

ETHICAL & ACCOUNTABILITY

CONDUCT

ACCOUNTABLE

ETHICAL

CODE OF CONDUCT

ADOPTED AND ADHERED TO BY THE

**KOSOVA WOMEN'S NETWORK**



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# CONTENTS

<b>2</b>	<b>PREAMBLE</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>PROGRAM &amp; MISSION</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>GOOD GOVERNANCE</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>HUMAN REOURCES</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY &amp; ACCOUNTABILITY</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>PARTNERSHIPS &amp; NETWORKING</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>HOW THE KWN CODE FUNCTIONS</b>

**Kosova Women's Network Ethical & Accountability Code 2007**

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## PREAMBLE

The *Ethical and Accountability Code* is a document of principles and benchmarks adopted by a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are members of the Kosova Women's Network (KWN). The code supports the enhancement of its members' professionalism and effectiveness as organizations working for the public good. It also provides for a coordinated approach and action towards gender equality and women's rights in Kosova.

In order for their work to be successful, KWN members rely on each other's support. They also depend on a diverse body of individuals, foundations, and organizations to provide moral, technical, financial, or other support. Therefore, KWN members must maintain a trusting, transparent, and open relationship with the public as well as their supporters. With the purpose of strengthening public support and trust, KWN members have developed, adopted, and agreed to follow the KWN *Ethical and Accountability Code*.

The code includes six basic principles: Mission and Program; Good Governance; Human Resources; Financial Transparency and Accountability; Civic Responsibility; and Partnerships and Networking. KWN members' progress toward meeting these principles is measured through a series of benchmarks, which show the extent to which an organization is meeting its responsibilities towards its beneficiaries, supporters, and the public at large.

In 2006, all KWN members pledged to fulfill completely the KWN *Ethical and Accountability Code* by December 2009. By the end of 2007, members will have fulfilled at least 50% of the code; by 2008, 75%; and by 2009 the entire code. KWN members have agreed to file an application each year, showing how they continue to make progress toward fulfilling the code.

According to a decision made by its members, KWN publicly disclaims itself from members that fail to fulfill the code for a period longer than one year; they can no longer be KWN members. Each year, KWN issues a new list of its member organizations to other members, supporters, donors, and the public.

KWN supports its members in meeting principles and benchmarks within the code through the provision of ongoing support and training opportunities. In addition, KWN encourages non-member NGOs in Kosova to strive toward similar values of transparency and accountability in their work.

## ABOUT KWN

The Kosova Women's Network (KWN) was established in 2000 as a network of women's groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from throughout Kosova. KWN's membership includes women's NGOs, groups, and associations, some of which are well established in the region and have over ten years of experience in community development.

KWN's *mission* is to support, protect, and promote the rights and interests of women and girls throughout Kosova, regardless of their political beliefs, religion, age, level of education, sexual orientation, and ability. KWN realizes its mission through the exchange of experience and information, partnerships and networking, advocacy, and research.



## WHY IMPLEMENT THE CODE?

By implementing the *Ethical and Accountability Code*, non-governmental organizations can further develop their organizational capacity and professionalize their work. The benchmarks within this code can serve as a guidelines for an organization's staff members to better evaluate the organization's mission and programs; improve the governance of their organization; support better internal relations among staff members and volunteers; ensure financial transparency and accountability; and seek additional relations with community members and other organizations.

Perhaps most importantly, organizations that abide by this code show their commitment to transparency and accountability. Publicly demonstrating professionalism, efficiency, transparency, and accountability will enable organizations to secure greater public trust for their work. Current and potential donors, including citizens, will be encouraged to offer their support to organizations that are transparent and accountable.

Also, by implementing the *Ethical and Accountability Code*, organizations become eligible to become members of the Kosova Women's Network (KWN). KWN members have access to numerous benefits and services...



## WHY BE A KWN MEMBER?

First, KWN assists member organizations to identify sources of funding and support, towards the achievement of their organizational missions. KWN has established working groups comprised of member organizations specializing on three issues: improving women's health, addressing violence against women and trafficking, and increasing women's participation in politics. For some of the member organizations involved in these three network programs alone, KWN raised more than 50,000 Euros that went directly to its member organizations. In the future, KWN will continue to its commitment to identifying resources for member organizations with clear missions that benefit the public good.

