

# CODE OF CONDUCT

VOLONTARIATO INTERNAZIONALE  
PER LO SVILUPPO



*Insieme, per un mondo possibile*

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Organismo Non Governativo - Onlus • Promosso dal CNOS - Centro Nazionale Opere Salesiane  
Accreditato presso ECOSOC con Special Consultive Status • Associato al DBN - Don Bosco Network

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## Introduction

VIS is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) and a civil society organisation (CSO) operating in the field of international cooperation, established in Italy, in 1986, and sponsored by the CNOS – National Centre of Salesian Works, which – as an organisation made up of lay persons – supports the traditional social commitment of the Salesians in Italy and in the countries of the South of the world, inspired by the preventive system of Don Bosco and the Salesian educational practices. Consistently with its identity and within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000-2015 Agenda) and of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015 – 2030 Agenda) defined by the United Nations, and in front of the situations of injustice that deny fundamental rights to a large part of mankind, VIS aim is to foster a concrete commitment to international solidarity and peace. VIS has the legal status of association with legal personality and is a:

- NGO/CSO officially recognised as such by the Italian Foreign Ministry, and registered with the List of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) kept by the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development under Decree 2016/337/000285/2 dated 04/04/2016, pursuant to art. 26, paragraph 2, of Law 125/2014;
- non-profit organisation (ONLUS), registered with the Registry of ONLUS non-profit organisations kept by the DR Lazio of the Italian Internal Revenue Service, pursuant to art. 32, paragraph 7, of Law 125/2014;
- NGO accredited with *Special Consultative Status* by the *Economic and Social Council* of the United Nations (ECOSOC) with decision no. 226 of 27 July 2009;
- NGO partner of ECHO - European Commission Humanitarian Office: FPA (Framework Partnership Agreement) 2014-305;
- NGO accredited by and/or partner to European and international institutions for the implementation of international development cooperation programmes, and NGO officially recognised by the local Authorities of numerous countries where it operates.

VIS is one of the founding members of the Don Bosco Network, an international network of Salesian-inspired NGOs, of CINI - Coordinamento Italiano Network Internazionali (Italian Coordination of International Networks) and of the Italian Committee for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. Furthermore, VIS is member of ASVIS – Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile, of the FRA - *Fundamental Rights Agency Civil Society Platform* and of the *EU Civil Society Platform Against Trafficking in Human Beings*.

### **Article 1: Purpose of the Code of Conduct and inspiring principles of VIS activities**

1.1 This Code presents the set of values on which VIS grounds its actions and the principles that are of fundamental importance for VIS regular operation, management reliability, credibility and reputation.

1.2 All relations and activities implemented in the name of VIS and/or in its interest and/or, in any case, on its behalf, both internally and externally, shall comply with the provisions of this Code. The compliance with the rules and provisions set out in this Code constitutes an integral and essential part of the contractual obligations arising from any activities and, in particular, from the employment agreements (employees) and other contract arrangements (collaborators or consultants).

1.3 The provisions of this Code exemplify the general duties of diligence and loyalty required of employees under the law (articles 2104 and 2105 of the Italian Civil Code), as well as the duties of fairness and good faith required of any type of collaborator (articles 1175 and 1375 of the Civil Code).

1.4 The Code of Conduct has been developed and approved by the Executive Committee (EC), which is responsible for revising it, also based on the suggestions and observations received from all the Code

recipients, on regulatory developments and any changes to the more widespread national and international procedures, as well as the experience built up in the application thereof.

1.5 This Code shall be brought to the knowledge of all concerned parties through direct dissemination among the principal stakeholders (members, volunteers, workers and collaborators, donors, etc.) and the publication and/or promotion through VIS information channels, according to the specific indications issued by the EC.

1.6 The inspiring principles of VIS activities, and of all the members of its operating structure, regardless of their role, in Italy and developing countries, are set out in the Bylaws of the Organisation and its General Regulations, and are also specified and detailed in the Motions by the General Assembly and, with regard to its operations, in the annual Social Balance.

Consistently with the principle of "*Development of the Whole of Man and of all Men*",<sup>1</sup> VIS conceives development only if it is full and universal, if it recognises all human beings as the bearers of inalienable rights, which, alongside responsibility, accompany them in their meetings and mutual relationships.

Therefore, VIS **vision** foresees a "*a world where every person can fully enjoy their rights and participate with dignity and actively in the life of the community contributing in its development*". The commitment is towards those most in need, the poorest, where poverty is seen primarily as a lack of opportunity. And, among those living in situations of difficulty and exclusion, VIS has a special focus on the most vulnerable children and young people, according to the charisma of Don Bosco.

This vision has prompted the Organisation to adopt an approach aimed at broadening individual and social capabilities, for the twofold purpose of building and/or strengthening the empowerment capacities of the rights-holders, with respect to their fundamental rights, and the accountability aptitudes of the duty-bearers, with regard to the fulfilment of their duties, according to the principle of responsibility. Therefore, VIS **mission** is to "*promote the development and broaden the capabilities of each person – as individual and as member of a community – with particular attention to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, providing them educational, training and work opportunities together with the means for the promotion and protection of their rights*".

