



# Code of Conduct

## Coalition for Human Rights in Development

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## Core values

Our Code of Conduct is grounded in the following values that emerge from our commitment to centering love as a force for social change:

**Respect & Dignity**

**Solidarity and Connection**

**Justice and Equity**

**Transparency & Accountability**

**Participation & Inclusion**

**Safety & Care**

We recognize that individuals may face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability, sexuality, age, Indigeneity, migration status, and other aspects of identity. Our approach is fundamentally **intersectional**: we work to address systemic inequalities and to ensure our practices are inclusive and responsive to the diverse realities of all individuals.

## Standards of conducts

We are committed to:

- Treating all individuals with dignity and respect regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, class, language, or other aspects of identity;
- Recognizing and honoring diverse perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing;
- Creating and protecting safe, inclusive and accessible spaces for all (online and offline) by integrating risk assessment, community protection, accountability, and monitoring in our work;
- Prioritizing the health, wellbeing, and security of all Coalition duty bearers above outcomes/deliverables;
- Safeguarding confidential and privately shared information at all times, and must not make public any private information without consent;
- Upholding the highest standards of respect, dignity, and human rights in all their communications and representations, whether internal or external;
- disclosing and addressing conflicts of interests.

## Who does it apply to?

The Code of Conduct applies to all Coalition duty bearers while they are doing Coalition's related work:

- All secretariat staff members
- Coalition members and their representatives
- Steering committee and advisory bodies
- Consultants, volunteers, and interns
- Partners and collaborators participating in Coalition activities (online & offline)
- Anyone representing the Coalition in external forums

Coalition-related work include:

- In-person meetings
- Advocacy work and community engagements
- Public events and communications
- Internal decision-making processes
- Field visits and community interactions
- Online spaces and platforms operated by the Coalition

Prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Discrimination
- Intimidation, threats, bullying, mobbing, harassment
- Gender-based violence (GBV), sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, exploitation, pornography
- Child abuse, exploitation and neglect
- Publicize any private information without consent
- Retaliation
- Exploitative relationships
- Corruption

## Power & responsibility

As we work in a world of deep systemic inequities, we need to be aware of power and privilege in different working relationships, and not act in ways that cause discrimination or lead to exclusion of individuals or groups subjected to marginalisation.

We use our influence responsibly and in service of our collective mission. Where the secretariat has power and privilege we will work to devolve it to members and partners who are closest to the grassroots.

## How to file a complaint

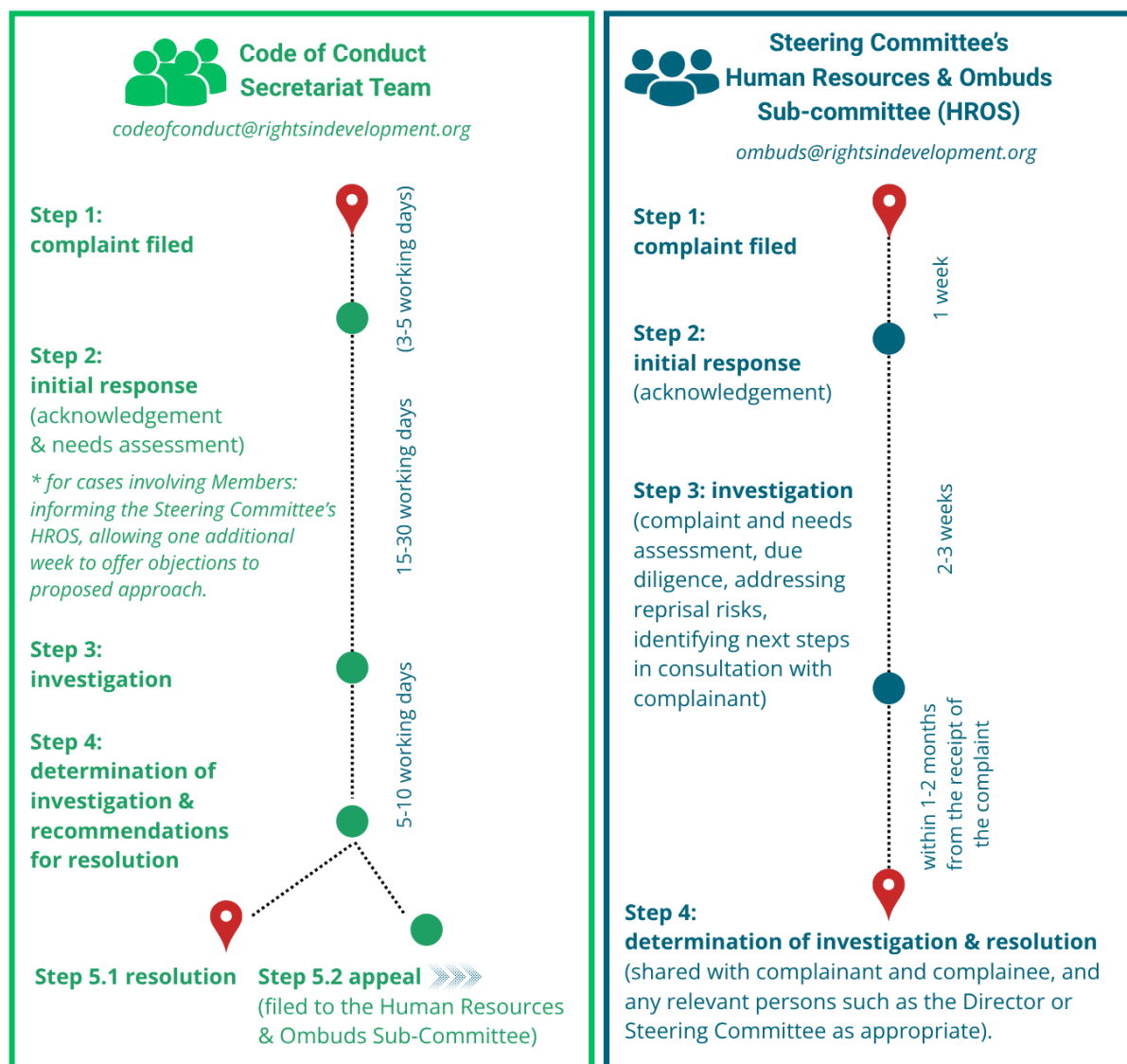
- If you want to report a Code of Conduct breach, write to the **Code of Conduct Secretariat Team** ([codeofconduct@rightsinddevelopment.org](mailto:codeofconduct@rightsinddevelopment.org)), or
- Write to the **Human Resources & Ombuds Sub-committee** of the Steering Committee (HROS: [ombuds@rightsinddevelopment.org](mailto:ombuds@rightsinddevelopment.org)) in these cases:
  - > Appeals of Code of Conduct Secretariat Team's decisions;
  - > Conflicts of interest involving the Secretariat;
  - > Cases involving the Director or Steering Committee.

