



**A PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT**

Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services

**Toolset 3-G**  
Codes of conduct, peer mentoring

**TS3-G-3 – Standards for Professional Conduct: International Rescue Committee**

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| <p><b>Context</b></p>                       | <p>Following the uncovering and subsequent acknowledgement of the high levels of sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries by aid workers in West Africa and elsewhere around the turn of the century, humanitarian organisations have increased attention on developing organisational codes of conduct, enshrining these codes into job contracts and establishing enforcement mechanisms.</p> <p>The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is an international humanitarian NGO that works in more than 40 countries and in 22 US cities. Its teams work across a range of sectoral areas from WASH and emergency response to health (including reproductive health), women’s empowerment, children and youth, governance and protection of rights, including with respect to GBV, as well as in research and advocacy.</p> <p>This case study documents an example of good practice in the IRC Standards for Professional Conduct and its associated information leaflet as to what to do if we suspect someone is breaching the code.</p>   |
| <p><b>Implementing organisations</b></p>    | <p>International Rescue Committee.</p>   |
| <p><b>Description of good practices</b></p> | <p><i>The IRC Way, Standards for Professional Conduct</i> can be seen in full on the following page. The code:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes the core principles or standards that the work of the IRC is centred around. Its work is based on three values, which provide a framework for IRC staff conduct – Integrity; Service; and Accountability.</li> <li>• Notes that the IRC rigorously enforces the UN Secretary General’s <i>Bulletin on the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Beneficiaries</i>, and endorses the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.</li> <li>• Emphasises that the IRC respects equally the rights of women and men and does not support practices that undermine the human rights of anyone, and specifically emphasises that the organisation refrains from any form of exploitation, discrimination, harassment, retaliation or abuse of colleagues, or the communities in which the IRC works.</li> </ul> <p>An accompanying leaflet summarises the standards to comprise the following key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for others</li> <li>• A workplace free of harassment</li> <li>• A diverse workforce</li> </ul> |

- Human rights for all
- Transparency
- Financial integrity
- Excellence in service
- Accountability

The same leaflet identifies what to do if anyone observes a behaviour that is inconsistent with The IRC Way, Standards of Professional Conduct, and offers different channels including a third party anonymous option. It also provides frequently asked questions.

### References/Links

- International Rescue Committee (no date) *The IRC Way, Standards for Professional Conduct*. New York, USA: IRC ([on USB stick](#))

# THE IRC WAY

## Standards for Professional Conduct

This document describes the core principles or standards that guide the work of the IRC. It delineates three values that provide a framework for IRC staff conduct and sets the organization's expectations for all IRC staff (employees, volunteers and interns) around the world.

### INTEGRITY

**At IRC, we are open, honest and trustworthy in dealing with beneficiaries, partners, co-workers, donors, funders, and the communities we affect.**

- We work to build the trust of the communities in which we work and sustain the trust earned by our reputation in serving our beneficiaries.
- We recognize that our talented and dedicated staff are our greatest asset and we conduct ourselves in ways that reflect the highest standards of organizational and individual conduct.
- Throughout our work, IRC respects the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of those we serve.
- We respect equally the rights of women and men and we do not support practices that undermine the human rights of anyone.
- We refrain from all practices that undermine the integrity of the organization including any form of exploitation, discrimination, harassment, retaliation or abuse of colleagues, beneficiaries, and the communities in which we work.
- We do not engage in theft, corrupt practices, nepotism, bribery, or trade in illicit substances.
- We accept funds and donations only from sources whose aims are

consistent with our mission, objectives, and capacity, and which do not undermine our independence and identity.

- We support human rights consistent with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights\* and The Convention on the Rights of the Child.\*\*
- We rigorously enforce the UN Secretary General's Bulletin on the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Beneficiaries.\*\*\*
- IRC recognizes its obligation of care for all IRC staff and assumes their loyalty and cooperation.

### SERVICE

**At IRC, our primary responsibility is to the people we serve.**

- As a guiding principle of our work, IRC encourages self-reliance and supports the right of people to fully participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- We create durable solutions and conditions that foster peace, stability and social, economic, and political development in communities where we work.
- We design programs to respond to beneficiaries' needs including emergency relief, rehabilitation, protection of human rights, post-conflict development, resettlement, and advocacy on their behalf.

- We seek to adopt best practices and evidence-based indicators that demonstrate the quality of our work.

