

Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

Malteser International is the Sovereign Order of Malta's international humanitarian relief agency. We stand by those affected by poverty, disease, conflict, and disasters. We put people at the heart of our work, and are committed to serving those in need by helping them to live a healthy life with dignity. As a Catholic organization working in humanitarian aid and development, our work is rooted in Christian values, and is undertaken according to humanitarian principles.

Malteser International has a responsibility to protect the people we aim to support. We have a responsibility to act professionally, respectfully, and with integrity towards partners, authorities, donors, and beneficiaries. All Malteser International staff represent the organization through their work and life: it is therefore essential that they demonstrate their support and commitment to Malteser International's values and principles, and respect Malteser International's nature as a Catholic organization in the conduct of their work.

Malteser International expects its staff to comply with all applicable laws, policies, rules, and regulations as well as to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity, and especially to respect and protect the rights and dignity of all.

The Code of Conduct outlined below is designed to guide all those working with Malteser International by setting out what is considered acceptable professional and ethical behavior. By accepting their appointment all members of staff undertake to discharge their duties in line with the requirements of this Code.

The Code of Conduct forms part of the policies described in Malteser International's *Operational Handbook* and must be included with all country-specific *Staff Rules and Regulations* that are issued.

2. The scope of the code

This Code of Conduct applies to all national, international, full, and part-time staff, as well as to interns, volunteers, and consultants working with Malteser International who for the purpose of this document are all referred to as "staff". It applies wherever Malteser International works, including the organization's headquarters.

Cases in which conditions relating to locally employed staff are at variance with this code must be discussed with the responsible country or program coordinator. The approval of headquarters must be sought where deviations may be thought to be necessary.

3. Implementation of the code

Malteser International's Code of Conduct is to be given and explained to all staff before they begin their assignment. Each member of staff is required to sign an acknowledgement of their commitment to comply with the Code.

Malteser International Human Resources (HR) is responsible for managing and monitoring the application of this Code, and resolving issues that arise under it. In field locations, the country or program coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the provisions of the Code are applied. The Code is designed to act as a guideline, but does not cover every possible situation staff may face. Any situation in which staff members may be in doubt about issues covered under the Code ought to be discussed with the country or program coordinator.

Violations of this Code may have serious implications for Malteser International as an organization as well as for the staff concerned. Violations may result in disciplinary action, dismissal, and claims for compensatory damages. In cases where local law has been breached, Malteser International may report infractions to local authorities, and/or take civil legal action against staff. Disciplinary processes and complaints are to be administered by HR in consultation with the country or program coordinator.

4. Upholding professional ethics, neutrality and impartiality

As a humanitarian and development NGO, Malteser International and its staff are committed to principled, accountable, and high-quality humanitarian action according to the *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability*¹. Furthermore, as an organization working with a focus on health, medical staff are obliged to maintain medical professional ethics.

- **Malteser International staff must work in an ethical manner from a position of neutrality and impartiality, and not practice any discrimination.**

5. Avoiding conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a person must choose between the duties of their work and their private interests. Avoiding conflicts of interest is an overarching principle of fighting against corruption. Conflicts of interest can occur in the context of Malteser International's work and it is important that they are identified and managed effectively. Conflicts of interest may arise in the course of humanitarian and development work when, for example, decisions are taken on the selection of staff, suppliers, service providers, and partner organizations. However, they can also arise when decisions are made regarding the locations where Malteser International will operate, and the staff making these decisions have connections to particular potential beneficiary locations or groups. This may especially be the case when staff and/or their family members hold business interests in a supplier or service provider that Malteser International intends to do business with, when persons related to Malteser International staff are considered for employment, or when staff are affiliated with another organization.

Family in this context is generally to be understood as including first-degree relatives such as parents, children, spouses, siblings, or other close dependents. This definition of family may need to be adjusted

¹ www.corehumanitarianstandard.org

according to the local context. A business interest is assumed when staff or their family manage private businesses, or hold a financial interest in a private business.

- **Malteser International staff are not permitted to authorize contracts or participate in selection or decision-making processes when there is a family or private business relationship that could lead to a conflict of interest.**
- **Staff must give notice to their superior as soon as they find themselves in a situation involving a potential conflict of interest.**
- **Malteser International staff must raise any potential conflicts of interest they may perceive, which have not already been disclosed by the parties involved, to the relevant superior, or by using the established whistleblowing procedure where applicable.**

Where staff fail to disclose a conflict of interest, disciplinary processes may be invoked.