**To file a complaint, please specify:**

- Who you are filing a complaint against and why;
- Which Code of Conduct standards were violated;
- Any steps you have taken to resolve the issue and outcomes, if any;
- What redress or actionable outcomes you seek;
- Details and specifics about the complaint;
- Any relevant evidence or supporting documents;
- Concerns about potential reprisals (from whom, why, etc.).

If you're concerned about a conflict of interest or if you need guidance, you can also contact any individual member of the Secretariat or the Steering Committee.

## Complaints procedures



# 1. Introduction and Scope

The Coalition for Human Rights in Development exists to advance community-led and human rights-based development. We work to ensure communities have the information, power, and resources to determine their own development pathways and hold development finance institutions, governments, and other actors accountable.

This Code of Conduct represents our commitment to practicing the values we advocate for in the world. Just as we work to promote equity, dignity, and justice in development practices globally, we must embody these principles in our own operations and interactions. This Code translates our core value of "love" – seeing ourselves and others as whole and legitimate while deeply connected, as outlined in the [Coalition secretariat principles for connecting and growing movements for development justice](#) – into practical guidelines that govern behavior and decisions of everyone who is collaborating in our collective work.

By establishing clear expectations for conduct, we create a foundation of trust, safety, and accountability within our coalition. This enables us to more effectively challenge power imbalances and injustices in development practices worldwide. Our credibility and effectiveness as advocates for human rights depend on our ability to uphold these standards in our own work.

## 1.1 Why This Code Matters

As advocates for human rights in development, we recognize that our credibility and effectiveness depend not only on the causes we champion, but on how we conduct ourselves in pursuit of those causes.

### **Our Ethical Responsibility**

We have an ethical duty to embody the principles of dignity, equity, and justice that we demand from development finance institutions, governments, and other actors. If we call for accountability and transparency globally, we must hold ourselves to equally high standards. Our work gains moral authority when our actions align with our advocacy.

### **Safeguarding Rights in Our Work**

The communities we serve often face marginalization and power imbalances. We have a responsibility to ensure that our own practices do not replicate the systems of oppression we seek to dismantle. This Code helps us create safe, inclusive spaces where all individuals can participate fully and authentically.

### **Translating Values into Practice**

Our core value of "love" must be more than an aspiration. This Code translates our values into concrete behavioral expectations that govern our daily interactions and organizational culture, while building the trust essential for challenging injustices effectively.

By committing to these standards, we strengthen our capacity to advance community-led and human rights-based development while ensuring that our methods honor the dignity and rights of all those whose lives our work touches.

## 1.2 Who and when it applies to?

*The Code of Conduct applies to all Coalition duty bearers while they are doing Coalition work, or about matters that directly relate to their work with the Coalition, or during events or processes that have been organised or co-organised by the Coalition.*

Coalition duty bearers include:

- All secretariat staff members
- Coalition members and their representatives
- Steering committee and advisory bodies
- Consultants, volunteers, and interns
- Partners and collaborators participating in Coalition activities
- Anyone representing the Coalition in external forums

Coalition-related work include:

- In-person meetings
- Advocacy work and community engagements
- Public events and communications
- Internal decision-making processes
- Field visits and community interactions
- Online spaces and platforms operated by the Coalition

We recognize that the conduct of Coalition duty bearers, even outside of Coalition-related work, can impact the integrity and reputation of the Coalition. While Coalition duty bearers are expected to adhere to the Coalition's Code of Conduct when engaged in Coalition activities and on Coalition platforms, we also urge them to uphold the principles of respect, dignity, and human rights in their other professional roles, in accordance with laws and codes of conduct applicable to those roles.

Please note: The Code of Conduct and its procedures are not a substitute for the criminal or legal justice system. If you have a complaint that relates to a criminal matter, or are seeking legal remedy, please directly contact relevant authorities.

## 2. Core Values

Our Code of Conduct is grounded in the following values that emerge from our commitment to centering love as a force for social change:

1. **Respect and Dignity:** We recognize the inherent worth of all people and treat everyone with respect.
2. **Solidarity and Connection:** We understand our deep interconnectedness and work to strengthen relationships across diverse communities.
3. **Justice and Equity:** We actively work to dismantle systems of oppression and privilege while building more equitable alternatives.
4. **Transparency and Accountability:** We operate with openness about our decisions and actions and take responsibility for their impacts.
5. **Participation and Inclusion:** We ensure that those most affected by decisions have the opportunity to shape them.
6. **Safety and Care:** We prioritize health, wellbeing and security of secretariat staff, members and partners before outcomes and deliverables *in accordance with our secretariat principle of 'health, wellbeing and security first'*.

## 3. Standards of Conduct

These standards apply to all Coalition-related activities and spaces—whether in-person or online—including meetings, events, advocacy, fieldwork, and all digital and telecommunication platforms operated by or associated with the Coalition. Coalition duty bearers are expected to maintain respectful, professional conduct in all interactions and are prohibited from engaging in harassment, bullying, or the sharing of inappropriate content, regardless of the setting.

### 3.1 Non-Discrimination and Inclusion

- We treat all individuals with dignity and respect regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, class, language, or other aspects of identity.
- We recognize and honor diverse perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing.
- We ensure that our meeting schedules, locations, and formats accommodate different needs and constraints.
- We are committed to accessibility as outlined in our Accessibility and Accommodation standards below.

#### 3.1.1 Gender Equality Framework

We recognize that gender equality is integral to our human rights commitments and value base. Everyone, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, identity and expression, is entitled on an equal and equitable basis to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all spheres of life.

