

Codes of Conduct – for Norwegian Mission Organisations with international involvement

Introduction

During the last decades the context of both mission work and mission way of working have changed radically. This is why NORME (Norwegian Council for Mission and Evangelism) has prepared these simple Codes of Conduct for mission organisations and missionaries.

Attitudes and relationships

A Christian view of human life

The mission organisations base their work on a view of human life from the Bible. Mans worth is given from outside, from God, thus independent of characteristics, skills, culture, rase, gender and age. The human life is holy and inviolable from conception to death. We understand the human being as a relational being, created to live in relation to God, himself, other human beings, and nature.

Human Rights

The mission organisations and their staff shall in all their work respect international ratified human rights (from the UN and the Council of Europe Human Rights Conventions) and work towards whatever needed to respect these rights.

Christian charity

Christian charity is founded on the common understanding of our responsibility for our fellow human beings and the world we live in. This should be visible through the mission organisations way of work and work-tasks, and in our attitude towards human beings, nature and environment. We should especially pay attention to the weakest amongst us and strive so we and our partners will present ourselves as trustworthy speakers for the weaker.

Ethnocentrism, racist attitudes and cultural sensitivity

The mission organisations and their staff members disapprove all kinds of expressions of cultural arrogance. Such expressions can give reasons for or cause ethnocentrism or racist attitudes. We prefer to put effort into developing cultural sensitivity and respect for local traditions.

Towards children and adolescents

The Children Convention with its 54 articles gives good guidance as to how children should be respected and treated. The mission organisations and their staff ought to see to that the Convention is respected.

Sexual abuse

NORME and its member organisations aim at sexual abuse and excessive sexual behaviour are not occurring. NORME and its member organisations shall be on general alert with clear guidelines to prevent abuse in a professional and justifiable way. Numerous organisations have prepared guidelines which can be used as a template, or one can get assistance from e.g. the guidelines prepared by Norwegian Christian Council.

Buying of sexual favours shall not occur.

Professional and ethical competence

Personal and professional qualifications are essential for all the mission organisations and their staff. Both formal qualifications and real competence are important. High degree of ethical consciousness on the commitments towards sending organisation and partners is very important as well.

Local legislations

The mission organisations and their staff have to respect the legislations in the country they are working. We want to renounce corruption, bribes, and other illegal and unethical economical transactions both in the work of the organisations and in staff-members private affairs and activities.

Local foundation and partnership

The local church will always have the primary responsibility for the mission work. All the work should be done together with and in understanding and dialogue with the local partners. The mission organisations' contributions should aim at strengthening the partner's independency and counteract dependency. Local foundation is important to assure that the target group will take part on all levels and in all stages. The mission organisations and their staff should respect the partner churches and their rules, theology and teaching, both when working and in leisure time.

What about other religions?

The mission organisations and their staff have to acknowledge their commitment to present the Good News for people of other beliefs. This has to happen together with or at least in understanding with the local churches. When preaching and teaching the Good News, all kind of use of power, threats, manipulation, or misguiding, in words or deeds, are unacceptable. The mission organisations and their staff should treat people from other religions with dignity and respect and work for everyone's right to practise their religion according to their conviction, whether Christians or Non-Christians.

Peace and reconciliation

The mission organisations and their staff should promote peace and reconciliation between ethnic groups, between people from different religions, and between other groups in conflict, enhancing the local community.

Conflicts

As parts of the body of Christ, we are co-workers in a ministry with a common, superior purpose. It is expected that the co-workers show each other respect and lives in settled relationships between themselves. We will be careful in how we talk about national and international colleagues, and avoid spreading rumours which can nourish conflicts or make damage to anyone's reputation.

Social justice

In their work the mission organisations and their staff should prioritize the local community's need and search to find social justice, among other ways, through the role of advocacy. Development and aid should be given without taking account of religion, race, or other dividing lines, and should first and foremost aim at helping the most weak in the society.

Ecology

Respecting the work of creation, our work shall be pervaded with a high degree of ecological consciousness. It's a purpose to have sustainable use of resources, with minimal damage to the environment, and avoid all unnecessary pollution (biological, chemical, visual and when it comes to noise and the like). We should encourage to recycling and reuse.

Communication

Purpose

The mission organisations should give suggestions to the medias so they may write about mission, development work and aid. All our information shall be true, trustworthy, and give a respectful image of our partners.

Message

The mission organisations should give a true presentation of its basis, purpose, values, and work methods. The organisations shall prepare information of its work with respect for what the local community and the local partners present as their self-understanding. The mission organisations should strive for openness towards the media in issues of general interest. That includes the administration of the organisation's resources.

Target Group

The mission organisations respect current rules for personal security in all relationships.

Ethics in Media

When profiling, the mission organisations should define the purpose for each task. All tasks should have respect for the dignity of the ones that are presented or that will gain from any kind of fundraising. When using pictures, one should name the source, the object should be relevant, and the presentation should be given in a way that secures no insult.

Leadership and Personnel

Leadership

The mission organisation's superior leadership should profile the purpose of the organisation. The management should be representative for the members of the organisation. The form of leadership should present a Christian view of life and human beings. This includes caring for the staff. Relevant competence should be situated within the management or within reach for consultation.

Hired staff

The mission organisation should have a total overview when it comes to personnel, independent of where each person is situated. The staff should be guaranteed satisfactorily working conditions and the possibility for personal development. All hired staff should have a written working contract.

An overall view has to act according to what is needed to live and work in a foreign culture. When moving to another country, the employee's family situation has to be taken into account. One has to find the best possible solutions for the children/adolescent growing up under cross-cultural conditions. The preparations have to be organized and adjusted to the partner's priorities. The missionaries need follow-up and to be given the opportunity to be an integrated part of the cooperation. There should be clear, written contracts of the service relationship, for working tasks and areas of responsibility.

Volunteer staff

Volunteer staff is a huge resource for the work and should be seen and treated as valuable staff. There should be proper conditions as to sending the short-time workers and volunteers. One should take into consideration the difference when it comes to premises and the character of the ministry.

Fundraising and Economy

Administration of assets and budgeting

Budgeting and administration of money should be conducted according to current legislation and in a responsible way, according to well-known, ethical principles.

Fundraising

Fundraising should happen according to acceptable ethical principles (i.e. The Norwegian Control Committee for Fundraising in Norway). One should strive for the highest possible openness.

Donations and earmarked income

Donations should be used according to the organisations articulated purposes. The organisations must be able to present how the donations have been used, and the reporting of accounts must be transparent.

External partners

The mission organisations should have clear guidelines when paying out from project money to external groups and partners, also when it comes to follow-up and evaluation of the same projects. The organisations should use competence criteria when searching external assistance, and one should prepare information of the extent of fees for services and their determination.

Account and Audit

The accounts from the mission organisations should present a truthful picture of the economic situation. The presentation should be open and transparent. Audit should be done through a state authorised public accountant or registered accountant or other independent accountants, elected in a satisfactory way.

Norwegian Council for Mission and Evangelism
7th December 2005

Passed at 7th December 2005 in issue 14 2005/2006:

Discussion over the suggestions for “Codes of Conduct”.

Decision: The Board of NORME passes the Codes of Conduct as they are and recommend its members to use these guidelines in their organisations and churches. The Manager will distribute these guidelines immediately.