Second, as a network of NGOs working to address various issues affecting women and communities in Kosova, KWN provides a forum for NGOs to exchange information and learn from each other's experiences. Bimonthly information-sharing meetings, members' profiles on the KWN website, an annual report that contains members' contact information, and a quarterly newsletter that tells about the network's and individual members' activities are all informational resources that KWN provides to its members and to local and international stakeholders interested in the work of KWN. KWN has thousands of partners and supporters worldwide and it promotes networking between its members and other NGOs, partners, and stakeholders both locally and internationally.

Third, KWN provides a support mechanism through which members with shared concerns can unite quickly toward a common cause. KWN provides advocacy support to its member organizations, joining multiple member organizations together to write advocacy letters and apply pressure as needed at the municipal, national, regional, and international level. KWN protects the values and interests of its members, assisting them with representing their interests before the authorities and public where necessary.

Fourth, KWN has developed a reputation for its accountability, transparency, and advocacy initiatives. By becoming a member organization, NGOs will be recognized as part of this reputable network.

Fifth, toward the achievement of this code and a strong, organizationally-developed membership, KWN provides support services, including information, training, mentoring, and professional advice to help its members further their organizational capacity.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are funded with the intention to serve the public and the public good. Therefore, a KWN member organization must have a clearly defined mission, and its programs and activities must contribute to the achievement of its mission. An organization regularly provides the opportunity for its supporters, beneficiaries, and the public to evaluate its mission, programs, and activities.

## DEFINITION OF A NON-GOVERNMENTAL, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

1. A non-governmental organization (NGO), as such, does not support any one political party. However, the position of a NGO on a certain issue might coincide with the position of a political party on that issue.
2. All NGO staff members who have a formal function or position in a political party must resign from the NGO.
3. Since it operates in the public service, an organization, including its individual staff members and Board members do not profit from its work.
4. A non-governmental organization serves members of society in its work, and its programs and activities are designed based on the needs of the people that it purposes to serve (beneficiaries).
5. A non-governmental organization does not use or support the use of violence or any kind of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or age to achieve its mission, objectives, goals, express its opinions, or gain public attention.
6. Each person that works for the organization voluntarily agrees to participate; in other words, no person is forced to work for the organization.

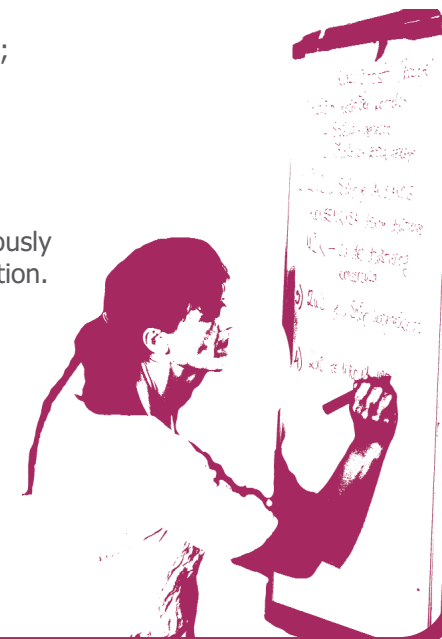
## MISSION

1. The organization has a clear mission or main objective, which specifies:
  - What the organization is working towards;
  - What activities it is involved in;
  - How these activities are realized; and
  - How the activities address the needs of the beneficiaries for which the NGO was established.
2. The mission has been approved by the organization's Board of Directors.
3. In its work towards achieving its mission, the organization is guided by its statute, policy manual, and objectives.
4. The organization's activities are clearly consistent with its mission.



