

1<sup>st</sup> February 2023

# The Lutheran World Federation Staff Code of Conduct



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

## Preamble by the General Secretary

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) holds fast to the principle that each person has a God-given dignity that must be protected and respected and that everyone's dignity, irrespective of their social status, gender, ethnicity, age, ability, or other differences, must be upheld.

We respond to God's love for human beings in how we behave towards one another. LWF's organizational values reflect this. We reflect and uphold dignity and justice, compassion and commitment, respect for diversity, inclusion and participation, transparency and accountability in our work.

We want to make sure that in all our work for the LWF, we support and respect each other and use the resources entrusted to us responsibly. Therefore, we have a no-tolerance policy for harassment, abuse, and disrespectful behavior towards colleagues.

This Code of Conduct for LWF staff builds on the constitution of the LWF, its bylaws, vision, mission, and values. It also draws on the commitments and expectations of stakeholders and partners with whom the LWF works in its different capacities. Everyone included in the scope of the LWF Staff Code of Conduct who is engaged in the work of the LWF is obliged to comply with it.

I trust this Code of Conduct will be a tool that helps the LWF and its staff uphold dignity and move towards fulfilling the LWF's vision, which calls us to work together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.

Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt

General Secretary of the LWF

## I. Introduction and Purpose

**The Lutheran World Federation's Staff Code of Conduct**<sup>1</sup> is intended to assist all staff as defined below under section II to uphold the values of the LWF and make ethical decisions in their professional and private lives, both within and outside office hours, and to better understand the obligations placed upon their conduct. This Code of Conduct refers to any misuse of power and exploitation in the relationships among staff and between them and those they serve. It offers guidance to promote safety, to ensure respect for the people with whom the LWF is in contact, to protect staff and the effectiveness, reputation and integrity of LWF's work.

As a policy document, staff need to understand and comply with the behavior that is expected from them as described by the LWF Staff Code of Conduct. The LWF Staff Code of Conduct shall be referred to in LWF guidelines and LWF contractual agreements, as a governing document approved by the LWF Executive Committee. Any non-compliance with the LWF Staff Code of Conduct may lead to sanctions up to termination of employment relationship<sup>2</sup> following established procedures<sup>3</sup>. Mandatory regulation of local law is reserved.

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<sup>1</sup> The original English version, approved by the LWF Executive Committee on 8 June 2022, is considered as the authentic text.

<sup>2</sup> The LWF adheres to the "zero tolerance" policy as defined by the United Nations policy establishing that sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel is prohibited and that every transgression will be acted upon (United Nations, Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 24 July 2017). This also applies to the other topics covered in the LWF Staff Code of Conduct.

<sup>3</sup> Depending on the context in which staff work and their role more specific rules may exist which would provide additional details on expected behavior.

## II. Scope of Application

The Lutheran World Federation's Staff Code of Conduct applies:

- to all staff during their service with and for the LWF working under an agreement of employment, at all times<sup>4</sup>,
- to anyone working for the LWF or on behalf of the LWF on another basis, such as a consultancy contract, a secondment agreement with another employer, temporary staff, trainees, interns, incentives workers and volunteers, as well as visitors under LWF responsibility, at all times,
- to casual staff including persons representing the LWF in conferences and events,
- to all individuals carrying out activities under LWF's name and status,
- to individuals involved in LWF-led projects and programs at any level, during the project / program<sup>5</sup>.

For the purpose of the LWF Staff Code of Conduct, the above-mentioned persons are hereunder referred to as "staff".

## III. Rules of Conduct

### 1. General Rules

LWF core values<sup>6</sup> are to be lived out in the work of the LWF. In line with them, the LWF Staff Code of Conduct focuses on the following ethical principles and commitments:

- Respect for the dignity and integrity of all human beings,
- Fair and just treatment of all, without discrimination, exploitation or harassment,
- Promotion of gender justice<sup>7</sup>,
- Responsible stewardship and integrity in the exercise of power concerning people and the use of financial and other resources,
- Respect for diversity, inclusiveness and participation<sup>8</sup>, and transparency and accountability.

In order to fulfil the LWF mission, all staff shall respect rightful and legal requirements.

