OXFAM NOVIB

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

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1. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Conflict of Interest	A situation in which a person's loyalties or interests are (perceived to) or might be in conflict with those of the organisation. This may be caused by a private relationship or association with a person, group or entity with whom they have a professional relationship or association, or (alternatively) by a private interest, activity or activities conducted during or outside of working hours.
Actual and Potential Conflicts of Interest	Conflicts of interest that exist, or might exist if no avoidance or mitigation actions are taken. For the purposes of this policy, this includes any situation in which a relevant person's loyalties or interests are - or might be - in conflict with Oxfam Novib. Note that the conflict of interest exists regardless of whether or not the potential risks associated with it actually occur. The existence of a conflict of interest does not necessary imply wrongdoing, but does require the situation that gives rise to the actual or potential conflict of interest to be addressed and associated risks mitigated.
Perceived Conflicts of Interest	Conflicts that do not exist, but that might be perceived as existing by a reasonable third party. Perceived conflicts can be equally harmful to the reputation of Oxfam Novib (and those that work for/with us) as actual conflicts, and so must be managed accordingly.
Ancillary Activities	Business interests or other (paid or unpaid) private activities that are not conducted as part of an employee's Oxfam Novib employment (e.g. ownership of a private business enterprise, external consultancies, trusteeship appointments, political campaigning, the authoring/publication of articles, books or other media, public speaking engagements, etc.).
Oxfam Novib Activities and Interests	Any project, programme, activity or related business operation (including fundraising) conducted or formally sponsored or supported by Oxfam Novib. This includes such activities conducted via partner organisations or by contracted representatives acting on Oxfam Novib's behalf.

2. BACKGROUND

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3. POLICY SCOPE

3.1 This policy applies globally to all Oxfam Novib employees and those associated with the delivery of Oxfam Novib's work, including volunteers, interns, contracted representatives, and those working on temporary/consultancy contracts. This policy applies both during and outside normal working hours, except in countries where the following policy contravenes local legislation. In these cases, local legislation must be followed, with guidance from the relevant HR Business Partner/Manager. Oxfam Novib's policy will apply in the event that it is more stringent than local legislation.

3.2 Breaches of this policy (and the associated procedure) will be addressed and may result in disciplinary action. Where there are suspicions or concerns that an undeclared conflict of interest has been abused as part of an act of corruption, this must be reported to the Integrity Team pursuant to the Speak Up protocol. See the Oxfam Anti-Fraud and Corruption policy for guidance.

4. POLICY PURPOSE

1.1 Oxfam Novib is committed to upholding the highest standards of integrity through fostering a culture of ethics, transparency and accountability in all areas of its work and expects its employees to uphold these standards at all times. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to employees on the identification, disclosure and management of conflicts of interest.

1.2 Oxfam Novib recognises that Oxfam Novib employees bring valuable skills, experience, networks and contacts to their work that have been gained through their active involvement in society and the communities in which we operate. Additionally, Oxfam Novib supports the rights of its employees to be actively engaged in social and political movements, and encourages staff to contribute their knowledge and experience to the broader development community. This policy does not seek to curtail those rights, which are key to the achievement of Oxfam Novib's mission. However, as a charitable organisation that relies on funding, goodwill and campaign engagement from the public, and the trust of the communities in which we work, Oxfam Novib relies on employees to conduct themselves appropriately and in line with the Code of Conduct and Oxfam's organisational values at all times. It is vital that all activities conducted by, or on Oxfam Novib's behalf, are (perceived to be) conducted fairly and in accordance with Oxfam's principles; and are not compromised or undermined by private interests or affiliations. For this reason, staff are required to declare any activities in their private lives and any personal or familial relationships that may present a conflict of interest with Oxfam's work or mission, or could otherwise be damaging to Oxfam's reputation and public image.

1.3 This Conflict of Interest policy comprises a common set of principles which, along with the Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management Procedure, must be followed by all staff to whom this policy applies. The policy principles (section 6) detail the standards of conduct expected of employees in relation to conflicts of interest. The Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management Procedure (available via Compass) details the standard process that must be followed by all staff, with specific responsibilities for staff, managers and HR regarding the declaration, assessment and management of conflicts of interest.

