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Partos Code of Conduct

april 2019

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Partos Code Of Conduct

2018 version, adopted at the General Meeting of 15 November 2018

Dutch Association of NGOs working in Development Cooperation

Introduction

Partos members are professional organisations from the Netherlands working in the field of development cooperation. With their activities taking place both in the Netherlands and in other countries or on a global level, the organisations pursue the overarching goals of delivering effective development cooperation and achieving an inclusive, peaceful, fair and sustainable society for everybody.

Member organisations aim to bring their structure and processes into line with the values they have defined together, as this helps them to pursue their own objectives in the best possible way. Everything in this Code of Conduct (hereafter: "the Code") has been formulated in the interests of effective development cooperation. The trust society places in the manner in which the organisations affiliated with Partos organise themselves and carry out their activities is also of great significance for both the sector as a whole and for its individual members. A code of conduct reflecting the values on which Partos member organisations wish to base their operations is an essential tool in this respect.

In order to avoid duplication as much as possible, this Code will make, when relevant, explicit reference to other codes, regulations or standards already applicable, or to specific parts of these. Examples of these are the recognition programme for charitable organisations (*Erkenningsregeling Goede Doelen*), the SBF Governance Code (SBF being the organisation for the philanthropic sector), and the Istanbul Principles and their development in the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness.

The current Code, adopted in 2012, has been ratified by the General Meeting and is binding on all existing and new members of the association. In November 2018, the General Meeting adopted a number of important changes to the Code, mostly on the issue of integrity. These changes will become effective on 1 January 2019, and include a transition period of one year.

The Code sets out the values guiding the activities of the Partos member organisations. The guiding principle is: "apply or explain". Under the compliance protocol, the association monitors whether members are open to receiving complaints and giving them serious consideration. Some sections of the Code are dedicated to setting out the criteria which must be met in order to be admitted as a member of Partos. Under the Internal Regulations of the association (*Huishoudelijk Reglement*), the Partos Board of Directors may impose a sanction when a member organisation fails to comply with any one of these criteria (see Compliance Protocol for further details). Of course, the Code also applies to the Partos office.

Note for the reader

The text sets out the norms and common values endorsed by Partos members as the basis for their activities. Further detailed guidance which members should preferably follow in their efforts to comply with the relevant provisions of this Code is provided in some footnotes to the text. This Code does not pretend to fully reflect every aspect of the topics covered.

I. Sustainable Civil Society Development

1. Sustainable positive change

The members of Partos shall:

- a. Operate on the basis of policies aiming to achieve sustainable results from their efforts;
- b. Work, on the basis of their policies, towards cooperation intended to achieve sustainable outcomes and impact;
- c. Serve, above all and in all their activities, the long-term objectives and needs of the groups of people targeted by their interventions. These activities may take place in the geographical region where the target groups are located or, for example, on a global level¹;
- d. Identify any potential negative impact before carrying out their interventions and activities, and do whatever is possible to avoid this negative impact;
- e. Uphold human rights, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, against that background, pay special attention to vulnerable and deprived people in the regions where the organisations are active;
- f. Take gender equality and the rights of women and girls as an important starting point for the development and implementation of policies;

- g. Take ecological sustainability into account in their activities.

2. Local ownership²

The members of Partos shall:

- a. Ensure where possible that their partners are co-owners of programmes and projects, and that objectives and requirements of these partners and the target groups are leading when developing policies and designing the programmes and projects;
- b. Make use, where possible, of existing local structures and expertise in order to strengthen civil society in the countries where the members carry out their operations.

3. Partnerships

Members of Partos shall aim at:

- a. Establishing partnership relationships³ that are based on shared values such as equality, complementarity, mutual respect, trust, autonomy of the organisation and shared long-term goals, solidarity and global citizenship⁴.
- b. Strengthening, individually as well as jointly, the cooperative relationship with other actors involved in development cooperation.

¹ The members will state, in a clear and direct manner, what approach they have adopted, for example the "Rights-Based Approach". The declaration of the UN reads as follows: "A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law."

² The members preferably incorporate the development of capacity (empowering people, organisations and societies to successfully act in

their own interest) as an integral starting point in their development programmes. They facilitate the endogenous development of capacity among their partners by supporting them in their organisational development while taking into account the local and country-specific context as well as issues of ownership and active management of demand.

³ Partners are those people and/or organisations with whom the members collaborate in order to achieve their mutually agreed objectives.

⁴ Global citizenship finds its expression in behaviour which honours the principles of mutual dependency in the world, the equality of all mankind and our shared responsibility for the solution of global problems.