We acknowledge that women and sexual and gender minorities are disproportionately represented among the poorest and most disadvantaged segments of the population. We recognize that gender-based discrimination often intersects with other forms of discrimination, including (but not limited to) race, class, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, age, being from the Global South and being Indigenous.

We ensure our practices are gender-responsive and inclusive of all gender identities and expressions, incorporating accessibility measures as detailed in our Accessibility and Accommodation section.

We maintain zero tolerance for gender-based discrimination and violence (GBV), which includes any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will based on socially ascribed gender differences. This includes both discrimination and violence, as detailed below.

### 3.1.1.1 Gender-Based Discrimination

- Offensive or unwelcome comments, including slurs, negative stereotyping, and discriminatory remarks disguised as humor, based on gender identity and expression, sexual orientation
- Distribution, display, or discussion of written or graphic material that ridicules, insults, or shows hostility toward individuals or groups based on gender identity, expression, or sexual orientation
- Deliberate disclosure or 'outing' of any aspect of a person's gender identity, sexual orientation, or expression without their consent
- Deliberate refusal to respect gender identity, misgendering, or use of rejected names
- Exclusion from activities, decision-making, or opportunities based on gender identity or expression

### 3.1.1.2 Gender-Based Violence, Sexual Harassment, and Exploitation

Gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment are serious violations of human rights and dignity. GBV refers to any harmful act directed at an individual based on their gender, gender identity, or gender expression. Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment

Prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual violence, including exploitation and abuse
- Domestic violence and intimate partner violence
- Harassment based on gender identity or expression
- Violence against gender non-conforming individuals
- Economic abuse and control
- Psychological and emotional abuse related to gender
- Unwelcome sexual attention, including innuendoes, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual propositions, lewd remarks, obscene gestures, or intrusive questions about private life
- Sexual coercion or bribery, including implicit or explicit requests for sexual activity or silence about harassment in exchange for rewards, or sexual coercion under threat of punishment
- Distribution, display, or discussion of sexually suggestive material that is gratuitous, off-topic, or shows disrespect toward individuals or groups
- Unwelcome physical contact, including inappropriate touching, hugging, cornering, kissing, fondling, or any form of sexual assault

### 3.1.1.3 Intersectional Approach

We recognize that individuals may face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, disability, sexuality, age, Indigeneity, migration status, and other aspects of identity. Our approach is fundamentally intersectional: we work to address systemic inequalities and to ensure our practices are inclusive and responsive to the diverse realities of all individuals. This includes, but is not limited to,

making Coalition spaces accessible to people with disabilities, as outlined in our Accessibility and Accommodation section

#### 3.1.1.4 Empowerment and Participation

We are committed to supporting the empowerment of women and gender minorities through:

- Awareness-raising and capacity building
- Ensuring meaningful participation in decision-making processes
- Addressing structural barriers to equal participation
- Supporting leadership development across all gender identities

We recognize that empowerment comes from within, and our role is to create supportive conditions for individuals to empower themselves.

We recognize and honor diverse perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing, with particular attention to historically marginalized voices.

We ensure meaningful participation through inclusive meeting practices and accessibility measures as specified in our Accessibility and Accommodation section.

#### 3.1.2 Accessibility and Accommodation

We are committed to making Coalition spaces accessible to people with disabilities and providing appropriate accommodations for individuals with specific needs. We ensure that our meeting schedules, locations, and formats accommodate different constraints and requirements.

Upon request, specific accessibility measures can include:

- Providing sign language interpreters and/or real-time captioning for meetings and events
- Ensuring physical venues are wheelchair accessible with accessible restrooms and parking
- Offering materials in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, or audio versions
- Providing assistive listening devices and microphones for clear audio
- Scheduling breaks during long meetings to accommodate various health and caregiving needs
- Offering hybrid participation options (in-person and virtual) to reduce travel barriers where security and goals of meetings allow.
- Using plain language and avoiding jargon in all communications
- Providing documents in advance to allow time for review and preparation
- Ensuring websites and digital platforms meet accessibility standards (WCAG guidelines)
- Offering flexible work arrangements and modified schedules when needed
- Providing private or quiet spaces for individuals who may need sensory breaks
- Ensuring adequate lighting and reducing background noise in meeting spaces
- Providing private or quiet spaces for sensory breaks, prayer, or meditation

- Accommodating child care and other caring responsibilities, when possible
- Accommodating service animals and personal assistants
- Offering multiple communication options (including email, phone, video calls, text)
- Providing transportation assistance or reimbursement when possible
- Accommodating dietary restrictions related to religion, health, or culture

We proactively encourage individuals to communicate their accessibility needs in advance, and we commit to working collaboratively to identify and implement appropriate solutions. No one will be excluded from Coalition activities due to disability, caregiving responsibilities, or religious/cultural needs, and we will continuously improve our accessibility practices based on feedback and evolving best practices.

## 3.2 Safety and Protection

The Coalition for Human Rights in Development is committed to creating and protecting safe and inclusive spaces for all individuals, both online and offline. We prioritize the health, wellbeing, and security of secretariat staff, members, partners, and community members above outcomes and deliverables. We maintain a zero-tolerance policy regarding abuse, exploitation, harassment, or inappropriate relationships.

We prohibit all forms of harassment, sexual misconduct, exploitation, bullying, and intimidation and retaliation, whether occurring in-person or online. Harassment includes any verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct designed to threaten, intimidate, silence, or coerce.

*Note: For gender-based discrimination and violence, including sexual misconduct and harassment based on gender identity or expression, see Section 3.1 Gender Equality Framework.*

Specifically prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

### 3.2.1 Discrimination

- Offensive or unwelcome comments, including slurs, negative stereotyping, and discriminatory remarks disguised as humor, based on race, ethnicity, Indigeneity, religion, national or regional origin, age, disability, physical appearance, or social status
- Distribution, display, or discussion of written or graphic material that ridicules, insults, or shows hostility toward individuals or groups based on these protected characteristics
- Exclusion from discussions, decision-making processes, or activities based on any protected characteristic or as a form of retaliation or intimidation.