All staff have a responsibility in promoting the application of the LWF Staff Code of Conduct. LWF supervisors have the particular responsibility for ensuring that staff are aware of this Staff Code of Conduct, understand its meaning in concrete terms, and apply it in their work. Staff have the responsibility to uphold these standards, to set a good example and to create a conducive working environment that supports and empowers others.

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<sup>4</sup> The respective Staff Personnel Regulations may spell out any further obligations specific to a context.

<sup>5</sup> When engaging in partnerships, consortia, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements, the LWF Staff Code of Conduct shall be incorporated as an attachment, shall require the contracting individuals and associated parties to abide by the LWF Staff Code of Conduct and shall state that failing to comply with the provisions of the LWF Staff Code of Conduct constitute grounds to terminate agreements of cooperation.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/our-core-values>

<sup>7</sup> See LWF Gender Justice Policy, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> As it relates for instance to gender, to age, to disability, to ethnicity, etc.

## 2. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

### Definitions

**Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)** causes physical, sexual and/or psychological harm and suffering to individuals. Anyone could be subjected to SEA but vulnerable groups are at a heightened risk<sup>9</sup>.

**Sexual exploitation** means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, an exchange of money, a promise of employment, goods or services, as well as the threat of other negative repercussions, such as the withholding of assistance.<sup>10</sup>

**Sexual abuse** means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions<sup>11</sup>. This includes rape and sexual assault, including attempted or threatened rape and sexual assault

**Sexual activity with minors (under 18)** is considered both as sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, and is prohibited regardless of the locally recognized age of majority or consent. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense. The LWF Child Protection Policy outlines specific measures to ensure the safeguarding of all children taking part in LWF activities.

**Sexual activity with sex workers** is considered both as sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, and is prohibited regardless of the legal status of sex work locally.

The term “**non-contact and online sexual exploitation and abuse**” covers the consumption of social media or online forums for sexual purposes, and the sending and soliciting of messages or images of a sexual nature.

### Staff must:

- Become aware of the SEA risks and possible measures to actively mitigate these risks in order to prevent SEA and seek to protect all stakeholders in all situations, including on duty and off duty.
- Report all the witnessed or suspected cases of SEA. Use the mechanisms in place<sup>12</sup> to respond to SEA.

### Staff must never:

- Sexually exploit or sexually abuse any individual.
- Engage in any sexual activity with a child 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.
- Act in ways that may place an individual at risk of abuse, including online and psychological abuse.
- Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sex, including consensual sex and all forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior. This includes the buying of or profiting from sexual services as well as exchange of assistance that is due to right holders for sexual favors.
- Abuse a position to withhold development or humanitarian assistance or give preferential treatment for sex.

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<sup>9</sup> Individuals in the following categories are generally considered to be at heightened risk: girls and boys, including unaccompanied and separated children; persons with serious health conditions; persons with special legal or physical protection needs; single women; women-headed households; older persons; persons with disabilities; and persons of diverse sex, sexual orientation or gender identity (UNHCR, Humanitarian Handbook, Persons at Heightened Risk).

<sup>10</sup> See: United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin 2003/13, 9 October 2003; Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Also see LWF PSEA Policy (November 2020).

<sup>11</sup> See: United Nations Secretary General's Bulletin 2003/13, 9 October 2003; Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Also see LWF PSEA Policy (November 2020).

<sup>12</sup> See the Complaints Handling Mechanisms on the LWF website and available in LWF offices.

- Engage in sexual relationships with members of crisis-affected populations<sup>13</sup> given their increased vulnerability and since such relationships are based on inherently unequal power dynamics and undermine the credibility and integrity of aid work.
- Engage in a relationship with a member of the community which is benefitting from a LWF program.
- Engage in a relationship with another staff of the LWF, where one has direct supervisory function over the other, to prevent perception of a conflict of interest or abuse of power.

### 3. Harassment

#### Definition

**Harassment** means any unwelcomed conduct that makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. Unwelcomed conduct implies that the recipient's feeling and individual perception to particular behavior is what matters. Harassment may for example be present in the form of spoken or written words, gestures or actions<sup>14</sup>.

The term harassment or bullying and mobbing which are other words for harassment, is commonly taken to refer to behavior, which happens repeatedly or persistently. However, depending on the circumstances, a conduct that happened only once may also constitute harassment.