II. Professional organisation

1 Professionalism and Effectiveness

The members of Partos shall:

- a. Use the resources available to them as effectively and efficiently as possible;
- b. Continually work to improve their capability to achieve their mission;
- c. Aim to engage in cooperation transcending organisations where such cooperation increases effectiveness and/or efficiency;
- d. Work, in a visible manner, on the quality⁵ of their organisation and processes, and have these externally assessed on a regular basis;
- e. Monitor and evaluate⁶ their activities and results and do this at least partly on the basis of locally formulated indicators of processes and outcomes;
- f. Adhere, where appropriate, to the general standards for Corporate Social Responsibility⁷.

2 Building and sharing expertise

The members of Partos shall aim:

- a. To be a learning organisation (a learning organisation is an organisation which encourages individual and collective learning at all levels while adopting a methodical approach, and which develops itself continuously as a result);
- b. To encourage learning from experience and the proactive sharing of expertise

with each other and with and between the partner organisations and the various stakeholders, both within and outside the sector.

3 Financial standards

The members of Partos shall adopt the following financial standards as a minimum:

- a. An audit report from an external auditor, which is not an adverse audit opinion, is available and in accordance with the relevant guidelines for annual reporting;
- b. The financial management guidelines for charities (Richtlijn Financieel Beheer Goede Doelen) are followed with regard to the size and management of reserves and the investment policy;
- c. Remuneration of executive directors and board members takes place in accordance with the latest version of the regulations on the remuneration of charity directors (Regeling belonging directeurs van goededoelenorganisaties) by Goede Doelen Nederland. Additionally, the norm for senior government officials set by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs applies as a maximum for all directors, board members and employees;
- d. Each year, they disclose the financial situation by publishing the financial annual accounts.

⁵ Members will preferably use as a guideline Partos 9001, a sector-specific application of ISO 9001 that takes into account the special circumstances of civil society organisations operating in the development cooperation sector.

[https://www.partos.nl/webfm_send/162]

⁶ The frequency and method of evaluation should preferably be appropriate to the nature and scale of

the activities. Where evaluations are used for accountability, they should preferably be carried out by independent professionals.

⁷ The member shall preferably adhere to the OECD Guidelines where applicable.

<http://www.oecd.org/corporate/mne/>

4 Transparency and accountability

For the purpose of transparency and accountability, the members of Partos shall adhere to the following principles:

- a. They take active steps to provide, in understandable language, insight into their objectives, policies, decision-making processes, expenditures, activities, progress, results, evaluations, operations and integrity issues, covering the Netherlands as well as the regions where they carry out their operations;
- b. Their accountability also covers those who constitute the target group of their activities;
- c. They are prepared to engage in consultation and dialogue about their own performance with the relevant social and political groupings.

5 Good employment standards

The members of Partos shall:

- a. Adopt clear guidelines on the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees and volunteers working in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Members will act on the basis of detailed safety and integrity risk assessments with regard to both their own employees and volunteers as well as with regard to other parties towards whom they have a responsibility;
- b. Pursue equal opportunities for staff members by:
 1. acting on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination;
 2. aiming to achieve diversity in the composition of their workforce and in managerial positions.

- d. Ensure that their employees and volunteers are aware of applicable local legislation⁸ and cultural factors that may affect their work, and that they take that knowledge into account in their actions.

6 Good governance

The members of Partos shall:

- a. Pursue active policies with regard to the prevention and combating of fraud and corruption both within their own organisations and in their dealings with the outside world;
- b. Have introduced, in accordance with the SBF Governance Code, a separation between the governance and the supervision of the organisation;
- c. Ensure that a board member or a member of a supervisory body who becomes involved in a conflict of interests will report this to the board or supervisory body on which he or she sits and abstain from taking part in relevant consultation and decision-making processes.

7 Well-functioning integrity system⁹

The members of Partos shall:

- a. Have a Code of Conduct which defines the standards and values of the organisation in a clear and concise manner. The code covers all aspects of integrity, as listed under b) below, and defines what is considered unacceptable behaviour and sets out how potential victims are protected and receive good care. The Code of Conduct is readily accessible and published on the website.

⁸ Where possible and appropriate, members shall comply with all relevant legislation in the countries where they work (including legislation in the areas of social security, health, pensions and tax).

⁹ The practical implementation of the integrity system can be adapted according to the nature and size of the organisation. A principle of 'apply or explain why not' must be observed.