Briefly, VIS in developing countries, operates through international cooperation programmes, primarily with an integrated approach, to:

- Education, training, care and support for vulnerable children, adolescents and young people at risk of social exclusion;
- ensure vocational training, labour market inclusion and social reintegration of young people;
- human rights promotion, especially of children, adolescents and women;
- foster the development of the local communities, supporting the local educational structures, the training of the local teachers and managers, the development of the youth entrepreneurship;
- ensure that any projects carried out in the aftermath of an emergency (conflict or natural disaster), in areas where the NGO already operates, or at the request of the local partners, do not run out once the emergency is ended (the so-called relief and first emergency), but become part of a medium-to-long-term human and sustainable development framework;
- foster a vision of migration and relevant issues, grounded on human rights, namely, the protection and promotion of the freedom and right of each person to enjoy a life in dignity in any part of the world, by either building and developing his/her life in his/her country of origin, or developing a personal safe and successful migration project. For this reason VIS envisages – in a contextual and complementary manner – the duty based on solidarity of welcome, promotion and inclusion of migrants and refugees in our societies, and the duty to cooperation development and human rights promotion in the countries of origin and transit, as a means of building opportunities for local development;
- broaden access to information and training through new technologies;

<sup>1</sup> Cf.: Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio*, 1967.

- ensure sustainable and eco-friendly development, in particular by fostering biodiversity and encouraging the use of renewable energy sources.

In Italy and across Europe, VIS has the following priorities:

- raise public awareness on solidarity and international cooperation issues;
- foster international volunteering activities to be implemented with educational professionalism and focusing on the person, in order to promote human and sustainable development;
- training through different and innovative methods, on international cooperation and human rights issues and topics;
- implementation of advocacy activities aimed at raising awareness and influencing the institutions, which, at various levels, with their actions and decisions, are capable of affecting the quantity, quality and effectiveness of international cooperation and the struggle against poverty, the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents and the quality of education.

1.7 In performing its co-operation activities and in particular its humanitarian actions, VIS operates exclusively with the aim of protecting and promoting the fundamental rights of beneficiaries and communities, as an independent, unbiased and neutral organization, in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination (with regard to religion, race, gender, culture, political and social opinions), encouraging instead respect for diversity, difference and pluralism. In this respect and to this end, VIS adheres to the principles and fundamental contents stated in the following international acts and documents and binds itself to both putting them into practice in all its programmes and ensuring their diffusion and understanding among all its workers and operators:

- a) The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid;
- b) Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief;
- c) Sphere Standards.

1.8 VIS is committed to fostering and abiding by the internationally recognised principles of efficiency, transparency and accountability. This commitment refers to both VIS internal organisation and its external interventions and, therefore, to the relationships and actions that the Organisation carries out in the implementation of its activities.

VIS undertakes to comply with these criteria with all its stakeholders involved, in various capacities, in its activities.

1.9 VIS guarantees to its partners and its key stakeholders a transparent management and information with regard to its donors; it recognizes the need to account for its actions, both financially and in terms of the efficacy of its interventions, and views the donor's contribution as essential to achieve its mission and attain its planned objectives.

1.10 VIS has adopted the generally accepted standards of technical accuracy and honesty in the presentation and independent interpretation of data, studies and researches.

1.11 VIS guarantees that all its co-operation to development activities and emergency interventions shall always respect the environment of involved local communities. All its actions always aim at guaranteeing the respect and conservation of the environment of the target-sites, both at headquarters level and on the field. To this respect, we bind ourselves :

- to respect high standards of environmental compatibility in all our procurement operations as well as in the management of wastes;
- to give early warning to all directly or indirectly involved persons in case of risk for the environment at community or beneficiaries level;
- to consider the environmental aspects of activities and conduct in the Annual Report.

1.12 The policies for the collection, management, provision and use of VIS financial resources are inspired by the principle of the “direct and indirect moral responsibility” and are consistent with VIS commitment to contribute to the development of an ethical economy and finance. Therefore, both in fundraising and management of the financial resources, VIS adopts the following fundamental ethical criteria in assessing funding entities, donors and third parties involved in the management of the funds raised and nature of the operations/activities carried out temporarily or definitely:

- a) Involvement in development, production and sale of arms.
- b) Incitement to alcohol and tobacco abuse and gambling.
- c) Violence against human life.
- d) Human rights violations.
- e) Children rights violations.
- f) Violation of labour rights as indicated in the ILO Conventions.
- g) Complicity in the injustices committed by governments.
- h) Abuse of natural resources and damages to the natural environment.
- i) Fraud, money laundering, corruption and other illegal activities.
- j) Failure in respecting the principles of legality and transparency.
- k) Irresponsible behaviour in marketing and sales.
- l) Involvement in the pornographic industry.

In particular, relationships cannot be established with companies or foundations of their direct enactment and control, as well as with entities, institutions, associations, committees and any other association or not, with the aim of raising funds, whose fundamental characteristics, identified on the basis of official institutional and social documents (such as statutes, regulations, directives, official missions, reports of the BoDs, etc.) are themselves and obviously incompatible with the aforementioned ethical principles.

In any case, relationships cannot be established that:

- condition VIS independence;
- involve the risk of an effective and obvious exploitation of the institutional purposes of the organization with respect to commercial or profit-making purposes.

The EC decides on the establishment of these relationships by resolution which must in any case indicate the reasons for such decision. A summary of the decisions taken must be presented annually by the President to the General Assembly, which, in specific cases, may request that the full text of the resolution and investigation be made known to him.

If, even in the presence of a positive compatibility screening conducted according to the criteria specified above, information or news emerge, via internet or other communication means, of possible behaviours on behalf of the partners which may even be potentially in conflict with said criteria, the General Assembly will proceed to an evaluation on the existence of reasonable guarantees of compliance with the ethical criteria adopted and/or on the profiles of a high risk for the image and credibility of the NGO and take the relevant decision, also giving indications about specific directives and/or conditions to which any eventual agreement must be subject.

In any case, the obligation to comply with the provisions of this Code on the relationships established and on the subject of consequent sanctions should be respected, should news and information subsequently emerge regarding possible behaviours of the partners, unrelated to the relationship with VIS but incompatible with the aforementioned ethical criteria, it will be necessary to proceed with a new evaluation on behalf of the General Assembly in the terms indicated above.