#### LWF Policy

The LWF is committed to ensuring a non-intimidating and safe working environment where human dignity is always respected<sup>15</sup>. Attitudes, words and actions are perceived in different ways, and may impact people differently depending on context and the individual. Every person comes with her/his background and has the right to decide when a particular conduct is unacceptable.

#### Staff must:

- Always treat one another with dignity and courtesy.
- Be sensitive to different customs and cultures, adjust their behaviors as needed and comply with the LWF values set above.
- Respect each individual's personal mental and physical boundaries and be aware that it can vary.
- Respect people's rightful right to privacy and individual choices and preferences.

#### Staff must never:

- Behave in a way which constitutes harassment, at any time or under any circumstances.
- Diminish the pain or embarrassment caused to the recipient in justifying an offensive behavior by it "being a joke" or other such comment.
- Make unwelcome sexual advances, or request sex, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviors of a sexual nature.
- Bully others by criticizing through humiliating comparisons, by withholding necessary information from individuals, by shouting at staff, by picking on people in front of others or in private, or by any other ways.

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<sup>13</sup> Individuals, groups, and communities that are directly or indirectly affected by a humanitarian crisis.

<sup>14</sup> Examples are: abuse of authority or power, sexual harassment, and psychological harassment, shaming, for reasons of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, physical ability, physical appearance, ethnicity, origin, political affiliation, age, religion or any other reason.

<sup>15</sup> In some cases, it might be difficult to establish the dividing line between harassment and other work-related issues. For example, negative feedback about staff's performance or behaviour as well as conflicts need to be addressed and solved through feedback and conflict resolution methods. They do not, by themselves, constitute evidence of harassment or prejudice.

- Participate in mobbing, for example by making continuous negative remarks about a person, constantly criticizing the person, isolating a person by leaving them without social contacts or constantly gossiping or spreading false information about a person.

## 4. Child Safeguarding

### Definition

**Child safeguarding** refers to all the actions an organization takes to keep all children they come into contact with safe. This includes the proactive measures put in place to ensure children do not come to harm as a result of any direct or indirect contact with the organization. Child safeguarding encompasses the prevention of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect and maltreatment of children by staff and other persons whom the organization is responsible for, including contractors, business partners, visitors to premises and volunteers<sup>16</sup>. Anyone under the age of 18 is considered as a child.

### LWF Policy

LWF staff commit to the collective and individual responsibility to protect and safeguard children from all forms of abuse and exploitation as well as from deliberate and unintentional harm and risks while they are in contact with LWF staff, activities and programs.

LWF staff's behavior and actions must protect the best interests of children as enshrined in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and make the LWF a child-safe organization<sup>17</sup>.

### Staff must:

- Maintain a professional role with children and proactively prevent any risk of a child being harmed as a result of coming into contact with LWF staff, programs or activities.
- Have a clear understanding of safe interactions with children and how to identify and respond to any unsafe, unacceptable or unprofessional conduct towards children.
- Ensure that children are appropriately and respectfully portrayed in all media and communications.

### Staff must never:

- Abuse the power granted through their position or function in a manner injurious to the rights and wellbeing of children.
- Support illegal, dangerous, negligent or abusive behavior towards children.
- Fail to properly assess and minimize potential risks to children as a result of implementing activities, using inappropriate language or behavior when dealing with a child, bullying and harassing a child verbally or physically, physical punishment, exposing a child to pornographic material including on-line grooming and trafficking. Whenever possible avoid being alone with a child.
- Consume, purchase, sell, possess or distribute any form of child sexual abuse material.

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<sup>16</sup> Further information can be found in the Child Safeguarding Toolkit for Business - A step-by-step guide for identifying and preventing risks to children who interact with your business, UNICEF 2018.

<sup>17</sup> See Child Safeguarding Guidelines and Toolkits 2023, Child Protection Guidelines and Toolkits 2023 and World Service Safeguarding Policy 2023.

## 5. Corruption, Fraud, and Unethical Business Practices

### Definitions

**Corruption** means abuse of trust, power or position for improper gain for oneself or for a third party, such as bribery, embezzlement, extortion, fraud and favoritism.