- b. Have an integrity system, including a Code of Conduct, which devotes attention to the following:
 - *Misuse of power or position*
 - Corruption;
 - Conflicts of interests and partiality (e.g. nepotism, favouritism);
 - Manipulation or unauthorised divulgence of information;
 - *Financial violations*
 - Fraud;
 - Misuse or improper use of resources; theft.
 - Tax evasion or asset management/investment policy contrary to the organisational purpose and objectives;
 - *Interpersonal violations*
 - Unwanted intimacy, sexual intimidation and sexual violence;
 - Aggression, discrimination and bullying;
- c. Will translate their Code of Conduct into guidelines and instructions for any people and parties who act on behalf of the organisation (such as service providers and partner organisations);
- d. Will assign overall responsibility for the integrity system to a director or management team member, while assigning relevant supervision to a member of the supervisory body;
- e. Have one or more sufficiently equipped staff members who are engaged in policy formulation, advice and practical implementation of integrity matters;
- f. For the reporting of violations, have in place:
 - A person or unit to whom reports can be submitted in an easily accessible, safe and confidential way by staff, volunteers and other stakeholders;
 - One or more persons of trust;
 - Formal arrangements with an external whistleblowers authority.
- g. Have available capacity and expertise (either in-house or externally) to:
 - Investigate reports ;
 - Advise on proportional disciplinary action/punishment, including possible legal;
 - Advise on appropriate victim support or compensation;
 - Take decisions on measures to be taken and implement them;
 - Advise on appropriate communication about any integrity violations.;
- h. Ensure that all target group, members of staff, volunteers and those acting on behalf of the organisation are aware of the Code of Conduct, guidelines and reporting procedures, and are alert to their proper application;
- i. Identify, at appropriately regular intervals, all relevant integrity risks;
- j. Introduce a moral learning process, to include a system of regular moral deliberations about issues and dilemmas put forward by staff;
- k. Devote a part of the organisation's Annual Report to integrity, and include information about:
 - The manner in which the organisation complies with all above requirements;
 - The number and nature reports about integrity violations and the action taken in response to those reports;
 - Reflection on the organisation's own integrity policy.

III. Communications and fundraising

1 Mutual understanding

The members of Partos shall:

- a. Behave in a comradely fashion in their interactions with other members;
- b. Show respect for each other when approaching the public with the aim of raising funds;
- c. Be willing to participate in mutual consultation regarding common interests;
- d. Hold each other accountable with regard to compliance with this Code;
- e. Make efforts, in both their individual and collective actions, to serve the interests of the sector and promote its public image, so as to promote in turn the effectiveness of development cooperation.

2 Responsible fundraising methods

The members of Partos shall:

- f. Provide full, correct and accessible information about the goals of fundraising;
- g. Show respect to both donors and recipients when fundraising;
- h. Report the costs of activities of which the main aim is fundraising as costs of fundraising, doing so in a transparent manner;
- i. Give priority to fundraising activities of their local partners when these local partners are competing for the same local funds and instruct their offices in

partner countries to give priority to local partners as well;

- j. Be in possession of the approval as required by the recognition programme for charitable organisations (Erkenningsregeling Goede Doelen) if the organisation is raising funds among the Dutch public in an active manner and on a permanent basis (for a minimum of two years). An active manner is understood to be the use of external communication that is focused on raising funds. In the scope of this code, fundraising is understood to be calling on the public's support by raising money from individual donors.¹⁰
- k. Be in possession of an official recognition (under the recognition programme for charitable organisations) when more than 30% of their income comes from fundraising among the public in the Netherlands;
- l. Develop a fundraising policy and make the resulting selection of images and messages on the basis of the following principles¹¹:
 - Respect for the human dignity of the people involved;
 - The equality of all mankind;
 - Acceptance of the necessity to promote solidarity and justice.

3 External publications

The facts, opinions and/or images presented by Partos members shall be based on their

¹⁰ Partos members who are not required to be in possession of the approval are nevertheless invited to subscribe to the recognition programme for charitable organisations.

¹¹ In implementing these principles members shall preferably comply with the Code of Conduct on

Messages and Images as drawn up by Concord, the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs. <https://concordeurope.org/2012/09/27/code-of-conduct-on-images-and-messages/>

own observations or on sources which are known to the member and are regarded as reliable. When establishing the facts of an issue, the principle of hearing both sides of the argument shall be applied. This principle shall also be applied to prevent partiality in

the organisation's external communication. The application of this principle can be overruled when the safety of individual people or organisations is at stake or.