### 3.2.2 Intimidation and Threats

- Sustained and deliberate disruption of discussions or Coalition activities
- Threats of violence, threatening language, menacing gestures, acts of aggression, or incitement to violence or self-harm

- Stalking or following, including repeated one-on-one communication despite requests to cease
- Unwanted photography, recording, or tracking of online activity without consent

### 3.2.3 Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct—including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment—is strictly prohibited within the Coalition. This includes any unwelcome, uninvited, or non-consensual behavior of a sexual nature, regardless of the medium (in-person, online, email, phone, etc.).

For sexual misconduct related to gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, see Section 3.1.1.2 (Gender-Based Violence, Sexual Harassment, and Exploitation).

**In addition, the following are strictly prohibited:**

- Sexual favoritism: Rewarding individuals who respond to sexual advances with employment, benefits, or other opportunities, or penalizing those who refuse such advances.
- Quid pro quo harassment: Requesting or demanding sexual favors in exchange for employment, promotion, benefits, or other professional opportunities, or threatening adverse consequences for refusal.
- Distribution or exhibition of private explicit images without consent: Sharing or displaying sexually explicit images or videos of another person without their explicit permission (sometimes referred to as "revenge pornography" or image-based sexual abuse).
- Sexual misconduct that may constitute a criminal offense: Any act of sexual misconduct that may be subject to administrative, disciplinary, and/or criminal proceedings under applicable law.

Coalition duty bearers must be aware that sexual misconduct, including the examples above, may violate not only this Code of Conduct but also national and international laws, and may result in criminal prosecution in addition to internal disciplinary measures.

### 3.2.4 Bullying and Mobbing

Bullying and mobbing are strictly prohibited within the Coalition.

- Bullying refers to repeated, unreasonable actions or behaviors directed at an individual or group that undermine their dignity or well-being, create a hostile environment, or threaten their safety.
- Mobbing refers to collective or group behaviors that isolate, intimidate, or otherwise harm an individual through unjustified accusations, humiliation, exclusion, or other forms of psychological abuse.

The Coalition is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all staff, partners, and community members.

### 3.2.5 Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Neglect

While the Coalition does not typically work directly with children, we recognize that children and youth may be present at events, meetings, or activities organized or supported by the Coalition, or may be engaged through our partners. In line with our commitment to human rights and safeguarding, we maintain strict standards to prevent and respond to any form of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect in all Coalition-related contexts. These standards apply whenever Coalition duty bearers may come into contact with children, whether directly or indirectly.

#### 3.2.5.1 Definition of Child Abuse, Exploitation, or Neglect

*For the purposes of this Code, the following definitions clarify what is meant by child abuse, exploitation, and neglect. These terms are used to ensure a shared understanding and consistent application of our child protection standards.*

**Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person (such as by punching, kicking, burning, etc.). Physical injuries take different forms including bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures. It is not always the case that physical injuries will be visible.

**Emotional Abuse:** Emotional abuse occurs when persistent ill-treatment of a child affects their self-esteem. This may include name-calling, rejection, threatening, intimidating, or any other acts, which can affect the child's physical and emotional growth and self-esteem.

**Sexual Abuse:** Sexual abuse occurs when there has been any (or likely) sexual exploitation of a child by an adult. Sexual abuse includes any actual, attempted, or threatened sexual activity involving children.

**Neglect:** Neglect occurs when a child's basic needs have consistently not been met to the extent that it has a detrimental effect on the child's health and personal development. These basic needs include food, clothing, shelter, and supervision.

All forms of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect are strictly prohibited by the Coalition.

#### 3.2.5.2 Child Protection Commitments

All Coalition duty bearers commit to the following child protection principles both at work and away from work:

- We will never engage in sexual activity with a child (person under the age of 18) regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- We will never exchange money, employment, or goods for sex, sexual favors, or other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior involving children.
- When activities have a possibility of involving children or youth, we will consider child protection safeguarding in project planning and implementation to determine potential risks to children associated with project activities and operations.

### 3.2.6 Privacy and Confidentiality Violations

Respect for privacy and confidentiality is fundamental to the Coalition's commitment to human rights and the protection of all individuals with whom we work. All staff, volunteers, and partners are required to safeguard confidential and privately shared information at all times, and must not make public any private information without consent.

### 3.2.7 Retaliation

The Coalition maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy for any form of retaliation. Protecting individuals who raise concerns or participate in investigations is essential to upholding human rights principles and ensuring a safe, inclusive environment for everyone. Retaliation includes any attempt to intimidate, threaten, or take adverse action against someone because they have engaged in protected activities related to this Code of Conduct.

This includes, but is not limited to, reporting or participating in investigations regarding:

- Discrimination or harassment
- Maladministration, mismanagement of funds, or corruption
- Violations of Coalition policies, ethical standards, or applicable laws

The following actions are strictly prohibited:

- Attempts at intimidation, retaliation, or retribution against someone who has:
  - Filed or responded to a complaint or report of discrimination, harassment, maladministration, mismanagement of funds, corruption, or other wrongdoing
  - Appeared as a witness in the processing of a complaint
  - Served as a coordinator of a complaint of discrimination or harassment
  - Supported someone filing a complaint
- Encouraging or assisting in violations of this Code of Conduct

### 3.2.8 Exploitative Relationships

Coalition duty bearers are strictly prohibited from engaging in exploitative relationships with community members, human rights defenders, or partners or anyone over whom they have decision-making or supervisory power. Any sexual or romantic relationship involving a power imbalance—such as between supervisors and those they supervise, or between staff and Board or Advisory Board members—is prohibited, regardless of whether the subordinate is under direct supervision. Where such a relationship arises, the person in the position of authority will be required to disclose the relationship and may be subject to reassignment or termination to protect the integrity of the Coalition's work and prevent abuse of power.

The Coalition prohibits the exchange of resources, employment opportunities, services, or any other benefit for sexual favors or romantic involvement. Any such exchange, or attempt thereof, is strictly forbidden.

Degrading, humiliating, or abusive behavior—including any conduct that belittles, intimidates, or undermines the dignity of another person—is also strictly prohibited. For the

purposes of this Code, “degrading” behavior refers to any act or remark that demeans, humiliates, or diminishes another’s sense of self-worth, especially when occurring within a context of power imbalance or professional relationship.

This policy applies regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or the consent of the parties involved, and will be enforced uniformly without discrimination.