**Fraud** means every type of cheating, including the intentional distortion, deceit, trickery, and perversion of truth or breach of confidence, relating to LWF's financial, material, or human resources, assets, services and/or transactions, generally for the purpose of personal gain or benefit. Fraud is a criminal cheating or the use of false representations to gain an unjust advantage<sup>18</sup>. Fraud is also every similar inappropriate conduct.

**Ethical Business Practice** means creating a culture where people make decisions and act in ways that build sustainable operations, care for the needs of all stakeholders and comply with their ethical and legal obligations.

### LWF Policy

The LWF operates according to moral and ethical business practices, including transparent, accountable, and honest practices in financial transactions, donations, gifts, and people management<sup>19</sup>. LWF staff shall avoid conflicts of interest and activities which may affect LWF's credibility and integrity. Through ethical business practices, staff promotes an organizational culture based on LWF's core values and ethical principles.

### Staff must:

- Be transparent, accountable and honest in all work-related financial transactions.
- Ensure that financial and other resources are used solely for the intended purpose.
- Conduct all business in accordance with national and international laws and standards.
- Proactively declare any known or potential conflicts of interest<sup>20</sup> to the LWF.
- Always strive for production and delivery of goods and services purchased under conditions that do not involve the abuse or exploitation of any persons and have the least negative impact on the environment.

### Staff must never:

- Steal, misuse or misappropriate funds, property or any other income including cash.
- Engage in abusive transactions, forging of documents, money laundering, taking of bribes or commissions or influencing tender process for benefit or illegal activities.
- Take part in activities that generate undue personal, organizational or collective profit as such activities may affect, or appear to affect, LWF's credibility or integrity.
- Accept any gifts or other favors<sup>21</sup> that may influence the performance of duties.
- Use illegal labor, child labor or forced labor.

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<sup>18</sup> Examples :Theft, misuse or misappropriate funds, property or any other income; dishonesty in the handling or reporting of money or financial document; engaging in abusive transactions, forging of documents, money laundering, taking of commissions or influencing tender process for benefit or illegal activities; involvement in activities that generate personal, organisational or collective profit such as buying or selling when such activities may affect, or appear to affect, the LWF's credibility or integrity; sharing of profits such as kickbacks, cuts or discounts for improper personal or organisational benefits; accepting of any gifts or other favours that may influence the performance of staff functions or duties; gifts are defined as, but not limited to: services, travel, entertainment, material goods, among others. Use of illegal labour, child labour or forced labour; use or distribution of known unsafe products or supplies in any development or humanitarian setting; disclosing confidential and proprietary information to outside parties; destruction, removal or inappropriate use of records, furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

<sup>19</sup> See LWF procurement guidelines for more information.

<sup>20</sup> Examples: direct relationship between staff and service providers, suppliers of goods, candidates to LWF openings or recipients of LWF aid or benefits.

<sup>21</sup> Gifts are defined as, but not limited to, services, travel, entertainment, material goods, among others. In order to respect national and local traditions and conventional hospitality, minor tokens and gifts can be accepted.

## 6. Use of Information Technology (IT) and Data Protection

**Information Technology** refers to the usage and management of any IT-related facilities, such as internet networks, data and devices (e.g., mobile phones, personal computers, laptops and printers).

**Data Protection** relates to the legal obligation to prevent data which are accessible to staff, whether stored on IT devices or in any other format, from being compromised, corrupted, lost or used in a manner which violates individual rights to privacy or consent.

### LWF Policy

Staff entrusted with access to data through LWF IT platforms or material must ensure to use them in a responsible manner and safeguard them from any form of misuse. Violation of existing LWF rules and regulations, infringement to other sections of this Code of Conduct, or discredit to the LWF as a result of misuse of LWF IT platforms, LWF material or LWF data are not tolerated.