1.13 Consistently with its mission, and strictly bound to its institutional aims, VIS activities for fund raising and management shall be always and in any case carried out exclusively for the benefit of the beneficiaries of the institutional activities and for the purpose of improving the operational capacities of the NGO.

1.14 The economic and financial sustainability of the organization and of its structure are a key and necessary value for ensuring the continuity, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of its interventions. However, in any case, the value of the sustainability should in no way bring VIS recipients and partners to breach the principles set out in this Code, for the purpose of obtaining good economic results.

## **Article 2: Circulation of the Code of Conduct**

2.1 This Code of Conduct applies to the following “recipients”:

- members of all VIS corporate bodies, such as: Executive Committee, General Assembly, Volunteer Participants Assembly, President, Vice President, Board of Auditors;
- Members of the Territorial Presidia;
- Executives of the organization;
- Employees, collaborators, consultants and all persons working/operating with VIS on a pro-tempore basis, in compliance of their professional autonomy and in relation to the implemented interventions, wherever they work, both in Italy and overseas.

The Code of Conduct also applies to the “implementing partners”, in Italy and in the target countries, as well as to suppliers, contractors and third parties involved in the implementation of institutional activities for various reasons.

2.2 VIS – if necessary – shall designate specific internal functions to circulate this Code among all the above mentioned recipients, as well as:

- a) interpret and clarify the provisions herein, also based on reports received from the Supervisory Body (OdV), with regard to the convenience of said actions;
- b) verify the effective compliance thereof;
- c) adopt any measures regarding the remedy of any breaches of the provisions herein, which shall constitute disciplinary breaches.

Also in compliance with the provisions established by the main institutional donors, VIS will provide to publish this Code of Conduct on its website, [www.volint.it](http://www.volint.it) and also make it available in the main vehicular languages. Contractual relations and/or agreements of a various nature signed in Italy and overseas by the NGO may also defer and/or make reference to such link.

## **Article 3: Prohibition to engage in behaviour in breach of the Code of Conduct**

3.1 The pursuit of VIS interests can never justify engaging in behaviours in breach of the applicable national and international laws, the provisions of the Organisational Model and of this Code of Conduct, of the contracts concluded by VIS, of its Bylaws and internal regulations and of all the other rules and regulations applicable to the people operating within VIS.

3.2 The recipients of this Code are prohibited from acting in such a way as to damage human dignity, wherever they may be and in all relations they enter into with the organisation, as well as the credibility and reputation of VIS, regardless of the criminal liability entailed by this behaviour, which shall be considered even more serious if engaged in by senior staff members (i.e. people exercising a certain degree of power, recognised as such, and in a position of authority within the Organisation, within the framework of a collaboration or “subordinated” employment relationship). If the conduct and, indeed, the behaviour engaged in breaches the legal norms, statutes and standards in force in the countries in which the NGO operates, these shall, of course, be considered as extremely serious.

In particular, the following prohibitions are considered essential:

- prohibition to use alcohol or narcotics: it is forbidden to use and/or supply alcohol, narcotic substances or similar substances, during work and, generally speaking at the workplace, in Italy and at the offices abroad;

- prohibition to possess pornographic materials: it is strictly forbidden to possess and/or share pornographic material, on paper or in electronic format, in the premises, warehouses, areas or any other appurtenances – none excepted – of the NGO and its partners, via website, email addresses or any other publication whatsoever;
- explicit and implicit prohibition to request sexual favours, either for money or in kind: it is strictly forbidden to request sexual favours, either for money or in kind, either at the workplace or in any other similar location, or, in any case, in any location where engaging in such conduct could harm the dignity of the recipient and damage the creditability and reputation of the organisation.

Finally, it is forbidden to exercise any form of pressure on any person called to make statements before the judicial authorities, for the purpose of preventing or (falsely) altering his or her testimony. It is also forbidden to assist any persons who have committed a criminal offence, to escape investigations by the police and judicial authorities or prevent the searches and investigations carried out by the said authorities.

3.3 VIS has a “**zero tolerance**” policy with regard to the abuse and exploitation of people, especially children and the beneficiaries of its interventions and is committed to ensuring that all its workers and collaborators, visitors, assignees, suppliers, sub-contractors and implementing partners operate in the observance and protection of fundamental human rights and human dignity. For this reason, the following constitute essential and mandatory principles:

- i. Abuse and sexual exploitation perpetrated in any way by human operators constitute extremely serious acts of misconduct, constituting, per se, a ground for terminating the working relationship. Furthermore, such acts shall be reported to the competent authorities, both local and international, so that they are pursued and punished.
- ii. Sexual activity with children and young people (namely persons under 18) is forbidden regardless of which age is considered as “adult” or “the age of consent” at local level. An incorrect conviction regarding the age of a child/youth does not constitute defence. As regards Italian citizens, it is pointed out that sexual activity performed with children is punished by law regardless of the country in which the crime is committed.
- iii. Forbidden are: any form of exchange of money, work, goods or services for sex, as also sexual favours or other forms of humiliation and degradation from exploitation. This also includes the assistance due to the beneficiaries in exchange for sex.
- iv. Sexual relations between humanitarian operators and beneficiaries of the interventions are in any case forbidden inasmuch as based on conditions of intrinsically unequal conditions of will/power.
- v. If a humanitarian operator has concerns or suspicions of sexual abuse or forms of exploitation by a work colleague, whether they belong to the same organisation or not, they must report such concerns or suspicions as a matter of urgency, following the whistleblowing procedures for reporting offences (ref. related article in the Code of Conduct) as formalised in the VIS Management System.
- vi. All the humanitarian operators are obliged to create and uphold an environment that avoids risks of sexual exploitation and all forms of abuse, as well as promoting the application of the contents of this Code of Conduct. Executives and managers, at every level, are specifically responsible for supporting and developing systems that guarantee this type of environment.
- vii. VIS workers and collaborators, as also every other party acting in the context of the institutional activities of the NGO (e.g. partners, suppliers, interns, etc.) cannot:
  - punish and/or chastise beneficiary children in any way;
  - adopt conduct aimed at discrediting, humiliating, diminishing or degrading the dignity of children or in any case perpetrate any form of physical and/or emotional abuse.
  - Use inappropriate language or are adopt behaviour that is harassing, offensive, sexually provocative or degrading in the presence of children;
  - discriminate or exhibit substantially differentiated and unequal treatment or that which favours certain children over others.