5. POLICY PRINCIPLES

5.1 Oxfam Novib requires all those associated with its work (whether in a voluntary, temporary or permanent capacity or otherwise) to act in the best interests of Oxfam and its international affiliates and to perform their duties, and conduct their private lives, in a manner that avoids (possible) conflict with the work of Oxfam. By agreeing to work for Oxfam Novib, employees accept a duty to act in Oxfam Novib's best interests, and thus to refrain from using their position for personal gain and to avoid personal or financial interests that could conflict with, or be perceived to conflict with, the interests of Oxfam Novib. This forms a key component of Oxfam's Code of Conduct, which applies to all staff, volunteers and contracted third parties.

5.2 This does not mean that every outside activity is a potential conflict of interest. There will be many activities that have no bearing on a staff member's work at Oxfam Novib and there may be other activities where - provided they are declared in advance - a conflict of interest can be avoided, or associated risks mitigated. In accordance with Oxfam Novib's Collective Labour Agreement (CLA) and applicable National Staff Terms and Conditions (NSTC), written permission must be sought before the commencement of any paid or unpaid ancillary activity. In some cases, permission may be refused if it is deemed that the activity is at odds with a staff member's duties to Oxfam Novib as their employer. This includes participation in politically sensitive activities that could put Oxfam Novib, its work, its employees and its partners at risk.

5.3 Oxfam Novib employees must not (whether in their own name, anonymously or under a pseudonym):

a. Allow activities outside work to interfere with, or adversely affect, their work with Oxfam Novib;

b. Allow any undeclared and unmanaged conflict of interest to exist between their duty to act in the best interest of Oxfam Novib and their private interests (including those of a third party);

c. Exploit Oxfam's name, or make use of or exploit their connection with Oxfam; exploit any information obtained as a result of their Oxfam Novib employment to further their own private interest or the interest of any outside organisation or other third party; exploit any information that would be to the detriment of Oxfam Novib;

d. Act in any other manner likely to damage Oxfam's reputation and public image, or negatively affect the objectivity, integrity and accountability of Oxfam Novib operations.

5.4 All Oxfam Novib employees are required to disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in accordance with this policy, the associated procedure and, unless otherwise authorised in writing by management, must formally excuse themselves from participating in activities with regard to any involvement in any matter which might give rise to a conflict of interest situation.

5.5 When an actual or possible/perceived conflict of interest arises, the conflict shall be disclosed by staff members in accordance with the principles outlined in this policy and the associated procedure, mitigated by the organisation, and resolved in favour of the interests of Oxfam Novib. Failing to declare a conflict of interest may expose a member of staff or related personnel to allegations of corruption (see Oxfam Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy) or other disciplinary action, civil or criminal offences.

Types of conflict of interest

5.6 All actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest must be declared in accordance with this policy. This policy therefore requires employees to consider whether any association could give rise to a perceived or potential conflict of interest because even the appearance of a conflict of interest can be damaging to the reputation of Oxfam Novib and of its staff. For example, a senior Oxfam Novib manager might be related to an employee of an Oxfam Novib supplier; however the senior Oxfam Novib manager is not involved in procurement processes through which the supplier was selected, nor has any other involvement in Oxfam Novib's dealings with the supplier. In these circumstances, whilst the Oxfam Novib manager does not have an actual conflict, it is likely that other parties (e.g. rival suppliers) might perceive that the manager's seniority in the organisation could influence the impartiality of those involved in supplier selection. It is therefore vital that staff consider their associations carefully and objectively, and also declare situations where perceived conflicts of interest might exist so that risks can be appropriately managed and mitigated.

5.7 The following represents a non-exhaustive list of situations that may present an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest:

a. Business or close personal associations with organisations and/or individuals who have a trading relationship with Oxfam Novib as a supplier or customer.

b. Business or close personal associations with organisations and/or individuals tendering for work from Oxfam Novib. Oxfam Novib staff need to avoid situations in which their knowledge or involvement in the tendering process (or other method of procurement) could be viewed as influencing a commercial decision in favour of an organisation with which they have a link. This includes through partner organisations.

c. Business or close personal associations with organisations and/or individuals that supply goods and services to Oxfam Novib. This becomes a matter of concern, particularly if a staff member is involved in decisions that might affect the choice of a supplier, the price paid for goods or services, or arrangement for the provision of goods and services.

d. Involvement in, oversight of, or influence over the selection, management or monitoring of Oxfam Novib partner organisations (including sub-granted organisations) with whom a staff member has a business, personal or private association or interest. This includes associations with individual employees of partner/sub-granted organisations.

