

## Rural Poultry Centre Code of Conduct\*

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## Purpose of this Code

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to define the minimum standards of conduct expected of all persons acting on behalf of the Rural Poultry Centre. The Code thus applies to all RPC personnel, be they Board members, staff, subcontractors, volunteers or partners of RPC.

This Code will also assist to enhance the positive image of RPC by transparently defining its standards of conduct for the information of clients, benefactors, partners, and other stakeholders.

RPC may revise or update the Code at any time.

## Some Terms

We, us, etc	The Board of Trustees and the Director of the Rural Poultry Centre in Malawi.
RPC	The Rural Poultry Centre, an NGO duly incorporated and registered in Malawi under the name "Registered Trustees of Rural Poultry Centre".
Personnel	Includes employees, contractors, volunteers, interns, Board members, and any other associates of RPC to whom a benefit accrues.

## Introduction

RPC commits itself to adherence to high ethical standards for all personnel. Personnel are encouraged to strive for and encourage others to achieve the highest standards of conduct.

Every employee and personnel member of RPC will be provided with a copy of this Code and should familiarise him/herself with the contents.

RPC personnel are expected to adhere to the Code at all times. Where there are conflicts of interest or other impediments which may threaten the ability of personnel to adhere to these standards, they should report without delay through their supervisor. Similarly, personnel are expected to raise questions through their supervisor where they do not understand any of the issues discussed in this Code.

## Principles

Ethics are the rules or standards of conduct any society imposes in respect of the rights and interests of its members recognising the fundamental moral principles that underpin every decision and action a member of that society may make.

In the work environment, these principles can be used to provide guidance in situations where no specific rules are in place, or where matters are unclear. They help determine what is right and proper in our actions.

This Code of Conduct is based on the following fundamental ethics principles and obligations:

- Respect for the law and system of Government;
- Respect for persons;
- Integrity;
- Diligence; and
- Economy and efficiency.

## **Standards of Conduct**

This Code provides guidelines and standards on:

- Personal conduct and mutual respect
- Conflict of interests
- Proprietary rights and access to data
- Use of RPC assets, equipment and resources
- Gifts and benefits from outside RPC
- Child protection
- Fraud and anti-corruption
- Bullying and harassment in the workplace
- Discipline and Termination Policies

### **Personal Conduct and Mutual Respect**

In the performance of all duties, RPC personnel must strive to achieve the highest standards of conduct and accountability. At all times, under the provisions of this Code, personnel are expected to:

- Demonstrate high standards of professional integrity and honesty;
- Act in good faith, with care and diligence, and in the best interests of
  - RPC,
  - its clients and partners, and
  - the wider community;
- Perform any duties associated with their position conscientiously, courteously, efficiently, impartially, and to the best of their ability, in a manner that bears the closest external scrutiny and meets all legal and community standards;
- Treat all persons, including children, with respect, dignity and reasonable compassion, in an equitable and fair manner, and with proper regard for their rights and obligations, regardless of race, colour, gender, religion, ethnic or social origin or disability;
- Comply with, and be seen to act within, the spirit and letter of the law;
- When travelling internationally, respect the laws and values of the host country;
- Obey any lawful direction, instruction or order given by any person authorised by law to do so;
- Disclose any fraud, corruption, misconduct and maladministration of which they become aware;
- Set and maintain standards of leadership that are consistent with RPC's mission and policies, be seen at all times to act in support of these goals and policies, and actively contribute to their achievement;
- Exercise high standards of personal and professional conduct, and encourage colleagues and subordinates to do the same;
- safeguard privacy and confidentiality of matters of a personal nature relating to other colleagues;
- Seek to maintain and enhance the confidence of clients, partners, colleagues, stakeholders and the wider community in the integrity of RPC;
- Ensure subordinates are set equitable and fair workloads.

All RPC personnel are expected **not** to:

- Intimidate, engage in any form of exploitation, harassment, discrimination, or otherwise abuse any person, including children;
- Improperly use their official powers or position, or allow them to be improperly used;
- Allow personal relationships to adversely affect their work performance or that of other personnel;
- Allow RPC or its partners to be associated in any way with political or social movements or issues beyond specific contemporary objectives of the organisation within its mission; any political activity by personnel is to be conducted strictly in a private capacity;
- Induce other personnel to breach this Code.