## EVALUATION OF MISSION & PROGRAMS

1. At least every five years, an organization revisits its mission to determine if a need for its programs continues to exist. In cooperation with its staff members, Board, and stated beneficiaries, the organization discusses changes to its mission, programs, or activities.
2. In order to assure quality and accountable service, an organization has procedures and mechanisms in place for evaluation of its mission and programs.
3. Regularly and no less than annually, the organization encourages its staff, members, beneficiaries, supporters, and society to honestly evaluate both quantitatively and qualitatively:
  - If its programs contribute to its mission;
  - The usefulness, effectiveness, and efficiency of its activities;
  - The cost-effectiveness of its activities; and
  - The results for the organization's beneficiaries.This includes a system through which all stakeholders can anonymously file complaints that will be taken into consideration by the organization.
4. The organization uses these evaluations to improve its future work.





# GOVERNANCE



A KWN member organization has an elected, voluntary Board of Directors who are committed to the organization's mission and govern the work of the organization fairly, impartially, and responsibly. An effective Board determines the organization's mission, establishes management policies and procedures, makes sure that the organization has adequate, capable human resources (paid or voluntary), and ensures that the organization has financial resources available for its work. The Board monitors the organization's management, finances, and quality of programs.

## BOARD COMPOSITION

1. The Board of Directors includes individuals who are committed to the organization's mission and have the expertise needed to support the organization in realizing that mission. The Board has at least five members, but seven or more members are preferable.
2. A policy is in place as to how many Board members should be in attendance at a meeting, and this should be a majority of the members on the Board.
3. The length of a Board member's term and the number of times a Board member can be reelected is specified in the organization's policies.
4. The Board members reflect the interests of the group that the organization seeks to serve.
5. Board members are not compensated for their service. They are only reimbursed for costs directly related to their Board service, such as travel expenses for attending meetings.

## BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Board meets no less than twice per year to participate in short and / or long term strategic planning for the organization, during which Board members review the appropriateness of the mission, define or redefine the organization's objectives and activities that will lead towards the mission, and evaluate progress made towards achieving the mission.
2. As needed, the Board meets to evaluate the progress of the organization towards achieving its mission, review its finances, and evaluate the successfulness of its programs and activities.
3. The Board establishes policies and procedures for finances and personnel in the form of a policy manual or similar document.
4. Annually, the Board approves the organization's budget and the appropriateness of the budget for the proposed programs. This includes reviewing the percent of the organization's budget that is spent on operational costs compared to programs and activities. The Board also approves the annual audit results, where applicable.
5. The Board hires the Director of the organization, sets his / her compensation, and evaluates the Director's performance at least annually.

## CONDUCT OF THE BOARD

1. The Board is responsible for determining its own operational procedures.
2. The Board elects new Board members.
3. The Board establishes expectations for each member, such as how he or she should provide support for the organization's fundraising or programs.
4. The organization has policies that govern Board member attendance of meetings, which include steps to be taken if a Board member fails to follow this policy.
5. The organization keeps written meeting minutes that include the Board members' discussion. Decisions made during the meeting should be noted and meeting minutes should be distributed to Board members after each meeting.





## HUMAN

Both paid and voluntary staff members contribute to an organization's ability to effectively achieve its mission.

Therefore, a KWN member organization has fair policies that specify its relations with paid and voluntary staff members, which include standards for employee conduct, clear expectations for staff members, and methods for regularly evaluating staff members' performance.

## STAFF POLICIES & CONDUCT

1. A KWN member organization has a written policy manual and standards of conduct that govern the work and actions of its staff members and volunteers, approved by the Board of Directors. These policies and procedures clearly define the conduct and rights of staff members, including:
  - Fair treatment
  - Working conditions
  - Employee benefits
  - Vacation and sick leave
  - Employee evaluation
  - Supervision
  - Hiring and firing
  - Anonymous ways for staff to file complaints
  - Sexual harassment
  - Employee growth and development, and
  - Confidentiality policy for staff members relating to client records and information.
2. Staff members respect and work towards the advancement of the organization's mission and objectives.
3. Staff members' behavior contributes to the organization's development, the image of NGOs, and public trust for NGOs in general. Therefore, staff members are expected to behave professionally and positively while representing the organization to other staff members, volunteers, or the public.
4. Staff members do not engage in dishonesty, fraud, or false presentation of the organization or its activities.
5. Staff members do not engage in public criticism of the organization. They present criticisms of the organization to the organization and its representatives first before taking issues to outside parties.