e. Business or close personal associations with beneficiaries, programme participants or other recipients of Oxfam Novib funds or programme support.

f. Business or close personal associations with political figures, local government representatives, ministers or other state officials; government officials, or other persons representing any kind of authority, with interests in or influence over Oxfam Novib activities.

g. Active political involvement in a political party, organisation or government authority.

h. Involvement in, oversight of, or influence over the recruitment of and/or the working conditions of family members, or people with whom the staff member has a personal relationship or association.

i. The unauthorised authoring, publishing or promoting of publications that are contrary to Oxfam Novib principles or behavioural standards or contradict an organisational position.
j. Making statements to the press, radio or other agencies of public information, accepting speaking engagements, or submitting articles, books or other material for publication when these relate to Oxfam Novib's activities or interests (broadly defined) and are not part of the staff member's official duties. This policy does not apply to statements, speaking engagements or publications done in an official capacity, for which approval procedures for work-related activities apply.

Personal and familial relationships

5.8 The employment of people who are related to, or otherwise maintain a close personal relationship with, an Oxfam Novib employee or their immediate family can create an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest. This includes those selected as volunteers, interns, consultants and contractors. Therefore, recognised partners (including spouses, or other established relationships), family members, or others who maintain a personal relationship (e.g. close personal friends) with an Oxfam Novib employee cannot be employed into a position which is superior or subordinate in the line of authority of the Oxfam Novib staff member; or where they are otherwise involved in the process of reaching or reviewing an administrative decision affecting the status or entitlements of the staff member to whom they are related or associated. This also applies to relationships that form between employees during their Oxfam Novib employment, as well as to the engagement of consultants, suppliers and volunteers.

5.9 In all such instances, advice needs to be sought from HR and alternative line management arrangements need to be made. Conflict of interest declarations must be made in accordance with this policy and the Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management procedure, and appropriate mitigation action applied.

5.10 For the purposes of this policy, family members will be determined as those with any degree of consanguinity ('blood relatives') or affinity ('non-blood relatives'), as follows:
Degrees of Consanguinity

Degrees of Affinity

5.11 Where existing employees subsequently form a personal relationship or become related after they commence their employment with Oxfam Novib, they should confidentially discuss their employment position with their Human Resources team. The purpose of this review it to ensure that matters of management, supervision, audit and possible functional conflicts can be considered. The objective is to be reasonable, to safeguard Oxfam Novib, and to maintain good employee relations.

5.12 If, during their Oxfam Novib employment, an employee is considering employment, a voluntary role or a consultancy or supplier contract for a personal relative or friend, the relationship must be declared in writing and any decision referred to the employee's manager, or another independent manager. If the employee has concerns about a relationship and is not sure if it comes within the scope of this policy, they are advised to discuss this matter with their Human Resources team.

Purchasing & procurement

5.13 Anyone involved in a procurement process (including, but not limited to, requesting goods/services, obtaining bids, supplier evaluation, contract award, authorisation or approvals), or with oversight responsibility for a supplier's performance, must declare any existing or potential association with any (potential) supplier involved in the process. Where an association does exist, staff members will not ordinarily be permitted to influence, or become involved in the procurement (or other associated business) process. Their recusal from the process must be documented. Any management decision to allow a staff member with a declared association to continue involvement in a procurement process must follow a documented risk assessment, in accordance with the Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management Procedure.

5.14 Staff members must inform their managers in writing of any contact they have with a (potential) supplier with whom they have a personal association at any stage during the procurement process, or subsequent delivery of goods or services. Staff must not provide information or assistance to any organisation, supplier or individual (including consultants) that are bidding or being considered for work with Oxfam Novib that would provide them with an unfair advantage, could be deemed to be anti-competitive, or in breach of any statutory requirement in a country or trading region.

5.15 In considering whether to grant permission to an employee to become or remain involved in a procurement (or associated business) process, a manager should consider the extent of the declared association, and the risk (or perceived risk) associated with the procurement. In some circumstances the manager may assess that an association no longer exists (for example, where 7+ years have elapsed since the association was 'active'). In all cases, the Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management Procedure must be followed.