### 3.2.9 Prohibition of Pornography

The Coalition expressly prohibits all its representatives from accessing, possessing, or circulating pornographic content (including jokes) using Coalition computers, Coalition email accounts, Coalition-related electronic distribution lists, or an internet connection paid for by the Coalition. This includes sharing emails or group texts.

## 3.3 Power and Responsibility

### 3.3.1 Responsible Use of Power

- Coalition duty bearers work in a world of deep systemic inequities, including gender, sexuality, global north versus global south, race, indigeneity and abilities. In doing our work, we need to be aware of power and privilege in different working relationships, and not act in ways that cause discrimination or lead to exclusion of individuals or groups subjected to marginalisation.
  - We use our influence responsibly and in service of our collective mission.
  - We acknowledge when we make mistakes and take responsibility for remedying harm.
- Coalition duty bearers working directly with vulnerable communities must be particularly vigilant about maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and avoiding dual relationships that could exploit power imbalances.
- As outlined in our secretariat principles, where the secretariat has power and privilege we will work to devolve it to members and partners who are closest to the grassroots. Where collectively we lack power, the secretariat should support the building of power closest to the grassroots.

### 3.3.2 Conflicts of Interest

Coalition duty bearers must uphold the highest standards of integrity when working with affected communities, human rights defenders, partner organizations and each other. To this end:

- Disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest that could affect their work.

- Recuse themselves from decision-making processes—including funding allocations, partnership agreements, or advocacy positions—where personal interests might conflict with the Coalition’s mission.
- Ensure that personal relationships, political affiliations, or financial considerations never compromise their commitment to the communities they serve or the human rights principles they uphold.
- Exercise particular vigilance in maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and avoiding inappropriate dual relationships, especially when working directly with vulnerable communities, to prevent exploitation of power imbalances.
- Guarantee that resource distribution and support by the Coalition Secretariat and relevant Committees and Working Groups to grassroots members and partners is mission-aligned, fair, transparent, and free from personal bias or favoritism.

### 3.3.3 Confidentiality and Privacy

The Coalition Secretariat commits to following policies and guidelines regarding confidentiality and access to Coalition information, such as personnel files of staff, legal documents, papers and files, which should not be disclosed to anyone outside the organization. We also expect all Coalition duty bearers to ensure the protection of community members, human rights defenders and civil society actors, by respecting their confidentiality and treating sensitive information accordingly.

- The Coalition Secretariat obtains informed consent before sharing stories, images, or information about individuals. This includes: 1) proactively identifying and discussing potential risks, for the people directly affected and their wider community 2) assessing mitigation actions (e.g.: anonymizing a name), to ensure the information disclosed does not heighten security risks 3) informing the affected person(s) how and where that information will be shared and what will be used for 4) as risks might evolve over time, we ensure consent can be withdrawn at any time.
- The Coalition Secretariat commits to safely record and store sensitive information, and not to share it with anyone outside the Coalition without informed consent.

## 3.4 Ethics and Integrity

### 3.4.1 Anti-Corruption

Coalition duty bearers are expected to observe the highest standards of organizational and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. We are committed to upholding transparency and ethical conduct and are opposed to any form of corruption. We take a zero-tolerance approach to corruption and are committed to professionalism, fairness, and integrity in all Coalition-related work dealings and relationships.

#### 3.4.1.1 Definition of Corruption

Corruption includes bribery, fraud, extortion, money laundering, and an offer or receipt of any gift, loan, fee, or reward to or from any person as an inducement to do something that is dishonest, illegal, or a breach of trust in the conduct of Coalition activities. This also encompasses embezzlement, nepotism, conflicts of interest, and abuse of position for personal gain.

### 3.4.1.2 Prohibited Activities

Coalition duty bearers are strictly prohibited from:

- Accepting or offering bribes, kickbacks, or inappropriate gifts from partners, donors, community members, or any other party
- Using Coalition resources, information, or position for personal gain or unauthorized purposes
- Creating false documentation or manipulating financial records
- Diverting funds or resources intended for communities or Coalition operations
- Facilitating corrupt practices by others through action, inaction, or willful blindness
- Using Coalition affiliation to gain personal advantages or preferential treatment

The Coalition commits to compliance with all applicable anti-corruption laws and international standards in all jurisdictions where we operate, including donor requirements and international conventions such as the UN Convention Against Corruption.

### 3.4.2 Communication and Representation

*Coalition duty bearers commit to upholding the highest standards of respect, dignity, and human rights in all their communications and representations, whether internal or external.*

This includes:

- Communicating respectfully, honestly, and clearly with all stakeholders.
- Properly attributing the work and ideas of others.
- Not spreading misinformation or making misleading claims knowingly.
- Accurately representing the Coalition and its positions in external settings.
- Not promoting hatred, violence, or discrimination in any form.
- Prioritizing the security and dignity of all involved, closely assessing risks and adopting strategies to mitigate them before planning and implementing any communication strategy.
- Striving to avoid re-victimization when speaking about human rights abuses and to avoid depicting communities as victims.
- Creating safe, inclusive, and empathetic spaces when interacting with members and partners.
- Creating opportunities for grassroots members and partners to share their stories and shape the way those stories are told.
- Practicing open, effective, respectful, and non-violent communication in a timely manner.
- Assuming best intentions and asking questions with curiosity when there is a lack of understanding, rather than jumping to conclusions.

- Taking commitments seriously and delivering at a high quality, or proactively communicating any changes around delivery.
- Seeking guidance, assistance, and support when needed, and sharing knowledge and skills to strengthen the organization.

### 3.4.2.1 Professionalism and Commitment

*We expect all Coalition duty bearers to demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism and to honor their commitments in all aspects of their work. This includes being reliable, accountable, and proactive in fulfilling responsibilities, and seeking support or clarification when needed.*

The following commitments guide our daily conduct and help ensure we uphold these standards in every aspect of our work:

- We commit to have open, effective, respectful and non-violent communication in a timely manner.
- We commit to assume best intentions and ask questions with curiosity when we don't understand, rather than jump to conclusions.
- We say yes enthusiastically when we can, and say no clearly when we cannot.
- We take our commitments seriously and will deliver what we commit to at a high quality in the time we commit, or we will proactively communicate changes around delivery.
- We deliver our best services by giving importance to our respective duties and responsibilities that are to be accomplished efficiently and punctually; and seek guidance, assistance and support when needed in the implementation of our roles and responsibilities.
- We take initiatives to overcome our limitations, weaknesses and difficulties in the performance of our roles and responsibilities, and for improving and sharing our knowledge and skills for the implementation of activities and strengthening the organization.