## EVALUATION OF STAFF

1. Upon hiring, staff members receive an introduction to their position and responsibilities as well as the organization's mission, objectives, programs, activities, and policies, including this code.
2. Organizations have in place a policy for evaluating the quality of work, effectiveness, and progress that individual staff members have made, which should take place at least annually.
  3. Staff members participate in an annual internal evaluation of the organization and of their own work towards the achievement of the organization's mission, during which they realistically identify the organization's successes, challenges, relations with stakeholders and the public, and propose ways for improvement.



## VOLUNTEERS

1. An organization values and treats its volunteers with respect. Volunteers are informed about the organization's mission, objectives, programs, activities, and policies, including this code.
2. An organization provides training, good conditions for work (e.g., computer, project materials) to volunteers, and ongoing supervision in their work, as needed for their adequate participation in activities.
3. If interested, volunteers who are adequately qualified and experienced should take precedence over other job applicants when the NGO is hiring.
4. The organization awards volunteers with acknowledgement certificates and recommendations, in appreciation for their voluntary commitment to the organization.



# FINANCIAL & ACCOUNTABILITY

In accordance with its legal status, a NGO should comply with legal requirements set forth by Kosova laws and regulations, as well as by respective donors; maintain sound finances; keep accurate financial records; and use finances only for charitable purposes. Since a KWN member organization serves society, it should be transparent and open in regards to its finances with its supporters, beneficiaries, and the public.

# TRANSPARENCY

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES

1. An organization operates according to an annual budget that is approved by the Board.
2. An organization is aware of and complies with all applicable laws, including those related to registration, financial accountability, human resources, lobbying and political advocacy, and taxation. Organizations periodically review their compliance with known existing legal, regulatory and financial reporting requirements and provide a summary of the results of the review to Board members.
3. An organization has written financial policies adequate for the size and complexity of the organization, which govern: how the organization's assets are invested, internal control procedures, purchasing practices, and unrestricted current net assets.
4. An organization opposes and does not take part in partisan influence, personal gain, corruption, bribery, or other financial misuse in its activities. It acts promptly and firmly if any of its staff members or Board members are involved in financial misuse.
5. An organization provides a way for Board members, staff members, and volunteers to anonymously report the misuse of finances.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. A KWN member organization, including its staff members, volunteers, and Board, refrain from conflict of interest; this means that they act in the best interest of the organization rather than supporting their own personal interests or the interests of others.
2. To prevent conflict of interest, organizations have written conflict of interest policies that include what could be considered conflict of interest for the organization; procedures for disclosing and dealing with conflict of interest cases; and appropriate steps to be taken when a conflict of interest has occurred.
3. The organization provides to all Board and staff members a statement that explains conflict of interest.

### What is Conflict of Interest?

Conflict of interest is when a staff or Board member uses the organization's finances for their benefit or the benefit of their family or friends. For example, forms of conflict of interest include: hiring a family member to work at the NGO without an interview procedure and the Board's approval; or hiring a family member's company to do printing or other work for the NGO, even if another company that does equally good work and costs less is available.

## FUNDRAISING

1. Organizations receive funds from supporters and donors. These funds must be used efficiently and according to the purpose or activity that was proposed for their usage. If they are not used in the way that the donor intended, the organization either returns the funds or secures approval from the donor to use the funds in another way.
2. An organization does not allow for duplication in funding for the same item or activity from different sources.
3. NGOs should work towards self-sustainability, and various forms of self-financing can support this. Assets acquired through self-financing that are reinvested in NGO activities are not considered profitable. However, such assets should not duplicate funds already supplied by donors.
4. In project proposals and promotional fundraising materials, an organization presents its mission, programs, achievements, and intended use for the requested funds accurately and truthfully. There should be no omissions, exaggerations in fact, or communication that would create a false impression or misunderstanding.
5. Organizations do not apply excessive pressure on donors or potential donors.
6. An organization has a policy that specifies which individuals, businesses, or organizations or what kinds of donations it will or will not accept, in accordance with its mission. In other words, an organization clearly states that it will not receive donations from persons or for activities that go against the organization's mission.
7. The organization should monitor and be fully informed about any individual or representative of the organization that is soliciting contributions on behalf of the organization.