- viii. If VIS operators and collaborators ascertain or have suspicions of behaviors held by representatives or collaborators of international or local partners that may constitute hypotheses of abuse, harassment and exploitation, they must urgently report these to the OdV through the whistleblowing procedure. The proven documents resulting from the investigation conducted by the OdV will be brought to the attention of the EC so that the characteristics of the relationships with the partner specifically involved in the case are also assessed. The EC may also involve the General Assembly in the evaluation.

#### **Article 4: Obligations of diligence, loyalty and compliance with the Salesian inspiration**

4.1 The quality and strength of the Organisation are the result of the efforts and commitment of all the staff. Everyone being directly responsible for the actions carried out in the exercise of one's functions.

4.2 Each staff member is obliged to abide by his/her duties with diligence and honesty, and to respect and protect the property and assets of the Organisation by adopting a responsible behaviour, consistently with the internal and disciplinary rules, this Code, the law and collective bargaining.

4.3 Each staff member should also be aware of the Salesian inspiration of VIS and, consequently, to adopt a behaviour, at work and elsewhere, that is consistent with this inspiration, in the execution of his/her functions.

4.4 VIS staff members and collaborators shall abstain from directly or indirectly participating in the activities of secret associations or associations or organisations of a criminal or terrorist nature, or which pursue political ends through actions of a military nature.

4.5 The staff members who collaborate with VIS in any position, abiding by the principles of communion and sharing between Salesians and lay persons, according to the spirit and mission of Don Bosco,<sup>2</sup> shall abstain from practising, suggesting, carrying out, allowing or tolerating, in connection with the activities of the NGO in Italy or abroad, lifestyles and conducts that do not conform to the inspiring Christian values and ethical values, or which contrast with the dignity of human life and persons, or their rights.

4.6 Each recipient and/or person involved in VIS activities and projects, in Italy and developing countries, without distinction of race, gender, religious belief, political opinion or social condition, must be treated with respect and dignity; no one shall be subjected to physical, sexual, psychological or verbal harassment or abuse.

#### **Article 5: Human resources and fundamental rules on work at VIS**

5.1 Apart from that established under articles 2 and 3, with reference of human resources employed by the organisation, it is more specifically pointed out that VIS shall not make use of forced or other bonded labour.

5.2 VIS shall not employ workers aged below the minimum legal age of employment established to protect children and adolescents.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf.: *Salesiani e laici: comunione e condivisione nello spirito e nella missione di Don Bosco: documenti del capitolo generale 24 della Società di San Francesco di Sales*, Proceedings of the General Council of the Salesian Society of San Giovanni Bosco, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, Roma, 1996.

5.3 Each staff member employed at VIS shall be treated with respect and dignity and shall not suffer any physical, sexual, psychological or verbal harassment or abuse.

5.4 VIS employees and collaborators shall be hired under regular employment contracts and no form of illegal labour, or labour in violation of the applicable employment, tax and social security regulations, shall be tolerated.

5.5 VIS considers its human resources as one of the key factors for its success, both institutionally and from an organisational/operational point of view. All employees should be made aware of the regulations governing their functions and of the ensuing conduct required, as well as of their rights and of the opportunities for growth, though also of the duties and obligations implied in their working relationship.

In particular, employees are entitled to:

- exercise the functions for which they are qualified, even though they could be assigned to another function, taking into account the operational requirements and in accordance with the applicable laws and national collective agreements;
- the pay and work conditions set out in the applicable laws and the relevant collective agreements and industry-wide and individual employment contracts;
- the protection of health and safety at work, in accordance with the applicable regulations;
- legal assistance, in the cases provided by the applicable collective agreements and individual employment contracts.

5.6 VIS offers all its employees and collaborators the same opportunities, based on merit and in accordance with the principle of equality, and allows everyone to develop their skills, capacities and competences, implementing training programmes and/or refresher courses, consistently with the contingent possibilities and conditions.

5.7 On the basis of the applicable collective agreements and industry-wide/individual employment contracts, besides the civil code provisions and the law, employees and collaborators have specific duties. They must act loyally and conscientiously in complying with these obligations, abiding by the behaviour set out in this Code, with respect to the required services. In particular, the collaborators must:

- know and comply with the applicable regulations, processes, procedures and guidelines of the Organisation, as well as the principles set out in this Code;
- observe the provisions and instructions issued by the Management of the NGO;
- comply with the applicable health and safety at work regulations;
- suitably collaborate with their colleagues and managers, notifying all the information and engaging in the necessary conduct for operating efficiently in the performance of their tasks and the pursuit of the common goals;
- engage in a conduct and use language and clothing suited to the work environment;
- acquire the necessary professional skills for performing their activities and maintaining, throughout the term of employment, an adequate level of knowledge and experience, constantly updating their preparation and attending any proposed refresher or requalification courses organised by the Organisation.