## 4. Safety, Risk Assessment, and Monitoring

The Coalition is committed to proactively safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of all individuals and communities affected by our work. This section explains why and how we conduct risk assessments, and how we ensure accountability and ongoing improvement. By integrating risk assessment, community protection, accountability, and monitoring, we aim to prevent harm, support informed decision-making, and build trust with all stakeholders.

### 4.1 Participatory Risk Assessment and Community Protection

Risk assessment is a proactive process to identify, evaluate, and address potential threats to the safety, rights, and wellbeing of people affected by our work. Its main purpose is to prevent harm, prioritize resources, and ensure our work aligns with our values of human rights, equity, and accountability.

The Coalition commits to conducting risk assessments:

- Before launching new activities, projects, or partnerships—especially those involving direct community engagement, public events, or work in high-risk contexts.
- When there are significant changes in context, location, or participants (for example, shifting political situations, new partners, or emerging threats).
- During project planning and design, to integrate risk mitigation from the outset.
- In response to incidents, complaints, or near-misses, to prevent recurrence and strengthen our systems.
- Regularly, as part of ongoing monitoring and review, to ensure that risks are continually identified and managed as situations evolve.

Risk assessments are participatory and inclusive, centering the perspectives of those most affected, and are guided by our core values of safety, dignity, and justice.

We regularly assess and address risks in partnership with those directly affected by our work, centering their expertise and prioritizing their safety. Our risk assessment process includes:

- Identifying and preventing risks for all individuals, their families, and communities, using an intersectional lens.
- Setting clear “no-go” thresholds: If risks cannot be adequately mitigated, the Coalition will not proceed with the activity. Examples include withdrawing from events, suspending grants, canceling collaborations due to security concerns, or ending partnerships that pose risks.
- Ensuring ongoing consent and risk monitoring: Consent to participate can be withdrawn at any time, and risk levels are reassessed as contexts change.
- Vetting partners to avoid collaborations with individuals or organizations who pose a risk to community members, staff, or partners.

### 4.2 Implementation and Emergency Protocols

To ensure effective risk management and community protection, the Coalition:

- Reviews and updates risk assessments regularly and before any significant change in activity.
- Documents risk assessments securely, limiting access to those who need to know, and handles sensitive information in line with data protection protocols.
- Establishes clear emergency protocols for rapid changes in risk, including escalation procedures and evacuation plans where relevant.
- Supports partners and participants to build their own risk analysis and protection planning skills, promoting local ownership of security measures.

## 5. Non-compliance and Accountability

Reporting, accountability and monitoring ensure the Coalition lives up to its Code of Conduct commitments in practice, not just in writing. Coalition duty bearers also commit to procedures of reporting and accountability as contemplated under the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct team will work with other relevant Coalition duty bearers to develop and improve methods to socialise the code of conduct, track our progress, measure our adherence and gaps with the Code of Conduct, and make sure we are answerable about this Code of Conduct to our members and to the communities we serve.

### 5.1 Reporting Mechanisms

*The Coalition is committed to creating multiple, accessible pathways for submitting complaints and concerns regarding violations of this Code of Conduct. Complaints can be made by any person, including Coalition duty bearers, community members, partners, beneficiaries, or third parties with knowledge of potential violations.*

Please note: If the violations you are concerned about might constitute an illegal action prohibited by local or national laws, please directly contact relevant authorities, as the reporting mechanisms noted here cannot provide legal remedy in such matters.

#### 5.1.1 Primary Reporting Channels - Roles and Responsibilities

If it is safe and comfortable to do so, you may choose to raise the matter directly with the duty bearer whose conduct is of concern. However, there is no obligation to do so, and formal reporting channels are always available.

If informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, or if the concern persists, the following formal reporting channels are available.

*If you want to report a Code of Conduct breach, write to the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team.*

*However, for appeals of Code of Conduct Secretariat Team's decisions, or complaints against the Code of Conduct Secretariat team (including the director) or Steering Committee members, please write to the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee of the Steering Committee.*

#### Code of Conduct Secretariat Team

- **Email:** [codeofconduct@rightsindevelopment.org](mailto:codeofconduct@rightsindevelopment.org)

- **Composition:** Three members from the secretariat and the Director, ensuring gender and geographic diversity; the Code of Conduct Secretariat team will appoint a coordinator among themselves; the Code of Conduct Secretariat team will be reviewed every three years and continuity of the team will be confirmed by Secretariat and Steering Committee
- **Responsibilities:**
  - Ensure dissemination of the Code of Conduct and that duty bearers are informed about it
  - Initial assessment and determinations on Code of Conduct breaches
  - If the case involves Coalition members, inform Human Resource & Ombuds sub-Committee (or other appropriate Steering Committee members)
  - Refer cases to Steering Committee's Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee (or other appropriate Steering Committee members) when conflicts of interest arise or consensus cannot be reached by Code of Conduct Secretariat team
  - If the case involves staff or consultants of member or partner organisations, then exchange information with the organisation as appropriate
  - Conduct investigations for all complaints of reported violations
  - Recommend appropriate disciplinary measures and remedial actions, and monitor implementation by the relevant decision-makers as noted in Section 5.2.3.
  - Coordinate protective measures during investigations when needed
  - Maintain confidential case files

### **Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee of the Coalition Steering Committee** *(escalation only when another party needs to be involved)*

- **Email:** ombuds@rightsinddevelopment.org
- **Composition:** Secretary of the Coalition Steering Committee and Individual members from the Steering Committee who are on the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee
- **Responsibilities**, in accordance with [complaints handling procedures](#):
  - Handle cases involving conflicts of interest with:
    - Code of Conduct Secretariat Team members (including Coalition Director), and/or
    - Steering Committee members.
  - Monitor updates from Code of Conduct Secretariat team about complaints and investigations of Code of Conduct violations by Coalition members
  - Resolve situations where Code of Conduct Secretariat Team cannot reach consensus
  - Process appeals from Code of Conduct Secretariat Team decisions

Additionally, the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team or the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee could request the involvement of the **Steering Committee** to:

- Participate in investigations involving members of Coalition

- Review findings and recommendations from the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team or the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee.
- Make final decisions on disciplinary measures and remedial actions for Coalition members.