## **Conflict of Interests**

RPC personnel are expected to perform their duties in such a manner that client confidence and trust in the integrity of RPC is preserved.

A conflict of interest occurs when a person's personal interests conflict with their responsibility to act in the best interests of the organisation. Personal interests include direct interests as well as those of family, friends, or other organisations a person may be involved with or have an interest in. It also includes a conflict between a Board member's duty to RPC and another duty that the Board member has (for example, to another charity). A conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived and may be financial or non-financial.

These situations present the risk that a person will make a decision based on, or affected by, these influences, rather than in the best interests of the organisation and must be managed accordingly.

RPC personnel are expected to arrange their private or other official affairs in a manner that will prevent any actual<sup>1</sup> or apparent<sup>2</sup> conflict of interests from arising wherever foreseeable. To avoid putting themselves in a conflict of interest with the objectives and operations pursued by RPC, personnel shall respect the following guidelines:

- Declare any apparent or potential conflict of interest. This may take the form of a notification to seniors, or for Board members, peers, of the general nature of a potential conflict of interest. Such a declaration enables management to take appropriate action to forestall any conflict of interest and thus maintain the credibility and transparency of the organisation's actions.
- RPC property (including rented/leased) must not be used for illegal or unauthorized purposes.
- RPC personnel may not without permission, accept any engagement from another organisation if this work interferes with their work schedule and their duties and responsibilities to RPC.
- RPC personnel shall avoid putting themselves in situations where they may gain profit or derive direct or indirect interest by influencing a contract award.
- RPC personnel shall not make any commitments, financial or of any other nature, on behalf of the organisation without clear authority.
- Employees shall not solicit or accept tips, gifts, favours or other forms of gratuities for services rendered or required to be rendered in performing their duties within the organization.

Where a conflict of interest does arise between the private or other official interests of a person and the official duties or responsibilities of that person within RPC, the person is to disclose details of the conflict to the appropriate Manager.

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1 An actual conflict of interests exists when a reasonable person, in possession of the relevant facts, would conclude that the person's private or other interests are interfering with the proper performance of their RPC duties.

2 An apparent conflict of interests exists when it appears that a person's private or other interests could interfere with the proper performance of their RPC duties.

## **Proprietary Rights and Access to Data**

All intellectual property developed in the course of employment with RPC remains the property of RPC or, where contractually specified, the property of its clients.

Personnel must comply with all legislation, RPC policies and procedures, and contractual policies and procedures of clients, covering intellectual property and copyright. Personnel must take care not to infringe the proprietary rights of other individuals or institutions in their work activities.

In many cases, RPC personnel will need to access and deal with institutional data and information which carries a certain level of confidentiality or proprietary value. When dealing with official or confidential information of RPC, personnel are not to access, use or release information without an official authorised purpose related to the performance of their duties within RPC.

Nothing in the previous paragraph should impede notification of impropriety under the whistle blower procedures as described in the RPC policy documents.

## **Use of Assets, Equipment and Resources**

RPC personnel are expected to take good care of items which are owned, leased or rented by RPC.

### **Computers and IT equipment**

Acceptable use by RPC personnel of the internet, electronic mail or messaging, and any connected computer communications network, server, personal computer workstation or laptop, is solely for RPC purposes.

As such, access to and use of the variety of internet services, both internal and external to RPC, are considered a business privilege and should be treated as such by all users.

In brief, RPC characterises as unethical and unacceptable, any activity which purposely:

- seeks to use RPC's IT services for private and personal business;
- seeks to gain unauthorised access to any resources within or outside RPC;
- disrupts or destroys the integrity of RPC's or others' IT operations or assets;
- wastes resources (eg people, capacity, computer) through such actions;
- compromises the privacy of any users or other institutions;
- compromises corporate proprietary or otherwise sensitive information;
- does not comply with applicable local and national laws;
- stores or distributes content which could reasonably be considered offensive, pornographic or harassment.

RPC reserves the right to monitor electronic traffic and content on its IT systems in order to ensure compliance with this Code and to take appropriate disciplinary action in cases of default.

RPC does not tolerate the use on its systems of software which is pirated or otherwise of an illegal nature. RPC emphasises that it will not accept the liability to prosecution should such illegal software be found on its computer systems, no matter what the source. If pirated or otherwise illegal software is detected on RPC systems, it will be removed without delay. RPC will not be held responsible for any loss as a consequence of such action.

## **Access to and use of RPC resources**

In the performance of RPC duties, personnel are expected to:

- Use or manage both human and material resources efficiently, effectively, and only for the benefit of RPC and its stakeholders, clients and/or partners;
- Avoid waste, misuse, abuse, or extravagant use, of resources of any kind belonging to or leased by RPC;
- Ensure that all facilities, physical resources and other property belonging to or leased by RPC are given due care and maintenance;
- Conserve and safeguard RPC assets;
- Budget honestly; and
- Respect the environment by engaging in environmentally friendly work practices.

## **Use of RPC vehicles**

Use of RPC vehicles will be subject to the policies outlined in the RPC code of use and instructions to staff from time to time.

All RPC personnel are expected to follow the above principles of proper use of RPC assets and to adopt a high level of personal safety as passengers or drivers. RPC expects seat belts to be used at all times, where available.

## **Gifts and Benefits From Outside RPC**

In their official capacity, personnel are not to solicit any personal or other benefits, except where specifically authorised by RPC (e.g. legitimate pursuit of donations or sponsorship in accordance with RPC policy).

If there is any doubt about the intention or integrity of the source making an offer, personnel are expected to reject the offer.

However, RPC recognises that there will be instances where personnel will be offered benefits (gifts, hospitality, etc.) and that under certain circumstances it will be appropriate for personnel to accept them, or indeed inappropriate not to accept them. However, personnel are to avoid all situations in which the acceptance of any benefit could create an actual or apparent conflict of interests with their official duties.

In all such cases, the benefit must be declared to the relevant supervisor. The reason for this requirement is that failure to declare might be taken as an indication that a conflict of interest does actually exist.

## **Child Protection Policy**

RPC maintains a zero tolerance policy towards child abuse.

RPC always assesses and manages child protection risk and impact. For positions involving contact with children or working with children, recruitment includes appropriate assessment procedures and induction includes training specifically on Child Protection Policies. Equivalent procedures apply to contractors and other RPC personnel. In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration. RPC will suspend or transfer to other duties any employee who is under investigation for child related misdemeanours.

No personnel is to engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, including using language towards children that is harassing, abusive, sexually provocative or culturally inappropriate.

No personnel is to engage in any form of sexual activity with children, where under all applicable laws, the child is under the age of consent.

All personnel are required to adhere to the following rules when dealing directly with children (excluding where applicable the person's own child(ren), and in doing so take responsibility for ensuring they do not place themselves in a position where they risk allegations being made against them:

- treat children with respect regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status;
- not use language or behaviour towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate;
- not engage children under the age of 18 in any form of sexual intercourse or sexual activity, including paying for sexual services or acts;
- wherever possible, ensure that another adult is present when working in the proximity of children;
- not invite unaccompanied children into my home, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger or have been granted permission from their guardian/parent;
- not sleep close to unsupervised children unless absolutely necessary, in which case I must obtain my supervisor's permission, and ensure that another adult is present if possible;
- not use any computers, mobile phones, video cameras, cameras or social media inappropriately, and never exploit or harass children or access child exploitation material through any medium;
- not use physical punishment on children;
- not give or provide children with alcohol or illegal drugs;
- not show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- not hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which places them at significant risk of injury;
- comply with all relevant legislation, including labour laws in relation to child labour;
- immediately report concerns or allegations of child abuse in accordance with appropriate procedures;
- disclose without delay all charges, convictions and other outcomes of an offence, which occurred before or occurs during my association with RPC, and which relate to child exploitation or abuse;

When photographing or filming a child for work related purposes, all personnel must:

- assess and endeavour to comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images before photographing or filming a child;
- obtain informed consent from the child and parent or guardian of the child before photographing or filming a child; as part of this they must explain how the photograph or film will be used;
- ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and not in a vulnerable or submissive manner: children should be adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive;
- ensure images are honest representations of the context and the facts; and
- ensure file labels, meta data or text descriptions do not reveal identifying information about a child when sending images electronically or publishing images in any form.

All RPC personnel should understand that the onus is on them to use common sense, avoid actions or behaviours that could be construed as child exploitation and abuse. They must also understand their responsibility in the course of their work to immediately report any suspected cases of child abuse to RPC management.

## **Fraud and Anti-Corruption**

RPC regards and treats seriously any fraud and maintains a zero tolerance position towards fraud and misappropriation of funds or resources.

Fraud is defined as dishonestly obtaining a benefit by deception or other means. It extends to benefits obtained or derived that can be both tangible and intangible.

All staff are responsible for fraud prevention and detection. They are required to report any incident of suspected or detected fraud immediately to the relevant RPC Manager providing details of what they know and possible sources of evidence.

## **Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace**

RPC's values all of its personnel and is committed to providing a work environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation (victimization). RPC is also committed to the principles of equal employment opportunities for all employees, applicants, and trainees.

This section covers harassment or bullying which may occur both in and out of the workplace. The core principle is that employees must treat others with dignity and respect and should, themselves, be treated with dignity and respect. Employees should always consider whether their words or conduct could be offensive.

All allegations of harassment or bullying will be taken seriously and addressed promptly following principles of fairness, confidentiality and consistency.

### **Harassment**

"Harassment" is a serious, severe or pervasive conduct, that is unwanted or offensive that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, humiliating, hostile or offensive environment.

Unlawful discrimination and harassment (based on race, colour, sex, pregnancy, age, national origin, religion, language, social origin, disability, genetic information, sexual orientation, veteran status, gender identity, trade union membership or other categories protected by applicable law) will not be tolerated.

Discrimination also includes treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behaviour in the past.

Examples of potential harassment:

- Unwanted and inappropriate physical contact or horseplay, including touching, pinching, pushing, grabbing, unnecessary brushing against someone, invading personal space and physical or sexual assault
- Unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour, and suggestions that sexual favours may further a career or that a refusal may hinder it
- Stalking or persisting in showering a person with unwanted attentions, gifts, or messages
- Sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including e-mails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet)
- Offensive or intimidating comments or gestures, or insensitive jokes or pranks that undermine the dignity of the person

Persons may be harassed even if they are not the intended target. For example, person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if they create an offensive environment for them. RPC personnel



should be aware of the equal employment policy of the organisation and understand the implications in terms of their relationships with other RPC personnel.

## **Bullying**

"Bullying" is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that makes a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. "Power" does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation. Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct.

Examples of potential bullying:

- Shouting at, being sarcastic towards, ridiculing or demeaning others
- Physical or psychological threats
- Creation of arbitrary standards for one person, imposing unrealistic demands, micromanaging work, or using supervision to intimidate a person
- Inappropriate, exaggerated or untrue derogatory remarks about someone's performance, particularly in front of others
- Abuse of authority or power by those in positions of seniority
- Deliberately excluding someone from meetings or communications without good reason, or encouraging others to do so
- Stealing credit for another's work

Legitimate, reasonable, and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to workers in the course of their employment, will not amount to bullying on their own.

RPC recognises that reporting of cases of alleged harassment or bullying involve difficult judgements which may offend sensitivities of the individuals involved. However, where these issues are felt to have a negative impact on the morale and work of its personnel, RPC encourages all personnel to raise the matter directly with the senior supervisor (not being one involved in the alleged misdeeds) for possible further investigation or action.

Supervisors should follow up on any such allegations with the greatest degree of confidentiality consistent with RPC's obligations. Action might include investigation, remedial action, and if required, disciplinary action.

RPC prohibits retaliation or victimization of persons who reasonably seek to enforce their rights under the provisions of this policy.

## **Discipline and Termination Policies**

All personnel are expected to familiarise themselves with this Code and ensure that its provisions are observed.

Failure to comply with standards of conduct outlined in the code, without valid reason, will be addressed as a disciplinary issue.

Personnel requiring advice or assistance concerning their obligations under this Code should seek assistance from the Director of RPC.

When assessing perceived or actual breaches of the Code of Conduct, the RPC Board will adhere to the principles of natural justice, i.e. the affected person must be given the opportunity to present their case and have that information considered before any decision is made; and the decision maker must have no personal interest in the matter to be decided, have no bias as to the outcome, and act in good faith throughout the process.

## **Acknowledgement Form:**

This acknowledgement form must be signed by the employee, detached from the body of the Code and kept on the RPC personnel file for the employee.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Rural Poultry Centre's Code of Conduct and that I have read and understood the document. I have an understanding of the organisation and its expectations in terms of standards of conduct in the context of the position to which I have been assigned.

<b>Full Name</b>	
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Position</b>	
<b>Supervisor/manager</b>	

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