5.8 The relationship between VIS collaborators and/or employees shall be based on civilised co-existence, transparency, trust and integrity, with mutual respect and ensuring the protection of personal rights and freedoms. Relations between the different positions within the Organisation shall be based on the principles of loyalty and fairness and shall be inspired by the principle of shared responsibility, with the common objective of pursuing the interests of the Organisation and working together to achieve its ends.

5.9 The persons in charge of the single activity shall exercise the powers received, respecting and ensuring the dignity of their collaborators and fostering their professional development.

5.10 It is strictly forbidden to engage in any conduct, in Italy and in the developing countries, such as to directly or indirectly entail offence, disparagement for reasons of race, religion, language, sex, nationality, origin, or which entails any form of discrimination.

5.11 VIS, as part of the project activities carried out in developing countries, undertakes to preferentially employ and professionally valorise the local human resources, with no discrimination, in accordance with the applicable labour laws in the country in which it operates, ensuring, in any case, respect of the international labour protection standards.

## **Article 6: Working conditions of VIS employees**

6.1 Protecting working conditions is considered a primary value by VIS, which – in the course of its operations - is obliged to adopt the measures that, based on the particularity of the work, the experience and the technique, are required to protect the physical integrity and moral personality of the workers and collaborators, including any volunteers, based on a risk assessment and with regard to the health and safety and security of the workers, for the purpose of removing the said risks, or at least minimising the impact thereof, based on the knowledge acquired and the technical progress attained. In the case of volunteers and operators present in developing countries, the evaluation of the working conditions and of the security risks is carried out taking into account both the generally accepted and internationally adopted standards in the field of non-governmental cooperation, and the specific characteristics and peculiarities of the local contexts.

6.2 VIS guarantees working conditions that are respectful of the dignity of the person and the principle of fair remuneration.

6.3 All the persons responsible for performing and carrying out the activities and operations of the Organisation are also responsible for adopting the measures set out and specified in the preceding paragraphs, within their duties and attributions.

## **Article 7: Relations with public officials, identification and management of contractors, relationship with the partners**

7.1 The employees of VIS shall not promise or pay sums of money or other goods in kind, whatever their value, or grant any other benefit, to Italian or foreign public officials in order to promote or favour the interests of the Organisation, also as a result of any illegal pressure being applied.

7.2 Other forms of aid or contributions, such as sponsorships, advertising, job positions, consultancy services and the like, are also forbidden, if they likewise pursue the same forbidden purposes, where elusive of the provisions referred to in the preceding paragraph.

7.3 Whoever expressly or implicitly receives the benefits referred to in the preceding paragraphs from any public officials shall immediately suspend all relations with the applicant and promptly inform his/her line manager and, in any case, the OdV to this effect.

7.4 VIS shall select its contractors through specific procedures, which must be transparent, certain and non-discriminatory, using criteria that take into account the competitiveness of the services and products provided, as well as their quality. Therefore, VIS adopts the relevant procedures, to be implemented in Italy and in the countries where the NGO operates, possibly adapting them to the more restrictive procurement procedures provided by the institutional donors or local Authorities.

7.5 All VIS employees are prohibited from accepting benefits of any kind from suppliers, for the purpose of either unduly influencing their manner of operation or even only appearing to pursue this aim.

7.6 VIS selects and recruits its consultants with absolute impartiality, autonomy and independence of judgement and requests them to comply with the principles set out in this Code. The written form is mandatory for all relations with companies and liberal professionals, based on a contract or engagement with mutual undertakings, signed by both parties. The contract and letter of engagement must clearly and specifically indicate the costs and other charges related to the service.

Each contract/engagement letter must also include a clause in which VIS informs the contractor about the provisions set out in this Code of Conduct, in Legislative Decree 231/2001 and the need to abide by those provisions.

Each VIS employee involved in the performance of the contract must monitor the results of the consultancy services provided, keep the relevant documents and report any changes or discrepancies, with respect to the original contract, to his/her supervisor or, if a risk is involved, pursuant to Legislative Decree 231/01, to the OdV.

7.7 It is forbidden for any VIS employees to engage in the following further behaviour, in respect of relations with the Public Administration (PA):

- to perform services for external parties linked in any way to the NGO, such as consultants, partners and collaborators in general, which are not adequately justified by contractual relations, or in relation to the type of engagement to carry out and the local practises;
- to propose business opportunities that could benefit PA employees personally or accord other advantages or benefits of any kind (promises of hiring, etc.) in favour of representatives of the PA, or any other parties related to them;
- to make donations in cash and gifts to public officials, or to receive them outside of the generally accepted practices. In particular, it is forbidden to make any kind of gift to Italian or foreign public officials, or to their family members, such as to influence their discretionary powers of independence of judgement, or to induce them to ensure any form of advantage or benefit for VIS. The gifts allowed shall always be of limited value and shall be given solely for the purpose of promoting the "reputation and credibility of the Organisation". All the gifts offered – except those of limited value – shall be suitably recorded and documented, in order to enable the SB to make the necessary checks;
- to communicate to the PA any untruthful data or information, and to prepare false or counterfeit documents and to omit the information that should actually be provided;
- to violate the information systems of the PA, for the purpose of obtaining or manipulating any information to the advantage of the Organisation.

7.8 VIS deems it fundamental and strategic to carry out its core activities and operations in collaboration with its Italian and international partners.