### Staff must:

- Ensure that they understand and follow LWF IT and Data Protection rules and procedures, both for professional and private purpose.
- Behave responsibly on social media to communicate about topics within their areas of expertise, as long as this doesn't interfere with their primary duties or the security of the persons or IT systems.<sup>22</sup>
- Properly refer to and quote LWF official communication.
- Ensure that personal activities do not affect their professional work, imply additional cost or induce reputational risk for the organization.
- Exercise absolute discretion concerning all confidential and sensitive information, especially information related to staff and communities.
- Ensure compliance with relevant data protection laws and rules.
- Protect and safeguard private data as a duty of care to other people.
- Commit to protect the confidentiality of LWF internal information, and not to use nor share such information for any personal advantage or gain.

### Staff must never:

- Use LWF facilities and devices for personal profit, such as conducting trades or offering personal services. Any form of illegal activities is not tolerated.
- Use LWF facilities and devices for the production, consumption, sales or purchase of sexual exploitation or abuse material.
- Download on professional computer any illegal software, shareware or applications.
- Store any item at risk of violating other existing LWF rules and regulations or this Code of Conduct.
- Engage in written exchanges, activities and behaviors that could tarnish the reputation of the LWF or violates this Code of Conduct.
- Publish any text or videos that have been produced by and for the use of the LWF, without prior approval from the Office for Communication, due to intellectual property rights or without duly quoting the source<sup>23</sup>.

## 7. Promote Safety and Security

### Definition and Policy

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<sup>22</sup> More information in the LWF Social Media Guidelines.

<sup>23</sup> Staff is encouraged to use photos stored in the LWF database.



The LWF has a duty of care towards its staff. Where it carries out its activities, Safety and Security measures are in place to mitigate risks. Personal awareness and appropriate behavior have the purpose to promote a safe environment in order to conduct activities without endangering health and safety.

**Staff must:**

- Ensure that staff understand and follow LWF Security and Safety rules and procedures.
- Understand and be sensitive towards the risks and mitigating measures in the specific context.
- Behave in order to increase personal safety and security and that of others and to minimize risks of loss of life, health, wellbeing and assets.

**Staff must never:**

- Take risks compromising Safety and Security for themselves and others.
- Drive under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any other substances.

## **IV. Breach of the Staff Code of Conduct**

- A. A breach of the Staff Code of Conduct is a misconduct that may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the respective LWF terms, conditions and regulations and other applicable legal provisions, including, if applicable, charges under criminal law or termination of activity or employment.
- B. The LWF is committed to protect anyone reporting a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct in good faith and on reasonable grounds. The LWF endeavors to offer protective measures to individuals assessed to be at risk as a result of a reported breach of the Staff Code of Conduct.
- C. Purposely reporting a complaint based on false accusations, which later proves to be malicious, is in itself a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct.
- D. Failure to report through the appropriate channels any breach of the LWF Staff Code of Conduct is in itself a breach of the Staff Code of Conduct.

## **8. Reporting a Breach of the Staff Code of Conduct**

Breaches of the Staff Code of Conduct shall be reported as soon as possible. There are several ways to report: through the email address below, to any trusted person or assigned focal person for the Staff Code of Conduct, to a specially designated group, or to human resources staff. They shall take the necessary and prompt action.

All information related to breaches of the Staff Code of Conduct will be treated by all parties with confidentiality, stored safely and only shared on a need-to-know basis.

Breach of the Staff Code of Conduct can be reported directly to the following address:

- [codeofconduct@lutheranworld.org](mailto:codeofconduct@lutheranworld.org)

In World Service country programs, national email addresses or feedback boxes may also be available.

## Appendix 1

### Compliance Agreement with the LWF Staff Code of Conduct

The signatory<sup>24</sup> below has read, understood and is in agreement with the content of the LWF Staff Code of Conduct. The signatory also accepts the consequences which could be applied to him/her in case of any violation of any of the above provisions under this Code of Conduct.

Name: .....

Position: .....

Place: ..... Date:.....

Signature: .....

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<sup>24</sup> The LWF Staff Code of Conduct is signed by all staff working under an agreement of employment, during their service with and for the LWF, by anyone working for the LWF or on behalf of the LWF on another basis, such as a consultancy contract, a secondment agreement with another employer, temporary staff, trainees, interns, incentives workers and volunteers, as well as visitors under LWF responsibility, at all times, by casual staff including persons representing LWF in conferences and events, by all individuals carrying out activities under LWF's name and status, by individuals involved in LWF-led projects and programs at any level, during the project / program.