## ACCOUNTABILITY & TRANSPARENCY

1. An organization regularly reviews its budget and spending, submitting written reports to its Board at least twice per year. These identify and explain any areas where spending is different than that which was proposed.
2. An organization is professional and accurate in its finances, submitting a descriptive and financial report to all donors.
3. An organization is transparent and open with its budget, making it available annually for the public and all stakeholders.
4. An organization periodically analyzes the cost-effectiveness of its programs: the impact on the participants in relation to the cost needed to achieve them.
5. In all its work, an organization uses human, financial, material, and natural resources responsibly, considering the needs of present and future generations.
6. An organization whose annual budget is in excess of 60,000 Euros undergoes an annual audit by a certified auditor, chosen by its Board.



# RESPONSIBILITY

Non-governmental organizations operate in service to the public. As such, they should be transparent and accountable with their members, beneficiaries, supporters, and the general public by providing information about their finances, programs, and activities. KWN member organizations realize that their activities impact the public's perception of NGOs, and therefore they have a responsibility to enhance public trust.

1. A non-governmental organization sets its goals, decisions, and activities independently. It is not used by any political party, public institution, or private firm for its interests, which would jeopardize its independence, autonomy, or ability to act in the public interest.
2. A KWN member organization does not discriminate against any person in hiring, programs, or communication due to their age, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, education, financial means, sexual orientation, or ability.
3. An organization involves its beneficiaries as much as possible in designing, implementing, and evaluating programs, projects, and activities.
4. An organization has a designated, knowledgeable staff member who is responsible for public relations and communication and who provides information to the public whenever it is requested by any member of the public.
5. In an effort to be accountable and transparent with all its stakeholders, an organization continuously informs the media and the public about its activities through press conferences, press releases, announcements, campaigns, data, publications, seminars, websites, and other information sources.
6. When providing information to the public, an organization ensures that it provides enough information for the issue to be understood by the public and that any data presented is complete, accurate, and true to the best of the organization's knowledge. It does not overstate or minimize the human and material needs of the people it assists, specially in fundraising activities.
7. An organization makes available to all stakeholders and the public a report of its activities and finances at least once a year. This includes the names of the organization's Board and staff members.
8. An organization openly communicates its aims.



## PARTNERSHIPS & NETWORKING

Partnerships and networking with other organizations and non-partisan governmental bodies are central to the work of KWN and its members. KWN member organizations strive to foster professional, positive, and respectful working relations with other organizations, especially those working on similar issues.

1. In its work, a KWN member organization acts professionally and treats its beneficiaries and partners with respect.
2. Where applicable, an organization has policies that ensure the personal information of persons served through its work remains confidential.
3. An organization honors and acknowledges the ownership of individuals' and other organizations' ideas and projects.
4. An organization and its staff members realize that civil society is diverse and that other organizations operating in society may disagree with their mission. Even so, it strives to maintain professional working relations and respect the right of other organizations to have different views. Although an organization's representatives may disagree, they do not slander another organization, its opinions, or its staff members.
5. A KWN member organization does not criticize other KWN member organizations to benefit itself.
6. An organization honors all written contracts and agreements.

How Does THE  
& KWN ETHICAL  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
CODE  
FUNCTION?

## I. MEMBERSHIP VERIFICATION PROCESS

- 1.1. Each KWN member will sign the *Ethical and Accountability Code*, agreeing to follow its principles.
- 1.2. Each KWN member will be required to submit annually to KWN a packet of materials that demonstrate how it has followed the Code and met the stated benchmarks by December 31.
- 1.3. Upon receipt, a KWN staff member shall review the materials to make sure that all necessary materials are there. She or he will contact the member regarding any missing materials. The staff will assemble each packet and complete the evaluation checklist. He or she will then submit the materials to the committee.
- 1.4. The committee shall review the materials and meet as necessary to verify by vote that each member has met the criteria of the *Ethical and Accountability Code* and will continue to be a KWN member.