When selecting and handling relations with its partners, VIS operates in such a manner as to ensure overall and comprehensive consistency with its vision, mission and principles, in such a manner as to prevent any particularly favourable or, indeed, unfavourable conditions, with regard to the implementation of a project. This Code of Code is thereby circulated among partners in Italy and overseas to this end and the following aspects are assessed with reference to the latter:

- the partners should always inspire their activities to ethical principles that are equal, comparable or at least consistent with those of VIS;
- the partners must be well-known in the project area and must be recognised as possessing the necessary skills and professional competences for participating in the implementation of the projects;
- the partners must ensure administrative and accounting transparency and always comply with the local employment laws;
- the partners must abide by the obligations undertaken with VIS, under specific "*MoU – Memorandums of Understanding*" or "*Partnership Agreements*" and must not prevent the proper and regular

execution of a project. If a partner acts in such a manner as to violate the principles of this Code, the occurrence must be immediately reported to the EC and the SB.

#### **Article 8: Relations with funders and donors**

8.1 VIP accepts public and private donations for the purpose of carrying out its activities in Italy and elsewhere. All communications with the single donors and the general public must be open and transparent, to enable them to finance the Organisation in a knowledgeable and, as far as possible, focused way. Where donors do not specifically manage their donations, these shall be seen as an institutional support to the Organisation and, therefore, used exclusive for the attainment of its mission and the performance of the related operations.

8.2 In relations with its donors, VIS shall not make untrue representations, for the purpose of obtaining public funds, contributions or financing.

8.3 It is forbidden to allocate sums received as funds, contributions or financing from the above mentioned parties for purposes other than those for which they were originally granted, except if it becomes impossible to pursue the purposes established by the private donors, subject to a decision by the Executive Committee and subsequent notification of the donors concerned.

8.4 In particular, VIS undertakes, with regards to its donors and financers, to:

- provide, in accordance with the applicable privacy regulations, adequate information on its operations, as well as to all its stakeholders: financers, donors, supporters and partners;
- provide truthful information, with regard to the purpose and aims of its projects, ensuring first and foremost respect for the dignity of each person;
- be aware and responsible for all the fundraising and communication actions, including those delegated to or carried out by third parties;
- keep suitable and transparent accounts and management and control procedures, in accordance with the applicable regulations and any certifications;
- struggle against corruption and illegitimate favours within the Organisation and/or by external parties;
- appoint independent entities, with proven experience, to audit its financial statements, which must be made available at the head office and publicised according to the applicable procedures and consistently with the generally accepted and implemented transparency and accountability criteria.

#### **Article 9: Rules for the use of goods, web and electronic devices**

9.1 VIS employees are directly and personally responsible for protecting and preserving the Organisation's property entrusted to them for the performance of their tasks and duties, and to use the property in accordance with the rules on the preservation and protection of property and with the other applicable regulations.

9.2 The Internet connection, telephones, fax, email and video-recording devices should be used for the time that is strictly necessary and for work purposes only, as also personal mobile phones during working hours.

9.3 VIS employees shall not directly install any software or applications in their computers, or duplicate or remove any software installed there, except as authorised by the President or if expressly delegated by the technical manager.

9.4 It is forbidden to use the Organisation's computers, fax, printers and photocopiers for personal purposes.

9.5 The employees who are allowed to access the VIS intranet or the Internet, and, therefore, the email accounts as well, are forbidden from: a) downloading software or music files or saving files in the intranet that are unrelated to the performance of their duties; b) using the email accounts or other web services for personal purposes, unless they are authorised in writing, and corresponding with minors without the written authorisation of the said minors' parents or guardians; c) engaging in activities aimed at concealing their use of email accounts and the Internet from any controls – including occasional and sporadic controls – carried out by VIS in accordance with the law, whether collective or aimed at controlling individual persons or workstations; d) carrying out and performing activities aimed at preventing the continuity of operations by using email accounts and the Internet, in the case of their absence.

9.6 VIS employees must allow other persons to access any emails addressed to them, if they are absent for any reason and if it becomes necessary to learn the contents of the said emails for work-related purposes. In this case, they may designate beforehand another employee to access their email account and forward any email messages deemed relevant for work purposes to the management.

#### **Article 10: Use and protection of information**

10.1 The knowledge developed and built up by the Organisation is a key resource that all the recipients of the Code are committed to protecting. All the recipients of this Code of Conduct are therefore obliged to ensure maximum confidentiality with regard to the information managed by them in connection with their work activities.

10.2 Therefore, the recipients are obliged not to reveal to any third parties the information relating to the Organisation's wealth of project-related, technical and financial information, and any other undisclosed information, except if required by the law or by any internal regulations.

10.3 In connection with its operations in Italy and elsewhere, VIS collects a significant amount of personal data, relating to its donors, supporters and beneficiaries, which it is committed to treating and processing in accordance with the applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations, in the countries in which it operates, and with the best accepted confidentiality protection practices. Therefore, VIS guarantees a high standard of security in the selection and use of its information technology systems dedicated to the treatment of personal data and confidential information, according to the applicable privacy regulations.

10.4 VIS places data and information at the basis of its management system, which was reviewed following the entry into force of Regulation 679/2016 (*General Data Protection Regulation*) within the European territory, a specific Policy for the Protection of Personal Data, which constitutes the fundamental assumption of commitment by the entity respect to all the stakeholders of its Privacy system (users, workers, collaborators and supervisors, suppliers, Guarantor, etc.). In particular, VIS is committed, in relation to all the interested parties, to observe a series of behaviours with regard to the protection of person data, which are mainly specified in Organisational Model 231/2001 and in documents pertaining to the related processing, to which this Code of Conduct refers, both for further information and the concrete implementation thereof.

## **Article 11: Relations with the press and with other mass media**

11.1 VIS interacts with the press and other mass communication media exclusively through its governance bodies and its designated officials, who operate in accordance with the principles of fairness, availability and transparency, in accordance with a communication policy inspired by the truthfulness, non-violence and the respect of personal rights and dignity.