Personal gifts and hospitality

5.16 Employees should not accept personal gifts from organisations or individuals with whom they have or might have dealings on behalf of Oxfam Novib. This can include entertainment (outside the scope of normal business hospitality), or goods and services in kind or at preferential rates. It is however recognised that, in some contexts, it might be culturally insensitive/offensive to decline or refuse to accept a gift that is offered. In these circumstances employees may opt to accept a gift that is offered to them. Any such gift accepted by an employee must be within the limits of reasonable judgement, in consideration of things such as the value and appropriateness of the gift, and the circumstances in which it was offered (e.g. a gift provided by a supplier to a member of procurement committee during a bid evaluation would be inappropriate, as would a gift from a job applicant to a member of their recruitment panel, etc.). It must be made clear to the giver that gifts accepted in these circumstances are received by the employee on behalf of Oxfam Novib, and must then be declared to Oxfam Novib as outlined in paragraph 5.19. Monetary gifts (such as cash, bank transfer, vouchers or tokens) must not be accepted in any circumstances.

5.17 Staff members can accept normal business hospitality on a reasonable scale when representing Oxfam Novib and its interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct and Anti-Fraud & Corruption policy. Examples of 'normal business hospitality' would include the provision of reasonable refreshments/hosting during professional engagements, or attendance at professional events relevant to Oxfam Novib objectives (e.g. NGO forums, trade fairs, training events, etc.).

5.18 Staff members should not place themselves in a position where a gift or hospitality is, or could be interpreted as, a form of inducement (e.g. bribery or other corrupt influence).

5.19 All gifts and hospitality received as a result of employment or association with Oxfam Novib must be declared in writing to the recipient's manager, regardless of value. Managers must assess declared gifts and hospitality received by staff in consideration of the principles of this policy, the Code of Conduct and the Anti-Fraud & Corruption policy. Wherever practical, received gifts should ordinarily be handed over to management for use by Oxfam Novib (e.g. as an office resource, or distributed among staff members, etc.) rather than retained by the recipient. Managers' decisions regarding gifts and hospitality received by staff should be documented and retained.

Involvement in Ancillary Activities

5.20 Oxfam Novib is supportive of employees that choose to become involved in ancillary activities outside of their work. These would include things such as external business interests, political activities, direct involvement in campaigns and activism, membership of a trustee board, and involvement in publications, etc. Oxfam Novib recognises that staff often use their personal platforms to promote actions, activities and campaigns that are supported by Oxfam Novib, or are consistent with, Oxfam Novib's mission and values. However, some ancillary activities (particularly those which make specific reference to, or are associated with, Oxfam Novib) may give rise to a conflict of interest, and as such it is important that relevant ancillary activities are declared and approved by Oxfam Novib in advance.

5.21 In accordance with the CLA / NSTC, all paid or unpaid ancillary activities require the prior written permission of Oxfam Novib. Such permission, when previously granted, can be withdrawn in the event that the activity becomes incompatible or harmful to the fulfilment of an employee's job. Employees should seek the written permission of their manager if they intend to use material, or information associated with their work or otherwise related to Oxfam Novib's interests, or make specific reference to Oxfam Novib in the course of any ancillary activities. If an employee is in doubt about a private activity (such as external business interests, political activities, direct involvement in campaigns and activism, involvement in publications, etc.) in which they are already involved upon joining Oxfam Novib, or when they are considering engaging in a new such activity during their employment, they must talk to their manager first. Internet websites and publications

5.22 If an employee is developing an Internet website for themselves or an outside organisation, or seeks to submit articles, books or other material for publication or for any electronic dissemination in their personal (i.e. non-Oxfam Novib) capacity, they must not use Oxfam Novib copyright material or information (whether confidential or otherwise), and must not link to any Oxfam Novib website or online documentation or reference their Oxfam Novib affiliation without the prior written permission of their manager.

5.23 All external publications, including those expressed through personal social media accounts, should follow the principles of this policy and the Oxfam Novib Code of Conduct. Staff should also refer to Oxfam Novib's social media guidelines relating the use of websites such as Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media platforms ('Guidelines for the use of Twitter and LinkedIn').

Political activities

5.24 Oxfam Novib supports the right of employees to be politically engaged and active. However, active involvement in a political party or organisation (when not conducted as part of an Oxfam-sponsored campaign or project) can give rise to questions regarding a (perceived) lack of impartiality, or might undermine or contradict an organisational stance or value. What is acceptable in a given case depends on the individual's job (level) and the extent of their political involvement. In accordance with the Code of Conduct, employees must declare any intention to seek a nomination as a prospective candidate or another official role for any political party or public office, to clarify whether any conflict or perceived conflict with Oxfam Novib duties may arise.