6. Giving and accepting gifts

Malteser International has a responsibility to use resources economically. In order to safeguard independence and impartiality, as a rule Malteser International and its staff must not offer or accept any gifts, including invitations for entertainment or travel. Exceptions from this rule may only be made in the context of local culture and necessity. The giving and acceptance of gifts shall under no circumstances lead to further obligations for Malteser International.

- **Malteser International expects its staff to report and pass on to the organization any gifts that they may in exceptional cases personally accept with a value above the minimum set out in the country specific *Staff Rules and Regulations*.**

In the absence of any country specific rule, a limit of 20 Euro per year, or the equivalent amount in local currency, is set.

7. Preventing fraud and corruption

Corruption threatens good governance, sustainable development, democratic processes, and fair business practices. Fighting corruption helps to build civil society and eliminate social injustice, which is in line with Malteser International's vision to enable people "to lead a healthy life with dignity". Corruption can be defined as "the misuse of entrusted power for private gain". Corruption can take the form of bribery, fraud, embezzlement, and extortion. It has many faces, such as accepting or providing money, goods, or services in order to gain advantages, which may include favorable treatment, special protection, or extra services. Corruption is not exclusively a matter of money. In certain circumstances, providing a person with a job, services, or other favors can also be considered to be corruption.

Malteser International is committed to ensuring that all the resources it receives are used fully for the benefit of those for whom they are intended. Fraud and corruption are harmful to the fulfilment of our

goals, and are not tolerated by Malteser International. The risk of corruption needs to be included in all risk assessments, and preventive measures have to be planned accordingly.

- **Malteser International staff may not use any power or professional status they derive from their work with Malteser International for their own profit or gain. They are required to handle the engagement of staff, the procurement of goods, the delivery of relief items, and the provision of access to relief or development services with due care, in a transparent manner, and avoiding any conflict of interest. This attitude must also encompass a respectful attitude with regard to the rights of those entitled to our services.**
- **Fraud and embezzlement are illegal, and no member of staff may use these methods to gain personal or professional advantage.**
- **It is the responsibility of Malteser International's management and all staff to create a culture of value, trust and fairness, and to actively oppose and prevent corruption.**
- **It is the responsibility of Malteser International's management, staff, partners and stakeholders to raise any suspicion of fraud or corruption through the established whistleblowing system.**

Malteser International has issued a set of guidelines for finance, administration, logistics, personnel, and partner projects to ensure the proper management of accounts, funds, assets, and relief goods, and to prevent fraud and corruption. These are contained in the *Operational Handbook* and must be followed carefully.

8. Preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment

Malteser International is committed to respecting the dignity of all staff and beneficiaries. Working with vulnerable people including children, people with disabilities, women, elderly people, and members of minority groups inevitably brings power imbalances. It is the responsibility of all staff to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment. In order to prevent any abuse of power, Malteser International has adopted the Inter Agency Standing Committee *Core Principles for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation*.² These principles form an integral part of the Malteser International Code of Conduct and are binding on all staff as humanitarian workers:

1. **Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.**
2. **Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.**
3. **Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.**
4. **Any sexual relationship between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefitting from such humanitarian assistance and protection that involves**

²https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/iasc_six_core_principles_relating_to_sexual_exploitation_and_abuse_sept_2019.pdf

improper use of rank or position is prohibited. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.

- 5. Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.**
- 6. Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.**

In order to promote transparency and encourage an environment which prevents sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment **Malteser International managers and supervisors should not enter a sexual relationship with staff they supervise.** Should such a relationship arise, Human Resources must be notified in order to allow supervisory responsibility to be reassigned.

9. Protecting the rights of children

Children are a special group among the most vulnerable people. This means they need to be treated with special care, appreciation, and respect. Malteser International staff and partners are responsible for protecting the rights of children they encounter in the course of their work.