11.2 In any case, the information and communications relating to the Organisation and disclosed by it to the outside world shall be accurate, truthful, complete, transparent and consistent with the principles set out herein.

11.3 In particular, and with regard to the communication processes, VIS undertakes to:

- ensure the proper use of the images of minors and of any sensitive information, using them only in accordance with its statutory mission;
- communicate and promote, in its communication activities and its awareness and fund-raising campaigns, objective information and knowledge regarding the situation of the countries in which it operates, without operating any discrimination based on gender, race, religion or other form of discrimination, and without ever using the information and images it collects, for this purpose and in connection with its activities, in a distorted manner;
- be always open and willing to discuss its policies, and the manner in which it implements its projects, with its grassroots and the other stakeholders;
- adequately communicate, internally, with its members, supporters, collaborators and volunteers, with regard to its strategies, programmes and any other information useful for ensuring their effective participation in and development of the Organisation's activities.

## **Article 12: No conflicts of interest**

12.1 The recipients of this Code, when exercising their functions – at whatever level – shall not take any decisions or carry out any activities that could be in conflict of interest with the Organisation, or inconsistent with its mission and/or values. Any situation occurring in breach of this rule shall be immediately reported to the General Assembly. In this case, the party concerned shall abstain from participating in any discussions relating to and assessments of his/her operations.

Furthermore, any conflicts of interest should be avoided between the companies, and personal and family interests, and the activities carried out within the NGO. Finally, as detailed below, no recipient may obtain personal benefits from the activities carried out in the name and/or on behalf of the Organisation.

12.2 Anyone is prohibited from using information acquired in connection with the performance of his/her duties and functions, for purposes other than work-related purposes.

12.3 Any legitimately disclosed information must always be complete, transparent, comprehensible and accurate.

12.4 In the performance of any of its activities, the Organisation shall operate in such a manner as to avoid engaging in any conflict of interest situations, whether real or potential, and it requires all its employees and resources to act likewise.

12.5 Potential conflict of interest situations include those in which a VIS employee operates also for the purpose of pursuing an interest other than that of the Organisation and of the beneficiaries of its activities, for a personal advantage. Where situations of potential conflict of interest may arise, a VIS employee shall be obliged to report the situation to his/her line manager to resolve the issue.

### **Article 13: Information to the Supervisory Body (OdV)**

13.1 The OdV must be informed – by means of specific reports, by the managers, officers, employees, consultants, suppliers or other collaborators and by all the recipients of this Code of Conduct– of any events, actions or omissions that could involve the responsibilities referred to in Legislative Decree 231/2001.

13.2 This Code of Conduct transposes and implements article 2 of law 30 November 2017, no. 179, which regulates the exercise of whistleblowing in the private sector. Apart from the indicated law, the Code considers the indications contained in the following authoritative documents, adopted as a model of reference given that they are the best practices of reference available on the matter:

- Explanatory Note on whistleblowing approved in January 2018 by Confindustria;
- Guidelines on Transparency International Italy for the preparation of procedures on the matter of whistleblowing;
- ANAC (Autorità Nazionale Anti-Corruzione) Determination no. 6 of 28 April 2015 (Guideline on the matter of protecting the public employee who reports offences) with exclusive reference to the general rules also referable to the private sector.

13.3 The OdV constitutes the recipient of reports regarding whistleblowing, carried out by the entity's employees, both top management and those subject to direction.

13.4 Reports circumstantiated by illegal conduct and based on precise and concordant factual elements can constitute the subject matter of information to the OdV, or regarding violations of the organisational model and management of the entity, which the whistleblowers have become aware of due the functions they perform. This implies that a report related to the WB can concern both violations of the law and acts contrary to the internal regulations set out independently by the entity (e.g. Code of Conduct, regulations, agreements in force, good practices, etc.). In the context, on a more general basis the information expressly foreseen both in the Transparency Guidelines and the ANAC Determination drawn for the purpose from the VIS Organisational Model 231/2001 can be the subject matter of reporting.

13.5 Reports can be formulated both anonymously and not. VIS primarily foresees the email address dedicated to the OdV (odv@volint.it) as the channel dedicated to receiving reports regarding WB, however such OdV is also the recipient of communications in paper format sent to the address designated and communication for such purpose.

13.6 The OdV performs all the assessments needed respect to reporting and also verifies that no retaliatory or discriminatory action is adopted against the whistleblower for reasons connected, directly or indirectly, to the report.

13.7 When managing the report, both the OdV and other functions of the entity are bound to observing the norms in force within the entity on the matter of data confidentiality.

13.8 VIS shall undertake to adequately circulate WB procedures and to arrange for adequate training and updating on the contents of law 179 and the Guidelines of reference.

13.9 Criteria, methods and specific procedures with regard to whistleblowing are specified in the Organisational Model 231/2001, to which this Code of Conduct refers, both for further information and the concrete implementation thereof.



#### **Article 14: Inspection activities by the OdV**

14.1 All VIS employees must provide the utmost assistance to the inspection personnel appointed by the OdV to conduct the compliance audits.

14.2 During the compliance audits, it shall be necessary to provide all the information and documentary evidence requested by the auditors.

14.3 In the event of any anomalies or non-conformities being reported by the compliance auditors, each employee must actively collaborate in implementing the requested corrective or preventive measures.

14.4 The same rules of conduct shall be applied, in connection with the activities adopting a quality management system, or the single elements thereof, for first, second and third party audits.

#### **Article 15: Sanctions in cases of breaches to the Code of Conduct**

15.1 VIS shall not allow any breaches to the rules set out in this Code.

15.2 Any breaches by employees shall be treated as a breach of discipline and shall entail the application of the sanctions referred to in article 7 of Law 300/1970, articles 2119 and 2106 of the Italian Civil Code, Legislative Decree 231/2001 and in the applicable collective and regulatory provisions.

