

Research, Training and Management (RTM) International

Code of Conduct

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Preface

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Research, Training & Management (RTM) International is a resource organization registered with the Government of Bangladesh (GOB). It provides high quality technical and management support to the institutions/concerns working in development sectors primarily targeting poor and underprivileged people. RTM has three major areas of work: Research and Evaluation, Training and Capacity Building, and Program Support and Management. Recent activities of RTM focused in health, nutrition, gender based violence and mental health; education, training, research and human resources development sectors for the design, implementation and development activities. RTM International is supported by grants and contracts from UN agencies, private organizations and government agencies at local and international levels.

RTM International firmly acknowledges that all forms discrimination and harassment are a violation of human rights and an abuse of a position of power over a vulnerable population and fully committed to protect these rights of all the targeted population that RTM International is serving. RTM International is also working on capacity building of its staff members on various professional issues including ethical and moral lessons to fulfill their responsibilities to prevent and respond to social justice towards the affected populations they serve. RTM International is also monitoring strict adherence of the core principles by all staff, volunteer and contractors etc.

We are pleased to present the RTM International Code of Conduct (CoC) which has been revised in the light of our past experiences. Progressively this Code of Conduct will be revised after three years or as when required.



Prof. Mamtaz Shamim
President



Syed Jaglul Pasha
Executive Director

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Code of Conduct

1. Introduction:

Research, Training and Management International (RTM International) has always been committed to support the health and well-being of its target communities and its staff members. In the light of this commitment and aspiration to be a leader in responding to public health challenges, RTM International has developed a set of guidelines specific to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and the workplace.

2. Background:

RTM International started its operation as JSI Research and Training Institute, Bangladesh (JSI Bangladesh) which was established in 1994 as an independent national NGO in Bangladesh. The organization was affiliated with John Snow Inc. a leading public health research organization incorporated in the USA. With the expansion of the scope of its activities and the phasing out of financial support from JSI the organization was re-named in 2006 as RTM International. RTM International's mission is to promote and protect the health and reproductive rights and choices of the people, particularly the poor. Its goal is to develop the management and implementation capacity of health, education and poverty alleviation programs through research, training and management and to ensure quality services, especially for the poor and the underserved. RTM International provides high quality technical and information support for the design, implementation and development of local capacity to identify sustainable approaches that improve and maintain sexual and reproductive health, education, gender equity, environment and human rights.

RTM International with its relevant expertise is working with UNHCR, other donors and RRC/GoB in addressing different issues of health and education of the Myanmar nationals living in the two camps of Nayapara and Kutapalong and other camps in Cox's Bazar District. RTM International is primarily working in different parts of Bangladesh to supplement and complement the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) efforts in meeting the need of general population, particularly poor and vulnerable people in health, education, livelihood and environment sectors.

3. The Basic Principles:

RTM International fosters an environment that is enabling to support SRHR services, information and other promotional support activities in the workplace. However, for a workplace program to be effective, there ought to be present and in good measure organizational trust; that the organization will commit to and consistently act, deploy resources, take up information and advocacy in such a manner that staff feel and perceive a sense of commitment to a common mission, caring and compassionate among themselves and foster a similar attitude to the target beneficiaries, particularly the service seekers. This commitment and compassion must pay attention to the staff members, communities it is working for and individuals as a whole. While organizational trust is intangible, its absence can hamper the achievements of a program. RTM International strictly follows the code of conduct to implement any project including projects in the refugee/FDMN camps settings, which is based on the following principles:

3.1 Treat all beneficiaries/refugees and other persons of concern fairly, and with respect and dignity: Treating beneficiaries with “respect and dignity: is our basic obligation. Behavior or attitude of any RTM staff member that degrades a beneficiary or beneficiaries are totally unacceptable, no matter whether the beneficiaries is present or not. In many situations, children and certain groups of women are especially at risk. By understanding the specific situations of women, men, girls and boys in a beneficiary community, we can better protect them.

3.2 Prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries/refugees and other persons of concern: Having at our disposal scarce humanitarian resources puts us in a position of power vis-a-vis the people whose survival may depend on our assistance. That power must never be abused. Requesting favors or accepting bribes or offers of favors in exchange for protection or aid is totally unacceptable.