## Conflicts of interest

No person who has a complaint filed against them (“*complainee*”) will be involved in the processing of a complaint against them.

For situations involving conflicts of interest with the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team including the Director, a complaint can be submitted to the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee.

For situations involving conflicts of interest with the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee, a written complaint can be submitted to the Officers of the Steering Committee or any Steering Committee member as appropriate.

### 5.1.2 How to report violation of the code

To help the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team process your complaint efficiently and fairly, please provide as much detail as possible. Where possible, include:

- Who you are filing a complaint against, and why;
- Which Code of Conduct standards, if any, were violated (e.g., non-discrimination, safety, child protection, anti-corruption, etc.);
- Details about the code of conduct violation;
- Steps you have taken to resolve the issue, and the outcomes, if any;
- What redress or actionable outcomes you are seeking through the complaint process;
- Any relevant evidence or supporting documents (e.g., emails, documents, records); and
- If you are concerned about reprisals, please indicate from whom and why.

*Coalition duty bearers may also seek informal guidance or support from any Secretariat or Steering Committee member if they are unsure how to proceed, want to discuss their options, or need advice about a situation. The Secretariat or Steering Committee member will discuss with the individual what information, if any, can be shared with others, and will explain the option of making a formal report to the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team. There is no obligation to proceed beyond this conversation unless the individual wishes to do so or if there is a serious risk that requires further action.*

*Anonymous reporting is not available. However, the Coalition will maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible for all parties involved in a complaint, consistent with the need to ensure safety and a fair investigation. Information will only be shared with those directly responsible for addressing the complaint, and all records will be handled securely.*

### 5.1.3 Protection Against Retaliation

Protecting individuals from retaliation is essential to maintaining a safe, inclusive, and accountable environment. The Coalition is committed to ensuring that anyone who raises concerns, reports violations, or participates in investigations can do so without fear of reprisal. This protection applies to all Coalition duty bearers and stakeholders acting in good faith.

- Zero tolerance for retaliation against good faith complainants
- Protective measures for complainants at risk will be taken as promptly as possible and as appropriate to the situation.
- Disciplinary action against anyone engaging in retaliation
- Support services for those experiencing retaliation

### 5.1.4 Support and Resources

The Coalition commits to:

- Listening to, trusting, and centering individuals subject to harassment or abuse
- Welcoming involvement of those subject to harassment in shaping any proposed remedy
- Supporting access to mental health support and appropriate services when needed
- Ensuring that support persons may accompany individuals during reporting and investigation processes if requested
- Maintaining confidentiality and privacy to the extent possible while ensuring safety and transparency

## 5.2 Investigation and Resolution Process

The Code of Conduct Secretariat Team is responsible for investigating complaints involving Coalition duty bearers, including Secretariat staff. The Code of Conduct Secretariat Team can investigate and make determination if there is a code of conduct violation. It can also make recommendations to appropriate Coalition duty bearers or decision-maker to implement any remedial or disciplinary actions. While the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team may not have the power to compel remedial or disciplinary action, its recommendations are to be treated as highly persuasive by the relevant duty-bearer or decisionmaker.

All investigations are conducted fairly, confidentially, and in accordance with this Code. For investigations of alleged code of conduct violations by a secretariat staff person, consultant, or a non member of the Coalition, the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team is able to conduct investigations on its own, but may choose to inform the Human Resources & Ombuds Sub-committee and/or the Officers Sub-committee of the Steering Committee.

For investigations of alleged code of conduct violations by a Coalition member, the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team must inform the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee and the Officers Sub-committee to ensure appropriate oversight and to review any recommendations for disciplinary measures or remedial actions.

For performance issues relating to secretariat staff, it is best to raise with the concerned staff person, their manager and/or the Coalition Director, all of whom are responsible for addressing performance issues directly. If a performance issue also involves a potential violation of this Code, it must be reported to the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team, who will determine and oversee any disciplinary action related to the Code. Managers may take immediate steps to address operational concerns, but Code of Conduct violations will be handled according to the procedures outlined in this Code.

## 5.2.2 Code of Conduct Secretariat Team - Investigation Process

*The investigation process for the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team is divided into distinct phases to ensure thoroughness, transparency, and support for all parties involved. The procedures for the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee are [available here](#).*

### **Phase 1: Initial Response (within 3 to 5 working days for acknowledgment and assessment of need to implement urgent and precautionary measures)**

#### **Receipt and Documentation**

- Record complaint details in confidential file with case reference
- Assess immediate safety concerns and implement protective measures if needed
- Implement urgent and precautionary safety measures for all parties as needed, including adjustments to work assignments, limiting contact between parties, or providing additional support. These provisional measures are temporary, non-disciplinary, and reviewed regularly throughout the investigation.
- Determine investigation scope and approach
- Notify relevant parties as appropriate

*During the assessment and investigation of a complaint, the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team may recommend provisional (interim) measures to prevent further harm, reduce risk, or protect the integrity of the process in consultation with the complainant. These measures are temporary and non-disciplinary, and may include adjustments to work assignments, limiting contact between parties, or providing additional support. All provisional measures will be determined on a case-by-case basis, communicated clearly to those affected, and reviewed regularly as circumstances evolve.*

#### **Phase 1A: For cases involving members (1 week)**

**For complaints involving Coalition members the Code of Conduct Team must inform the Human Resource & Ombuds sub-Committee, allowing the subcommittee one week to offer any objections with the Code of Conduct team proceeding with their proposed approach. Where practicable for complaints regarding staff of member organizations, it is best to inform the member organization as well recognizing that the member has a more direct relationship with the staff person.**

#### **Phase 2: Investigation (15-30 working days)**

## Evidence Collection

- Interview complainant, respondent, and relevant witnesses
- Consult with subject matter experts and other resources as necessary
- Review relevant documents and communications
- Gather additional evidence as needed

## Investigation Standards

- **Assumption of good faith by complainant and respondent**
- Trauma-informed approach
- **Respondent Rights:** Clear information about allegations, opportunity to respond, right to support person
- **Confidentiality:** Maintain privacy for all parties throughout process while ensuring transparency of process
- **Documentation:** Keep written records of interviews and evidence
- **Flexible scheduling** to accommodate needs
- **Access to a support person** during interviews