15.3 Any breaches by so-called “coordinated continuing” freelance collaborators, self-employees and external collaborators in general, shall be the source of contractual liability and sanctioned as such, on the basis of the general legal principles and rules governing the related contracts.

15.4 Any breaches by the VIS officers shall be sanctioned on the basis of the statutory and regulatory provisions and the applicable civil and criminal laws.

#### **Article 16: Principles underlying the audit activities by the OdV**

16.1 The audit activities by the OdV shall be grounded on the following fundamental principles, aimed at ensuring the completeness, impartiality and effectiveness of the audit:

*a) Ethical conduct*

During the compliance audit, the auditors shall engage in conduct based on trust, integrity, confidentiality and discretion.

*b) Unbiased presentation*

The auditor shall faithfully and accurately report the results and conclusions of the audit, highlighting any significant obstacles encountered during the audit and any unresolved divergent opinions between the audit team and the audited organisation.

*c) Adequate professionalism*

The auditors shall base their audit report on their professional knowledge, integrated by the information collected during the audit.

*d) Independence*

The auditors shall be and remain objective throughout the audit process, to ensure that the results and conclusions of the audit are based solely on the evidence acquired.

*e) Evidence-based approach*

The audit evidence shall be verifiable and shall be based on samples of available information, as indicated in the audit report.

## **Article 17: Generally accepted practices in administration and accounting**

17.1 VIS has developed and adopts administrative and financial management procedures governing all the aspects and fields of importance for its core operations in Italy and in developing countries. All the NGO employees and collaborators shall, therefore, abide by the said procedures, which are inspired by the following principles and criteria.<sup>3</sup>

17.2 VIS employees operating – each one according to his/her respective responsibilities – in the management of the accounting documents, shall:

- a) engage in a proper, transparent and supportive behaviour, in accordance with the law, the internal procedures and the standards of accountability applicable to the sector, in respect of all the activities for the preparation of the budget and the year's end financial statements, and the other corporate communications, for the purpose of providing members and stakeholders of VIS a transparent, truthful and accurate information on the Organisation's economic, capital and financial situation. Therefore, it is expressly forbidden to:
  - o prepare or disclose false or incomplete data, or any other data susceptible of providing an incorrect description of the Organisation's economic, capital and financial situation;
  - o omit the disclosure of any data and information required by the law and the applicable procedures, with regard to the Organisation's economic, capital and financial situation;
- b) abide by the principles and requirements set out in the financial reporting standards and regulations, as regulated by the law and the various sectors;
- c) ensure the regular operation of the Organisation and its governance bodies, ensuring and facilitating any form of internal control over management, as well as the free and fair development of the general meeting's will;
- d) promptly and accurately make all the communications and notices required by law, acting in absolute good faith, without hampering the controls carried out by the OdV. To this end, it is expressly forbidden to:
  - o omit making all the periodical reports required by law and the applicable regulations, with the required completeness, accuracy and timeliness;
  - o present, in the above mentioned reports and communications, any untrue events, or conceal any significant events, with regard to the Organisation's economic, capital and financial situation;
  - o engage in any conduct that hinders the activities of the supervisory functions, also with regard to audits, by the Administrative Authorities (opposition, ungrounded refusals or even outright obstructionism or failure to collaborate, such as delays in making communications or in making documents available);
- e) prepare, apply, monitor and verify, in Italy and its offices abroad, the procedures needed to prepare the financial statements and periodical reports and the projects, as well as the management of the financial resources.

## **Article 18: Criteria relating to the management of payments**

18.1 VIS employees operating – each one according to his/her respective responsibilities – in the management of payments, shall not:

- a) engage in business relations with individuals or corporations which are known or suspected to belong to criminal organisations, or, in any case, which operate outside the law, such as, by way of example, persons associated with money-laundering, terrorist, drug-trafficking, usurious, etc. activities;
- b) use instruments that are not subject to internal procedures, for carrying out transactions involving large amounts of money;

<sup>3</sup> For the anti-fraud strategies on which the VIS management system is based, cf.:

- Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection – ECHO, *Anti-Fraud Strategy. Executive Summary*, 2014.  
- Transparency International, *Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Operations. Handbook of Good Practises*, 2014.

- c) make donations to individuals or corporations with a criminal record, in particular for terrorist or subversive activities.

Furthermore, the recipients of this Code are expressly obliged to:

- a) request all the necessary information for assessing the financial soundness and business/professional reliability of the suppliers and partners;
- b) ensure that all payments are made, with accurate regularity: in particular, it shall be necessary to verify – for each transaction – that the party in whose name the payment order, contract or accounting documents have been made out matches the party collecting the relevant payments;
- c) engage in proper, transparent and supportive conduct, based on good faith, in accordance with the applicable legal provisions and internal procedures, with regard to the activities associated with the management of the details of all the suppliers, the donors and the beneficiaries of the financial resources;
- d) pay due attention to the payments received from banks/clients abroad;
- e) carefully check, also with regard to VIS offices in the DC, the contracts and other relations entailing the transfer of financial resources involving parties based in, or which have links with – as may be reasonably determined by means of targeted searches (using the Internet or other means of information and databases) – so-called “uncooperative” countries by the FATF (cf. <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/>).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The FATF – Financial Action Task Force – is an inter-governmental organisation founded in 1989, for the purpose of developing and promoting strategies against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. The FATF publishes recommendations, which, although not legally mandatory (soft law), have nevertheless established themselves internationally and define the measures that a Country needs to adopt to be effective in the struggle against money laundering and financing terrorism.