Malteser International will not in any circumstances tolerate the use of violence, including sexual violence, or the abuse of power against children and other vulnerable people. Any response to alleged violations of these rights must give priority to the supposed victims above all other concerns. Every allegation must be adequately investigated. Therefore:

- **Malteser International expects its staff to give special consideration to the impact of its projects and programs on children, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. This should be differentiated by gender.**
- **All staff aware of, or suspecting, instances of violence, sexual violence, exploitation, or the abuse of power against children must report the misconduct or suspected misconduct immediately to their direct superior and to the HQ Human Resources Department, or using the established whistleblowing system.**
- **Malteser International commits to protecting victims by providing or referring them to support services in order to assist their recovery and rehabilitation.**

Malteser International has adopted VENRO's endorsed standard on the rights of Children, which has been incorporated into the operational handbook, and endorses the *OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance* (2019).

10. Use and protection of Malteser International's assets and brand

Malteser International provides assets including vehicles, computers, mobile phones, equipment in offices, and team accommodation, as well as items bearing the Malteser International logo such as staff

clothing, for the use of staff in the fulfilment of the organization's mission. Accordingly, the corresponding guidelines on safety and security must be followed:

- **Malteser International staff must handle all assets with due care, in a manner that ensures no harm is done to Malteser International's reputation. Staff must return all such items received to the organization at the end of their assignment.**
- **Malteser International vehicles may only be used for authorized purposes and driven by authorized staff.**
- **Staff may not use clothing or other items branded with the Malteser International logo for private gain or other advantage.**

11. Use and protection of Malteser International's data and knowledge

Over the years Malteser International has established a significant base of expertise and intellectual property. Malteser International provides its staff access to this knowledge through physical and electronic documents and communication systems. Staff are obliged to protect all Malteser International data, to practice confidentiality, especially of personal and patient data, and to follow the IT and data protection guidelines in force.

- **Staff must secure access to Malteser International information and accounting systems, and protect all data relevant to Malteser International's work.**
- **Staff may not use Malteser International's intellectual property outside of their work at any time during or after the termination of their employment with Malteser International.**
- **Data, especially personal and patient data, must be treated as confidential and may not be used for purposes other than those officially authorized by Malteser International.**

12. Weapons

In some countries, Malteser International works in areas of armed conflict and instability. The presence and carrying of weapons on Malteser International property or by Malteser International staff could severely affect the safety of Malteser International's operations.

- **Weapons are prohibited from any building owned or operated by Malteser International, including team accommodation.**
- **The carrying of weapons on or in Malteser International vehicles is prohibited. Armed civilian and military personnel are not permitted on or in the organization's vehicles. The Malteser International safety and security guidelines are to be followed should armed persons threaten violence if not carried by Malteser International vehicles.**
- **The use of armed guards on Malteser International property must be authorized by Malteser International headquarters.**

13. Alcohol and drugs

To safeguard the safety and security of staff and to prevent damage to Malteser International's property and reputation the use of alcohol and drugs is not permitted in Malteser International offices, warehouses or vehicles. Malteser International offices are non-smoking areas. A limited consumption of alcohol may be permitted by the person responsible for the location on the occasion of celebrations.

- **Malteser International staff are not permitted to work or drive while under the influence of any narcotic substances, legal or illegal, that affect their ability to perform their duties. It is forbidden to bring any such substance to Malteser International offices or warehouses.**

Working under the influence of alcohol or drugs is gross misconduct, and staff found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during work periods will be dealt with in accordance with disciplinary procedures.

14. Public and media relations, and the use of social networks

Malteser International considers good media coverage to be pivotal to the success of its programs. Public awareness of our work is essential to assure support for our goals. It may also affect the safety and security of our staff. Beyond this, we are aware that the public perception of our beneficiaries is shaped partly by how we present them. Malteser International staff should always be aware that whenever they express an opinion in public, this could be interpreted to reflect on the organization as a whole. Therefore:

- **All media communication ought to be undertaken in a responsible, respectful, and transparent manner in accordance with the *PR Guidelines*.**
- **Malteser International staff are obliged to conduct all contact with the media through the communications departments in the relevant Malteser International Regional Headquarters.**
- **When using social media, Malteser International staff are expected to follow the *Social Media Guidelines*.**

This Code of Conduct has been issued by the Secretary General of Malteser International.



Cologne, February 22nd 2021

Clemens Graf von Mirbach-Harff