- 1.5. The KWN staff will inform the member that their membership has been renewed and grant them access to all membership services.
- 1.6. All members will receive a list of KWN member organizations annually.

## II. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee shall have five (5) members.

- 2.1. KWN members shall elect by majority vote a committee that will function as a mechanism to ensure that each KWN member observes the Code.
- 2.2. The committee shall consist of: two KWN board members; and three non-KWN members who are not directly affiliated with KWN or its members.
- 2.3. The committee shall have two alternate members.
- 2.4. The term as a committee member shall be two years, and a member can only be re-elected for two consecutive terms.



### III. FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

- 3.1. The committee shall ensure that each KWN member has met the Code.
- 3.2. The committee shall deal with complaints submitted by staff, government, donors, partners, NGOs, or the public in regards to NGOs' failure to observe the code.
- 3.3. The committee may periodically review and recommend changes to the Code to KWN members.
- 3.4. The committee shall determine its own working procedures and norms.
- 3.5. The committee shall designate a Chairperson who will be responsible for communicating with KWN staff and convening meetings, as necessary.
- 3.6. The committee shall review instances where a significant breach of the Code has occurred and recommend steps to be taken by KWN.
- 3.7. A committee member who has a personal or professional interest in a case may not take part in the decision-making process for that particular case. In such instances, one of the alternate committee members may be called upon to participate in the decision-making process.

### IV. LODGING COMPLAINTS

- 4.1. Any one person or group of persons may file a written complaint describing how a KWN member has not complied with this Code with the Chairperson of the committee.
- 4.2. A written complaint should include:
  - The name and address of the complainant;
  - The name and address of the NGO or official against whom the complaint is being lodged;
  - The circumstance in which the breach or violation of the Code is alleged to have been committed; and
  - Supporting evidence.
- 4.3. If the complaint meets these four criteria, the Chairperson will bring the complaint to the committee's attention at the next committee meeting.
- 4.4. The complainant's anonymity shall be respected, if requested.





## V. COMPLAINT REVIEW PROCESS

- 5.1. The committee will inform the organization about which a complaint has been lodged, and the organization will have the opportunity to respond to allegations.
- 5.2. The committee may request any NGO or NGO representative to provide evidence regarding the case under consideration.
- 5.3. The information will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the need to investigate.
- 5.4. The committee may call a meeting between the accused NGO or NGO representative and the complainant to discuss the case, if necessary and the complainant agrees.
- 5.5. The committee shall determine by majority how the complaint shall be handled.
- 5.6. If the committee finds the KWN member or one of its staff members has violated the Code, one or more of the following measures may be taken:
  - 1) Involve KWN in providing the necessary education for the NGO to comply with code
  - 2) Advise the NGO to take corrective measures against the individual NGO employee who is directly responsible for the breach of the code
  - 3) Caution the NGO member and give them a period of time during which they can rectify the breach of the code
  - 4) Recommend the suspension or exclusion of the member from KWN member services and activities.
- 5.7. The organization will have the right to appear before the committee prior to suspension or expulsion.
- 5.8. The Chairperson shall inform the complainant and NGO member as to the decision that has been made.

## VI. APPEAL

- 6.1. A member may appeal the Committee's decision by writing a letter to KWN within one month of the committee's decision, explaining why they believe that the decision has been made unfairly. KWN will submit this appeal to the general membership of the network at the next bimonthly network meeting, where network members will vote in regards to the case. After hearing the case, the members may by majority vote:
  - Redirect the case back to the committee for reconsideration with additional facts.
  - Confirm the committee's decision
  - Reverse the committee's decision
- 6.2. An appeal after one month will not be accepted unless the appellant can prove good reason.
- 6.3. Organizations that have been ousted from the network following this process must wait for a period of two years before reapplying for KWN membership, at which time the NGO must prove that it has met the code.

The Code may be changed following prior notice to members and following a two-thirds approval by the members of the committee and the KWN Board.





For more information about the Kosova Women's Network *Ethical & Accountability Code* or to become a member of the Kosova Women's Network, please contact:



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