



Anti-Corruption Policy

Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) has a zero tolerance policy on corruption. WONGOSOL's stance on corruption is to:

- Never accept
- Always prevent
- Always act
- Always inform

Introduction

Happenings normally mentioned to as corruption are not always regarded as illegal in the eyes of the law. Sometimes corruption is more about the violation of accepted ethics and morals.

Corruption exists in all societies and most individuals have the same tendencies to act corruptly under certain circumstances. Corruption occurs both on a large and small scale. WONGOSOL takes a standpoint against all possible irregularities that may arise.

Corruption hinders development and contributes to the unequal distribution of resources. Corruption affects the poorest societies and worsens the predicament of vulnerable people. Women are disproportionately affected as they often represent a larger share of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society. It is therefore particularly important for WONGOSOL to work against corruption.

Corruption can occur when the possibility of obtaining personal benefits arises. An active approach is required to prevent corruption. As corruption is hard to detect, and difficult and costly to investigate, prevention is very important. Clear guidelines, good routines and systems are important tools to detect and prevent corruption. It is also important to work with raising awareness and documentation.

When corruption is deemed to be a criminal offence, it must be reported to the police and may, in case of conviction, result in dismissal. Corrupt behavior, or the failure to detect it,

may result in a withdrawal of funding for network organizations. This may subsequently lead to prosecution and an obligation to repay funding received.

Definition

WONGOSOL defines corruption as an abuse of trust, power or position that results in improper gain for a person, organisation, political party, company or other. Corruption includes bribery, kickbacks, extortion, favoritism and nepotism, as well as conflicts of interest, embezzlement and fraud.

Scope

This anti-corruption policy should permeate the entire WONGOSOL organization – locally and nationally – and should be applied both internally and during collaborations with network organizations.

The policy applies to all WONGOSOL's EMPLOYEES and all NETWORK organizations, in all positions and for all tasks.

WONGOSOL should ensure that network organizations are aware of the policy and that they apply it.

Network organizations should have other (their own) channels to report suspected cases of corruption, in addition to those mentioned in this document.

Responsibility

The Secretariat is responsible for informing the board about the WONGOSOL Anti-Corruption Policy.

All managers at WONGOSOL are responsible for ensuring that all employees receive information about the anti-corruption policy and how they should identify, recognize and handle corruption risks.

All employees are required to work actively to prevent corruption by identifying, recognizing and acknowledging corruption risks throughout the organization, as well as reporting irregularities and suspected cases of corruption.

Those individuals who enter into agreements, as an authorized signatory, with WONGOSOL are responsible for ensuring that the respective partner organization complies with this anti-corruption policy.

Never accept

WONGOSOL has zero tolerance against corruption. This means that we will never accept corruption. However, the zero tolerance policy must not pose a threat to an individual's life or health, or that of others.

In a threatening situation, individuals' safety is always paramount. If an employee feels compelled to participate in corrupt behavior (e.g. being forced to pay for something that should be free), this should be documented and reported, so that we can analyze if and how this situation could have been prevented and thus be able to act against corruption in the future.

“Never accepting” means that individuals are aware of and work against the profoundly negative impact of corruption, and thereby a more equal and fair world. “Never accepting” also means knowing about which mechanisms are hidden behind corruption so as to be able to work to prevent corruption.

Always prevent

There are some common situations that may pose a risk for corruption:

- Opportunity: Prevention means minimizing opportunity.
- Organizational culture: messages from management, lack of transparency.
- Tolerance in society.

Raising awareness about corruption internally is essential to achieve results. WONGOSOL must acknowledge corruption risks when establishing and applying internal rules and routines.

Most funds received by WONGOSOL's is used to support initiatives implemented through local partner organizations within the 15 subdivision of Liberia where corruption is prevalent. Anti-corruption work should occur in collaboration with our network organizations in order to be effective. A significant part of anti-corruption work involves adapting the collaboration with local organizations to minimize the risks for corruption at all stages.

Always act

When suspected irregularities or cases of corruption concerning network organizations arise, WONGOSOL must immediately take action to minimize any damage and ensure a prompt investigation. The secretariat will initiate the work. The grievances committee has the main responsibility for the investigation and decisions about appropriate actions.

In case of suspected irregularities/corruption, the action plan should be completed and all correspondence should be logged by the respective team/individual. These papers should be archived by the grievances committee.

The grievances committee is available for support and, as necessary, another individual may be assigned to a specific case. In cases where these individuals are suspected of being involved or biased, this must be reported to the top management and, finally, the Chairman of the Board. Suspicions of fraud or corruption can also be reported to the organization's auditor.

WONGOSOL whistleblowing procedure is where individuals can anonymously report suspected cases of corruption concerning activities in project communities against implementing networking partners or projects supervisors.

When suspected crimes are reported to the police, the general rule is that the police will take over the investigation.

Always inform

An open and transparent approach is important when working against corruption.

Anyone who suspects irregularities is not required to provide proof or have full knowledge of the case. Anyone reporting suspected irregularities must not be subjected to harassment or reprisals.

Donors, auditors and other stakeholders should also be informed early on by the immediate Executive Director of WONGOSOL.

Communication managers and press officers should be informed to assess any possible impact on WONGOSOL communication work.

Gifts

The Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia also enforces zero tolerance on gifts.

Bribery is a criminal offence. It is therefore illegal to accept gifts and this may be subject to legal proceedings. The relationship between the benefactor and the recipient will determine whether it is a gift or a bribe.

Individuals who have personal friendships with people at network organizations should not exchange gifts until the collaboration has ceased or the individuals no longer work for WONGOSOL.

Individuals who have visited an organizations or event as a speaker or an official guest may accept token gifts, but they must not be personal (ensue to WONGOSOL) and they should not be transferable into money.