- We endorse the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief.\*\*\*\*

### ACCOUNTABILITY

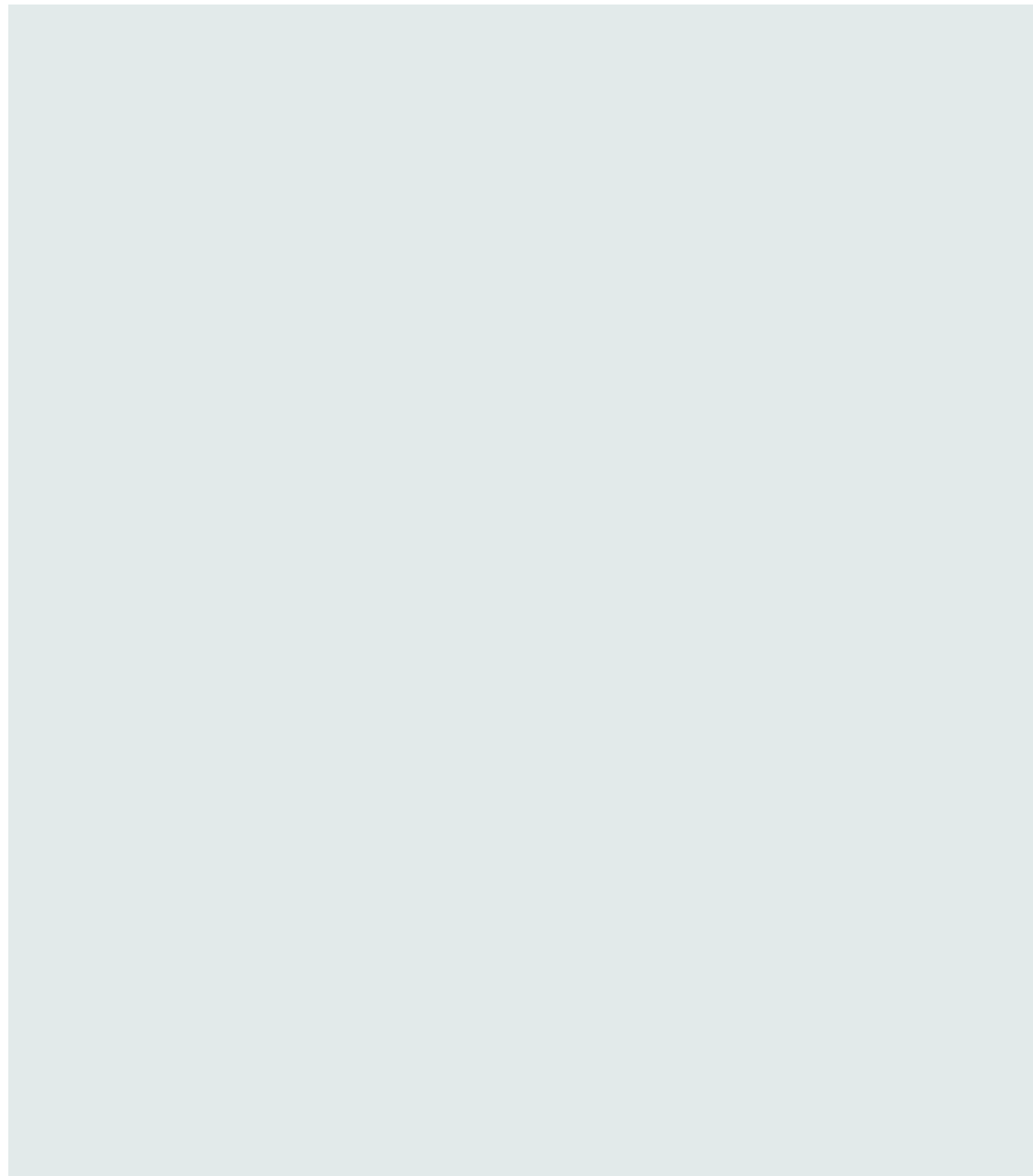
**At IRC, we are accountable - individually and collectively - for our behaviors, actions and results.**

- We are accountable and transparent in our dealings with colleagues, beneficiaries, partners, donors, and the communities we affect.
- We strive to comply with the laws of the governing institutions where we work.
- We maintain and disseminate accurate financial information and information on our goals and activities to interested parties.
- We are responsible stewards of funds entrusted to our use.
- We integrate individual accountability of staff through the use of performance evaluations.
- We utilize the resources available to our organization in order to pursue our mission and strategic objectives in cost effective ways.
- We strive to eliminate waste and unnecessary expense, and to direct all possible resources to the people we serve.

If you believe that any IRC employee, volunteer or intern is acting in a manner that is inconsistent with these Standards, please notify a supervisor or the confidential helpline Ethicspoint, [www.ethicspoint.com](http://www.ethicspoint.com) or call Ethicspoint toll-free (866) 654-6461 in the U.S./call collect (503) 352-8177 outside the U.S. There will be no retaliation against any person who raises concerns that are based on good faith belief of improper conduct. An intentionally false report or a failure to report conduct that is known to violate these standards may result in disciplinary action.

\*[www.un.org/en/documents/udhr](http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr) \*\*[treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en)  
 \*\*\*[www.un.org/en/pseataskforce/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/pseataskforce/index.shtml) \*\*\*\*[www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct](http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct)





**VIOLENCE  
GENDER  
& WASH**

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