## Phase 3: Determination of investigation and Recommendation for resolution (5-10 working days)

### Determination of investigation

- Code of Conduct Secretariat Team review all evidence using balance of probabilities standard
- Determination of whether Code violations occurred
- Selection of appropriate response measures

### Communication

- Written summary of findings provided to relevant parties
- Clear explanation of any recommendations of disciplinary actions
- Information about appeal rights
- Monitor implementation of remedial or disciplinary measures
- Follow-up on any organizational improvements needed
- Maintain confidential records for learning and accountability

*In cases where a violation of the Code leads to termination of membership or other significant action, the Coalition may communicate this outcome to the wider network or public when necessary to maintain trust, ensure safety, or prevent further harm. Any such communication will be handled with care to protect the privacy and dignity of all parties, and will not include unnecessary details about the complaint or investigation.*

## 5.2.3 Decision-Making Authority

From a procedural perspective, decisions related to complaints resolution procedures are made as follows:

- **By the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team for:** Investigations, findings, and ‘making’ recommendations for remedial and disciplinary actions (for cases involving members of the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team or the Steering Committee)
- **By the Steering Committee’s Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee and/or the Officers Sub-committee for:** investigations, findings, and remedial and disciplinary recommendations in cases involving conflicts of interest with Steering Committee members or Code of Conduct Secretariat team members (including the Director) and appeals from the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team.

Final decision-making for ‘implementing’ remedial or disciplinary actions, based on recommendations by the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team or the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee and/or the Officers sub-Committee, remains with duty-bearers who hold that authority. For e.g.:

- **With Director for:** Contract termination of secretariat staff or consultants
- **With the Steering Committee for:** Contract termination of Director, membership status of Coalition members, etc.
- **With the member/partner organisation for:** remedial or disciplinary action against their staff.

#### 5.2.4 Appeals to the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee

**Grounds:** Procedural errors, new evidence, or disproportionate response

**Process:** Written appeal must be submitted within 20 working days, and will follow the process set by the Human Resources & Ombuds sub-Committee.

### 5.3 Consequences of Non-Compliance

Recommendations for disciplinary and remedial actions are proportionate to the severity of the violation and the individual’s role:

- **Secretariat staff** may be subject to measures such as warnings, mandatory training, suspension, or termination of employment.
- **Other Coalition duty bearers** may be subject to recommended actions or sanctions, or, in serious cases, termination of Coalition membership.

All decisions follow due process and are implemented as outlined above.

Violations of this Code of Conduct may result in:

1. **Verbal Warning:** For minor first-time violations.
2. **Written Warning:** For repeated minor violations or moderate first-time violations.
3. **Temporary Suspension:** From specific activities or all Coalition involvement.
4. **Required Remedial Action:** Such as training, apology, or other corrective measures.
5. **Termination of Employment or Membership:** For severe or repeated violations. Non-compliance with these policies, including by Coalition members and partners, will result in appropriate actions if found valid after investigation, which may consist of recommendation of suspension or termination of relationship with the Coalition.
6. **Legal Action:** When violations constitute criminal behavior or legal breaches.

All consequences will be:

- Proportional to the violation
- Applied consistently and fairly
- Determined through a transparent process
- Focused on both accountability and restoration
- Implemented with consideration for the safety and wellbeing of all involved
- Used to inform institutional learning and drive organizational improvements

## 6. Limitations and Amendments

We acknowledge that this Code:

- May not address every possible situation or ethical dilemma
- Requires ongoing refinement based on experience and feedback
- Must evolve as our understanding of ethical practice deepens
- Should be reviewed every two years to ensure relevance and effectiveness

### 6.1 Process for Suggesting Changes

The Coalition recognizes the need to keep this Code of Conduct up to date and relevant. Changes may be proposed by any Coalition duty bearer. Amendments to the Code are classified as either minor or substantive, depending on their nature and impact. **Minor** amendments are small adjustments such as clarifications, corrections, or formatting changes, which do not affect the principles, scope, or procedures of the Code. **Substantive** amendments are those that alter the meaning, intent, principles, procedures, or scope of the Code, and therefore require a broader consultation and approval process. This section sets out the steps for proposing and adopting both types of changes.

**Minor Amendments** (clarifications, corrections, formatting):

1. All Coalition duty bearers may suggest amendments by emailing the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team at [codeofconduct@rightsindevelopment.org](mailto:codeofconduct@rightsindevelopment.org)
2. The Code of Conduct Secretariat Team will review suggestions biannually unless more immediate action is needed
3. Minor changes may be implemented directly by the Secretariat Team in consultation with the Steering Committee, with notification to Coalition members list and by updating the Code on the website.

**Substantive Amendments** (changes to principles, procedures, or scope):

1. All Coalition duty bearers may suggest substantive amendments by emailing the Code of Conduct Secretariat Team
2. The Code of Conduct Secretariat Team will conduct the initial review and assessment
3. Proposed substantive changes require the following process:
  - **Steering Committee review:** Initial assessment and approval to proceed with consultation
  - **General Membership consultation:** Circulation among all Coalition duty bearers for input
  - **Input period:** Members will be afforded a time period of 30 calendar working days to provide input
  - **Decision-making:** Final amendments will be based on membership support
  - **Consensus threshold:** In instances of differing opinions within the membership, amendments will only be adopted where opposition is less than 1/5 of the existing membership

4. **Final approval:** Steering Committee approval if there are any changes related to the consultation with the membership .
5. **Implementation:** All approved changes will be communicated to all Coalition duty bearers with clear effective dates

## 6.2 Urgent Issues

The Code of Conduct Secretariat Team is not well placed to respond to immediate safety concerns or emergency situations. In such contexts, it is better to reach out to emergency services and/or trusted resources and people, which in some contexts may also include an appropriate Secretariat member. Regardless, in cases of urgent issues of Code of Conduct violation seeking immediate redress, the Code of Conduct Secretariat team is committed to treating your complaint seriously and taking full responsibility to respond as quickly as possible.

## 6.3 Review Process

The Steering Committee and Secretariat will initiate a review of this Code every two years or when significant issues arise to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.