5.25 Employees must inform their managers if:

a. They intend to seek nomination as a candidate for any local, national or international parliamentary or governmental body at any level.
b. They currently hold an elected position in any local, national or international parliamentary or governmental body at any level.
c. They intend to re-stand for a position they already hold.
d. If they seek nomination or are selected as a candidate for election.
e. They act as a voluntary advisor to an elected politician.
f. They hold an elected office in a political party.
g. They wish to stand for election to local Council, parliament or political party.

5.26 Standing for election requires consent from Oxfam Novib which will not be unreasonably withheld (permission may be refused where, for example, activities might put Oxfam programmes, employees or partner organisations at risk). However, Oxfam Novib retains the right to consult with employees on how to conduct themselves to safeguard its reputation and public trust. If an employee is elected as a Member of Parliament or governmental assembly, they will be required to resign from Oxfam Novib with immediate effect.

5.27 Any (political) campaigning activity must not make use of Oxfam resources, must be conducted in staff members' own time and must not (be perceived to) conflict with their work at Oxfam Novib. Polling day itself should be taken either as registered or unpaid leave.

5.28 If an employee's family members or a close personal contact is standing for election, it is acceptable to express personal support for the individual standing for election, but they should not use Oxfam Novib's name, and where their support extends to political support this will be subject to the considerations as outlined above.

5.29 Similarly, Oxfam Novib shall not require employees to express a public political stance that could present a conflict of interest. Whilst Oxfam Novib might encourage staff to support public campaigns (such as through the sharing of messages on social media platforms), employees will not be obligated to engage privately in such political/campaign activities.

Trade Union/Staff Association activities

5.30 Oxfam Novib supports the right to collective bargaining in the countries where we work and within our own organisation. Employees are therefore free to take part in activities organised by a union/staff association that is recognised by Oxfam Novib. Employees who are elected as accredited trade union representatives may, from time to time, comment on political matters whilst representing the interests of their members. When expressing such views, employees should state that they are expressing these views as a trade union representative and that they are not necessarily reflecting the views of Oxfam Novib.

Use of information and resources

5.31 Anyone working for Oxfam Novib must refrain from using Oxfam resources to further their private interests or do any work for an outside company. Employees should seek the permission of their manager before using Oxfam information or making reference to Oxfam in any book, article, lecture or statement to the press. They must not reveal or share confidential information, including personal or sensitive data, received in the course of their duties, to a supporter, supplier, competitor or other organisation without authorisation from relevant persons. This commitment to confidentiality is required during employment and continues after staff have left Oxfam Novib. Anyone who deliberately reveals such information may be in breach of Oxfam's GDPR obligations, other local applicable laws, and/or the Code of Conduct.

5.32 Requirements around confidential information do not cover situations in which a staff member reports misconduct or acts as a whistle-blower. Refer to the Speak Up Protocol for further guidance in this regard.

Official travel with spouses, partners or other personal contacts

5.33 Staff are not permitted to take their spouse, partner or any other personal contact on a business trip at Oxfam Novib expense, unless it is a requirement of the formal duties of the visit and has been approved in advance (in writing) by the appropriate Director. In any other circumstances, if a staff member wishes to be accompanied, they must have the authorisation of their manager and all expenses for the companion, including travel and accommodation, must be paid for with their own funds.

6. RESPONSABILITIES & OWNING UNIT

6.1 Oxfam Novib's Director of Finance and Operations is process owner of this policy.

6.2 All Oxfam Novib employees (as defined in section 2.1) are responsible for declaring actual, possible and potential conflicts of interest pursuant to this policy and the Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management procedure. Line managers of staff are responsible for creating and updating risk assessments for declared conflicts. HR is responsible for reviewing and approving these risk assessments.

6.3 With the support of the Integrity Team and the HR Department, this policy shall be reviewed and updated periodically (two-year review cycle).

8.1 RACI-model

Roles and responsibilities with regard to the daily operations and the follow-up of this policy:

Unit / Board of Directors	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed
Integrity Unit	x			
Board of Directors		x		
HR dept			x	x
Workers Council			x	

7. VERSION MANAGEMENT

Description	Version	Date	Author
Final Draft	1.0	18-08-2020	Integrity Unit
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