permission or verbal informed consent from a person or from a parent/guardian of a child when taking a picture or when extensive reporting is made, and the person/child's face or name is visually identifiable in the photo/film footage. As part of this the general way in which the photograph or film will be used must be explained and the extent of the accompanying identification information agreed.

### Staff must never:

- E. Discriminate against any individual.
- F. Consume, purchase, sell, possess or distribute narcotic drugs.
- G. Visit bars, restaurants or other premises where minors are exposed sexually.
- H. Drive a vehicle when under the influence of alcohol or other substances.
- I. Drink alcohol or use any other substances in a way that affects her/his ability to carry out her/his role or affects the reputation of Aqua for All.

## 2. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

To protect all stakeholders in all situations, Aqua for All's and partners staff shall, while on duty and off duty, adhere to the following

*'staff' is mentioned, you should read 'Aqua for All staff, hired consultants and associated partners'.*

compulsory standards of behaviour:

Staff must:

- A. Inform his or her line manager when engaging in a long-term relationship with a member of the community which is benefitting from an Aqua for All supported initiative, and/or with another staff member of Aqua for All, to prevent perception of a conflict of interest in countries where Aqua for All works.

Staff must never:

- B. Sexually exploit or sexually abuse any individual.
- C. Engage in any sexual activity with a child or children regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
- D. Act in ways that may place a child at risk of abuse, including not giving due consideration to assessing and reducing potential risks to children as a result of implementing activities. Behaviours and actions that are prohibited include, but are not limited to, using inappropriate language or behaviour when dealing with a child or children, bullying and harassing a child verbally or physically, physical punishment, exposing a child to pornography including on-line grooming and trafficking. Whenever possible avoid being alone with a child.
- E. Consume, purchase, sell, possess and distribute any forms of child pornography.
- F. Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. This includes the buying of or profiting from sexual services as well as exchange of assistance that is due to right holders for sexual favours
- G. Exploit the vulnerability of any target group in the context of Aqua for All's work, especially women and children, or allow any person/s to be put into compromising situations.

### 3. Anti-fraud and corruption

Aqua for All and partners staff must:

- A. Be transparent, accountable and honest in all work-related financial transactions. Budget leftovers must be reallocated and approved in a transparent way.
- B. Ensure that financial and other resources are used solely for the intended purpose.
- C. Conduct all business in accordance with national and international laws and standards.
- D. Declare any known or potential conflicts of interest to their line manager.
- E. Ensure, where possible, that goods and services purchased are produced and delivered under conditions that do not involve the abuse or exploitation of any persons and have the least negative impact on the environment.

Staff must never:

- F. Steal, misuse or misappropriate funds, property or any other income.
- G. Engage in abusive transactions, forging of documents, money laundering, taking of commissions or influencing tender process for benefit or illegal activities.
- H. Take part in activities that generate personal, organisational or collective profit such as buying or selling when such activities may affect, or appear to affect, the Aqua for All credibility or integrity.
- I. Share the profits such as kickbacks, cuts or discounts for improper personal or organisational benefits.
- J. Accept any gifts or other favours that may influence the performance of staff functions or duties. Gifts are defined as, but not limited to: services, travel, entertainment, material goods, among others. In order to respect national and local traditions and conventional hospitality, minor tokens and gifts can be accepted up to a maximum value of €50,-.
- K. Use illegal labour, child labour or forced labour.

- L. Use or distribute known unsafe products or supplies in any development or humanitarian setting

## **Aqua for All Complaints and disciplinary procedures**

### **A) Complaints**

A complaint can be submitted via email, letter, telephone or in person to the integrity officer ([complaint@aquaforall.org](mailto:complaint@aquaforall.org)). Based on the reporter's preference, he/she can also contact the confidentiality advisor for consultation. If a staff member purposely makes false or misleading allegations on any action by another staff, this is considered misconduct and will be subject to disciplinary action at the discretion of the employer.

### **B) Non Retaliation and Confidentiality**

Stakeholders must be able to lodge their concerns without fear of reprisals or unfair treatment. As far as possible, Aqua for All will do its utmost to ensure that complaints are handled with confidentiality and without risking effects on employment or any form of reprisals and/or harassment as a result of highlighting a genuine problem.

Confidentiality is crucial to achieving satisfactory results, as it protects the complainant, the subject of the complaint and other witnesses. The fact and nature of the complaints, the identities of those involved and documentation resulting from the investigation are to remain confidential and are only shared on a need-to know-basis with the aim of performing the necessary administrative investigation.

### **C) Criminal Records and Former Complaints**

Individuals must notify their prospective employer of any criminal convictions or charges prior to employment and of any criminal charges that arise during her/his employment. Individuals must also notify their prospective employer of any former complaints concerning suspected or

substantiated misconduct. Aqua for All can request for a Statement of Conduct ('*Verklaring omtrent Gedrag*') when hiring staff or consultants based in the Netherlands.

### **D) Disciplinary Measures**

Any upheld breach of this Code of Conduct will not be tolerated and may, in accordance with relevant legislation, lead to (internal) disciplinary actions, dismissal or even criminal prosecution. Such action may be taken against both staff and organisations depending on the nature of the problem, the results of the investigation and proposed measures. If necessary, the management will adjourn any relationship with the party involved.

The organisation will take any suspicion of inappropriate behaviour by staff, hired consultants or partners very seriously in a zero tolerance manner. Protection of and support to the victim or informer is crucial. Depending on the report and who is involved, in principle, the report of inappropriate behaviour will firstly be taken up by the confidentiality advisor and/or the integrity officer and if agreed by the victim addressed in the Management Team. If applicable, the Supervisory Board will be informed. In case the inappropriate behaviour has become apparent, the Management will take appropriate measures against the party involved. Respective authorities and financiers will be informed.

## **Awareness and Overall Responsibility**

Aqua for all has a responsibility to ensure that all employees, consultants and associated partners are aware of this Code of Conduct, that they understand what it means in concrete behavioural terms and how it applies to their programme context. For that purpose, the Code of Conduct is made available at our website. Moreover, the Code of Conduct automatically forms part of all contracts of employment as well as funding and service agreements.

Similarly, all staff and partner organisations have an individual responsibility to familiarize themselves and their dependents with this Code of Conduct and its purpose.



## Code of Conduct - Agreement

The signatory below has read, understood and is in agreement with the content of the Aqua for All Code of Conduct as shared by Aqua for All. This Code of Conduct is valid until the staff member or consultant ceases to represent or work for Aqua for All. This Code of Conduct shall be subject to periodic revision and review.

The signatory accepts the consequences of any violation of any of the above provisions under this Code of Conduct. All staff and consultants are required to sign this Code of Conduct.

Name:

Position:

Signature:

Date:

Place: