



# AIFO CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT 2020

## AIFO LIBERIA

### Anti-Corruption and Whistleblowing Guidelines

Approved: September 2021

First approved revision: January 2022

Next review: September 2023

## Table of Contents

<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>
<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>APPLICATION</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>
<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>OBJECTIVE</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>IMPLEMENTATION</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>DEFINITIONS</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>RULES OF CONDUCT</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>MAINTAIN A LOW-RISK ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>PROVISION OF SERVICES / SUPPLIES AND GRANTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6.3</b>	<b>AWARDING CONTRACTS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6.4</b>	<b>BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6.5</b>	<b>FACILITATION PAYMENTS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6.6</b>	<b>ACCEPTING DONATIONS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6.7</b>	<b>USE OF RESOURCES</b>	<b>7</b>
<b><u>7</u></b>	<b><u>RAISING CONCERNS</u></b>	<b><u>7</u></b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONCERNS RAISED</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>ANONYMOUS DISCLOSURES</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7.3</b>	<b>UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b><u>8</u></b>	<b><u>PROCEDURES FOR MAKING A DISCLOSURE</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>
<b>8.1</b>	<b>THE SAFEGUARDING OFFICER</b>	<b>9</b>
<b><u>9</u></b>	<b><u>INVESTIGATION</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>
<b><u>10</u></b>	<b><u>POSSIBLE OUTCOMES</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>



## 1 Introduction

AIFO organizational Code of Ethics and Conduct ([Manual of Operational Policies](#), 2020) contains the following anti-discrimination and behavioural ethics policies:

- Gender policy (Section 2, chapter 5)
- Sexual exploitation policy (Section 2, chapter 6)
- Child protection policy (based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). (Section 2, chapter 7)
- Whistle-blower policy (Section 2, chapter 10)
- Rules for humanitarian aid workers on sexual conduct (PSEA-IASC document, Section 2).

Their purpose is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, especially the most vulnerable people, and promote respect for their inherent dignity.

AIFO firmly opposes all forms of corruption and fraud. The organizational Code of Ethics and Conduct, approved by AIFO's Executive Board on 9-10 May 2020, makes reference to the anti-corruption and anti-fraud strategy of the European Commission for the adoption of instruments and procedures to combat corruption, fraud and all forms of bribery in its countries of operation. This guidance document declines the principles spelled out in AIFO Global Anti-Corruption and Whistle-blowing policy to the Liberian context of operations.

Bribery and corruption are present in all countries. They affect the poor and marginalized overwhelmingly, diverting resources intended for the public good and increasing the cost of essential services. They undermine socio-economic growth and hamper good governance and participatory citizenship, discouraging trust in authorities and fellow people.

At AIFO, we require our employees, collaborators and partner organizations<sup>1</sup> to adhere to the highest moral and ethical standards of conduct and abstain from participating in any form of unethical practices, including fraud, corruption and racketeering. Claims that AIFO is in any way associated with bribery and corruption would be detrimental to our reputation and undermine the trust and support we have from our target groups, partners, the general public and donors.

Whistle-blowers play an important role in exposing, both financially and morally, fraud, abuse, illegal use of funds, mismanagement and other misconduct that could undermine our financial and moral reputation. This anti-corruption and whistleblowing policy and procedure encourages workers and other third parties to disclose serious alleged errors within AIFO.

## 2 Application

This policy applies to all employees, directors and other representatives of AIFO in Liberia, including collaborators, contractors, volunteers and all the partner organizations receiving funding from AIFO in Liberia. It must be read, signed and adhered to by all to which it applies. The whistle-blowing section is designed to allow AIFO staff, recipients and the general public, to disclose information that they believe shows malpractice, unethical conduct or illegal practices in AIFO workplace, without being penalised in any way. This includes protecting staff from any detriment or discrimination if they 'blow the whistle on' improper or illegal conduct within the organisation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Limited to partners' organizations receiving funds from AIFO Liberia.



### 3 Objective

The aim of this guidance document is to help AIFO country office in Liberia to act in accordance with AIFO Code of Conduct and maintain the highest possible standards of business practice, while advising individuals / organisations of our zero-tolerance approach to bribery and corruption and of means to reporting malpractice.

### 4 Implementation

In order to ensure that everyone is adequately informed about this policy, the most up-to-date version will be published on AIFO Liberia website and a number of copies will be printed for distribution in the three offices. In order to make the guidelines accessible to persons with disabilities, a short video showing the content of the guidelines will be produced with special arrangements for visually impaired persons and deaf and hard of hearing persons. Awareness to staff will be created through specific training sessions during on-boarding and through refresher sessions to be organised on a yearly basis. Additionally, the staff, collaborators, contractors and volunteers included, is required to sign a copy of this policy committing to act in accordance with such policy while working for AIFO. Target groups' individuals and partner organizations will be informed of our anti-corruption policy through AIFO's media. The aifo.it website has accessibility features for persons with visual and hearing disabilities. Sub-grantees of AIFO in Liberia will also need to sign a written commitment to the policy, and the formal agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) stipulating details of the collaboration with AIFO, will also make explicit reference to the policy.

### 5 Definitions

**Bribery:** an attempt to make someone do something for you by giving the person money, presents, or something else that they want.

**Corruption:** a form of dishonesty or a criminal offense which is undertaken by a person or an organization which is entrusted with a position of authority, in order to acquire illicit benefits or abuse power for one's personal gain.

**Extortion:** the act of getting something, especially money, by force or threats.

**Fraud:** the crime of getting money by deceiving people.

**Misconduct:** dishonest, unacceptable, or improper behaviour by someone in a position of authority or responsibility.

**Mismanagement:** the process of organizing or controlling something incompetently, poorly or wrongly.

**Racketeering:** making money from a dishonest or illegal activity.

**Whistle-blower:** anybody (including a person who works for a company or organization) that tells an authority about something illegal happening within a company or organization.

### 6 Rules of conduct

AIFO's employees, collaborators and partner organizations are prohibited from engaging in wrongdoing of any kind, whether for their own benefit or of third parties (including friends, family, other partner organizations, etc.). In order to prevent corruption and to protect themselves and the organization from penalties and reputational damage, employees, collaborators and partners are requested to observe and apply the rules of conduct below. A specific related statement will be in any



contract. The Manual be made available and, with the signature of the contract, acknowledged that is adhered to.

## **Maintain a Low-Risk Environment**

Maintaining a low risk environment sets out a list of best practices to adopt; including but not limited to:

1. **Transparency.** Maintain transparency with regard to business operations, decision making, and resource allocation so as to allow others to understand AIFO Liberia's decisions and actions.
2. **Documenting.** Document all processes in writing, including decision making and selections. Documentation and archiving are particularly important for recording the provision of services and the execution of financial transactions, and should be promptly uploaded on AIFO Liberia server and cloud (TEAMS). It is forbidden to forge, change, or destroy documents, receipts and any other records. It is as well forbidden to bill non-verifiable services.
3. **Informing.** Informing project participants, target groups and other stakeholders about the contents of this policy, about their rights, and about channels available for them to report violations of this policy.
4. **Reviewing.** potential new partner organisations before an agreement for cooperation is reached or a contract is signed including the measures they take against corruption.
5. **Rejecting.** offers or demands for tangible or intangible advantages and explicitly pointing out that the proposed business practice is contrary to AIFO Liberia's principles.
6. **Avoiding cash transactions.** Keep cash transfers to the bare minimum as they are not traceable. Instead, use mobile money, bank transfers or cheques. Barring exceptions (authorized by AIFO on a case by case basis), cash payments are only allowed for amounts totalling under 500 € (in accordance with AIFO internal procurement procedures). Requests for the purchase of goods and services must be accompanied by a purchase request form for any cost above \$25.
7. **Third-party verification.** For activities and processes considered to be exposed to a high-risk of mismanagement (such as disbursement of scholarships or of start-ups funds), engage a third-party (professional body / independent organization) in the objective assessment and verification of adherence to established set of standards and processes.

## **Provision of Services / Supplies and Grants**

Employees, collaborators and partners must ensure that the allocation and distribution of services, aid supplies and grants to target groups / partners is always free from reciprocal demands and done with utmost transparency.

Target groups and individual beneficiaries must therefore be clearly and adequately informed of the criteria used to:

- select project participants,
- determine the type and amount of aids, supplies and services, including details of residential trainings and meetings
- settle distribution details (times, places, methods, etc.).

Situations in which individuals appear to have complete authority over the procurement, provision, distribution of aid supplies and services are to be avoided. A strict and well-defined separation of roles between financial and managerial functions is observed, also in accordance with AIFO Code of Conduct.



Avenues for discussion with target groups about AIFO's criteria for services and supplies provisions include, but are not limited to, Disabled People Organizations' (DPOs) meetings, Management and Monitoring Committee and County MMC meetings, field monitoring visits, etc.

## **Awarding Contracts**

AIFO employees, collaborators and partners, shall not tolerate bribery by, or on behalf of, a supplier, its workers or sub-contractors.

A written contract between AIFO and all third parties with whom AIFO is engaged in the conduct or promotion of its non-for-profit activities is required. When awarding contracts, employees, collaborators and partners must ensure that decisions are made collegially; for this, an odd-numbered awarding committee is set up. Committee members are entrusted with making decisions solely based on objectively-verifiable criteria (such as price, quality, or performance) and with ensuring that no additional information concerning the details of a contract is discussed on an exclusive basis with individual tenderers.

The selection process must therefore be conducted and documented in accordance with **AIFO Procurement manual and AIFO Code of Ethics and Conduct (Section 4 - Policy on acquisition of goods and services)**. Before a contract is awarded, the integrity of the service provider or supplier must be carefully assessed.

## **Bribery and Corruption**

Under no circumstances whatsoever it is permitted to AIFO employees, collaborators and partners, or anyone acting on AIFO's behalf to offer, promise, authorize or give anything of value to any public official or any business partner in order to gain any improper business advantage of any kind.

Neither AIFO personnel or anyone acting on AIFO's behalf shall, either directly or indirectly through a third party, solicit, request, agree to receive or accept any form of bribe.

## **Facilitation payments**

Unofficial and undocumented facility payments to public officials for the purpose of accelerating routine and/or legitimate functions are forbidden and will be sanctioned.

Employees, collaborators and partners may face situations in which payments must be made to protect themselves and/or others from a direct threat to life, safety, or health. Those who make a payment under severe pressure and threat are required to report the incident to the Country Director/Country Coordinator but need to fear no penalty. The case reported will be investigated by the Country Director who will also inform the Headquarters and follow its guidance.

In other cases, where the threat and consequence will be more disguised or covert, the employee shall contact the line manager for guidance. The situation must be registered with time, names and roles of people involved, requirements and possible pay or items (i.e. scratch cards). The report on registered cases will be reviewed monthly by the Country Director and annually by Headquarters.

No employee or third party will suffer demotion, penalty, or other adverse consequences for refusing to pay bribes or facilitation payments even if it may result in the company losing business.

## **Accepting Donations**

Receiving and/or accepting gifts and donations from business partners / government officials and other third parties is strictly prohibited.



There are, however, circumstances in which rejecting a small gift (from a target community, for example) may be ill-perceived and bear negative consequences. AIFO has arranged a log (**Annex 1**) where employees, collaborators and partners must enter details of the gift received. Gifts are collected at the central office and once a year distributed equally among staffs or projects. Whenever possible, the gift should be put for office / project use.

## ■ Use of Resources

When employees, collaborators and partners receive an asset purchased with funds either managed by or belonging to AIFO (AIFO own funds), they must sign a **Declaration of Asset** form where they declare to understand that the asset(s) is for professional use only, and that they must return the asset(s) to AIFO Liberia upon termination of the project or otherwise indicated in the asset declaration form.

Transfer of projects' asset(s) to partners is normally regulated by a project donor's regulations. AIFO compliance with donors' *rules for assets' transfer to partners* are detailed within the Memorandum of Understanding with each partner.

The personal use of AIFO assets by employees, collaborators and partners is prohibited unless express written consent has been given for that use by the Country Director/Country Coordinator or HQ. The theft of money or other property belonging to the organisation is forbidden and alleged misconducts investigated, as further detailed in this policy.

Employees, collaborators and partners who purchase goods or services from AIFO and/or AIFO's business partners for private purposes must pay the market value and duly document the payment.

## 7 Raising concerns

Anyone with concerns, suspicions or knowledge of incidents regarding violations of this policy is **obligated** to immediately report them to AIFO's Safeguarding Officer following the modalities explained in Chapter 8. Failure to report an incident will also constitute a violation of AIFO's anti-corruption policy.

If in doubt regarding any potential breaches of AIFO's Anti-Corruption Policy, the individual should immediately consult a superior or the Safeguarding Officer.

## ■ Confidentiality of concerns raised

AIFO trusts to provide its staff, collaborators, partners and beneficiaries with a confidential avenue to voice misconduct concerns openly.

All disclosures, whether made by a member of staff, a partner and/or beneficiary, will be treated in a confidential and sensitive manner. As part of this, the identity of the whistle-blower will be kept confidential, as long as maintaining confidentiality does not impede the progresses of an investigation (ex. the person making the disclosure may need to make a statement and / or appear as a witness in court).

## ■ Anonymous disclosures

This policy encourages whistle-blowers to add their name to any disclosure they make. However, anonymous disclosures are also welcome. Concerns expressed anonymously are less powerful and may be more complex to investigate and they will be considered and reviewed at AIFO's discretion, based on the following criteria:

- The seriousness of the issues raised;



- The credibility of the concern;
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

Individuals who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the Safeguarding officer and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality.

## ■ Untrue allegations

Rephrasing: It is not the responsibility of whistle-blowers to conduct investigations, deliver evidence, or determine whether or not corruption took place. Whenever a whistle-blower raises concerns regarding the conduct of a colleague or a partner, AIFO is committed to conduct investigation on that allegation. In case the result of the investigation does not corroborate the allegation, no action will be taken against the whistle-blower, since AIFO assumes that the individual raising concerns is doing it in good faith.

If, however, it becomes clear that an individual is repeatedly making malicious or vexatious allegations with the purpose of blacken someone's name, then action may be taken against the individual, according to the circumstances:

- If a member of staff, the disciplinary action is regulated by AIFO Staff Handbook;
- If staff of a partner's organization, partners' organization disciplinary procedures apply; however, in some cases, AIFO may also choose to terminate the cooperation agreement with the partner;
- If a beneficiary / third party, AIFO could terminate relationship and prepare an internal report for future reference; in extreme cases, AIFO could file a harassment case with the Liberian National Police (LNP).

## ■ Accessibility arrangements

Accessibility arrangements for visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing persons are central for all of AIFO's development projects. Additionally, ensuring a proper channel where this category of people with disabilities can make anonymous disclosures is very paramount for the overall implementation of this policy. Thus, people who are visually impaired or have some visual loss may report information which is usually written down or provided in standard print in an alternative format such as: audio, on CD or as an MP3 file, braille, email or large print. All complaints are treated as highly confidential. Cases will be registered with a number so that follow-up and confidentiality is ensured. However, many visually impaired persons in Liberia cannot read and write. In such a situation, the individual may choose to send a voice complaint. The complainant could also request not to inform a certain person/group of persons.

A person who is deaf or hard of hearing may also need support from a Sign Language Interpreter (with the consent of the complainant). Other channels or formats such as speech-to-text, hearing aid or written information are considered depending on the person's ability. The person may also need information which could be provided in standard print in Sign Language Video format.

It should be noted that the ability of deaf and hard of hearing people in Liberia to file in written information varies considerably and it should not be assumed that having a conversation via written notes is an appropriate way of filing complaints. Communication needs of the complainant must be established in the first instance.





## 8 Procedures for making a disclosure

Any person who has concerns about the behaviour of AIFO staff, volunteers, consultants, trustees, partner organisations, staff seconded from other organisations are required to report it immediately to a senior manager (preferably in written form), who will inform in written form the Safeguarding Officer. If the concern is about the line manager, the Safeguarding Officer can be directly contacted to raise any concerns. If concerns are about the Safeguarding Officer in Liberia, the Chair of the Internal Control Committee (ICC) in Italy can be directly contacted (please refer to the Code of Conduct, Section 2, Complaint and Sanction policy).

### **Safeguarding Officer**

Name: Melany R. Oey

Email address: melany.oey@aifo.it

Telephone number: +231 778507196

### **Internal Control Committee (HQ) Chairperson**

Name: Patrice Simonnet – AIFO Director

Email address: patrice.simonnet@aifo.it

Telephone number: +39 051 439 3201

Mobile number: +393669207275

In case the safeguarding officer and/or the Chairperson are absent, an *ad interim* substitute will be assigned for the period.

### **■ The Safeguarding Officer**

When notified of an alleged misconduct, the Safeguarding officer is required to express his/her opinion on whether the matter is:

- Serious; the allegation would have serious consequences to AIFO's reputation / operation.
- Credible; the allegation is persuading and convincing.
- Feasible to investigate, there are identified means to pursue evidence.

And establish the level of risk associated to the disclosure. Risk (high, medium, low) is identified by assessing the likelihood and impact of:

- Reputational damage;
- Legal liability;
- Sustained damage.

The safeguarding officer will receive guidance on how to make this assessment. Thus, the Safeguarding Officer will report allegations to the Line supervisor in HQ who will consult with the Directorate on the preliminary assessment of the allegation and provide guidance to the Safeguarding Officer.

When the identity of the whistle-blower is known, the Safeguarding officer may contact the individual to discuss their concerns. When disclosing any concerns, whistle-blowers are not expected to have absolute proof of illegal practices, but would need to provide reasons for their concerns.

If assessed by AIFO HQ as high risk allegation as defined above, a consolidated case report will be prepared and shared with AIFO's ICC and the donor informed if that is required by the agreement.



Medium and low risk allegations will be dealt with administratively, according to the due diligence principles and rules.

## 9 Investigation

AIFO's ICC will indicate the appropriate process to determine:

- The nature and scope of the investigation;
- Who will lead the investigation (that person may be external to AIFO)
- The nature of any technical, financial or legal advice that may be required
- A timeframe for the investigation (paying regard to the level of risk)
- Whether any individual(s) under investigation should be suspended, based on the frequency and seriousness of the incident(s) and in accordance with the provisions detailed in AIFO Code of Conduct, Internal Control Policy and sanctions.

In the event that donor funds are allegedly mismanaged/embezzled, AIFO shall, if required, take the appropriate steps to notify the applicable donor agency in accordance with the donor agreement.

AIFO's ICC will also consider the appropriate time to notify the alleged wrongdoer of the investigation, as well as keeping the individual who raised the concern aware of the progresses in the investigation and its likely timeline. The need for confidentiality, however, may prevent AIFO from giving specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. Staff should treat any information concerning the investigation and its outcomes as confidential.

## 10 Possible outcomes

Possible outcomes of the investigation may include:

- No further action;
- Disciplinary action (refer to AIFO country office in Liberia Staff Handbook – termination of contract);
- Termination of cooperation agreements / MOUs / contracts (with sub-grantees and business partners);
- Further investigation by an external authority.

Note that that cases relating to suspected criminal activity, including but not limited to fraud, would be reviewed by AIFO's HQ Directorate and the ICC to decide whether they should be referred to the police or other relevant body.

AIFO Country Director/Country Coordinator in Liberia has the overall responsibility to implement the Anti-Corruption Policy of AIFO's activities in Liberia. The Country Director/Country Coordinator, under the strict guidance of AIFO's HQ line manager and the Directorate, should work in collaboration with the staff to monitor, control and train compliance to the Anti-Corruption Policy; including the establishment of mandatory information sessions for the staff.