Unequal power relationships generally exist between staff and beneficiaries. We therefore have to keep in mind that sexual, emotional, financial or employment relationships between staff and beneficiaries, even if we ourselves see them as consensual and non-exploitative, could be perceived by others in the humanitarian community and the public as an abuse of power and trust, or as a conflict of interest. Sexual relationships with beneficiaries undermine the credibility and integrity of the work and are strongly discouraged. Where there is any doubt, it is in the interests of staff to discuss these relationships with the supervisor. Where supervisors are consulted, it is expected that they will respect confidentiality and treat sensitive matters with discretion. Staff and supervisors can also avail themselves of the normal consultative options such as the Staff Welfare Section, Staff Council and Staff Associations. In case of disagreement the staff may take to recourse of options such as the Mediator.

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate universally recognized international legal norms and standards and as such have always been unacceptable behavior and prohibited conduct for RTM staff. Specific standards that reiterate these existing general obligations under the rules and obligations have been prescribed. Degrading or exploitative behavior such as exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex or sexual favors, or other forms of humiliation are prohibited to the staff.

3.3 Abide by the Six Core principles of PSEA: All staff members working in RTM International should abide by the six core principles related to PSEA which are mentioned as under:

Principle # 1: Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissal

Principle # 2: Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.

Principle # 3: Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance;

Principle # 4: Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged.

Principle # 5: Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.

Principle # 6: Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct.

3.4 Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the image and interests of RTM International:

Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain an enabling environment in RTM International. Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the image and interests of RTM International. No staff member will engage in or support any illegal, exploitative, abusive or unethical activities or use unethical language that violate human dignity or contravene UN resolutions or international human rights standards.

Sexual exploitation and abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures, including summary dismissals. Any concerns or suspicions regarding sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by a fellow worker, regardless whether in the same agency or not, must be reported through the established mechanisms. The exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex or sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior, is prohibited. RTM has a policy of ZERO tolerance to offences by any staff members if proved.

3.5 Uphold the integrity of RTM International by ensuring that my personal and professional conduct is, and is seen to be, of the highest standard: To a large extent, the integrity of RTM depends on the integrity of its staff members. This includes honesty, truthfulness and loyalty to the office.

RTM staff should avoid criticizing our partner agencies. In case of any problems with our partners, we should endeavor to seek resolution directly and if the issue persists, refer the matter to HQ.

3.6 Perform official duties and conduct private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in RTM International:

The use of one's office or position in RTM for personal gain is unacceptable and unprofessional. Staff must avoid accepting any honor, decoration, favor, gift or remuneration from any government or organization. When this is unavoidable, however we must be extremely careful not to accept gifts of value which might constitute a real or apparent attempt to influence our decisions or actions.

3.7 Contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding:

All managers and staff are responsible for building a teamwork environment. Politeness, respect, tolerance, and moderation should be the norm. Good performance is not only about how quickly and efficiently we perform our tasks but also about how well we

interact with others. In light of the diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences of RTM staff, we should take extra care to respect our colleagues. Lack of communication, personality differences, and lack of empathy, i.e. the inability or unwillingness to see other colleagues' points of view can have a serious negative impact on the work environment.

There is often a fine line between poor managerial practices and the issues of conduct covered by this code. Accordingly, managers not only have a particular responsibility, but can also have significant influence in fostering a harmonious workplace. Managers should be open to all views, including those of their junior staff, particularly when those views are opposed to their own. Managers are expected to set a good example.

3.8 Promote the safety, health and welfare of all RTM International staff as a necessary condition for effective and consistent performance: RTM is an institution as responsible for the safety and welfare of its staff. Staff should strictly observe safety and security instructions and demonstrate responsible behavior that minimizes risks for themselves and others.

3.9 Safeguard and make responsible use of the information and resources to which I have access by reason of my employment with RTM International: Disclosure of sensitive or confidential information without authorization may seriously jeopardize the efficiency and credibility of RTM and its staff, and endanger beneficiaries. Staff should be careful not to allow private interests to impact on their work duties and they should not misuse office assets; use an official vehicle for private purposes without authorization; perform excessive and unreasonable private business during working time; use office equipment for private purposes; and have staff or official contractors provide unremunerated private services.

3.10 Refrain from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation or favoritism in the workplace: Discrimination and harassment have a negative effect on the workplace environment, the career and well-being of staff. Discrimination, harassment, or bullying (mobbing) on the grounds of race, gender, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, disability, political conviction, hierarchy within RTM or any other distinguishing feature, must not be tolerated. Harassment can take many forms. It can be physical, verbal, visual or written (including electronic media such as e-mails). It can also be one incident or a series of incidents and can occur at work or during non-working hours.

RTM staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Managers, at all levels, have a particular responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment. Moreover they have a special obligation in the workplace to uphold the highest standards of conduct, free of intimidation and personal favoritism because of their authority, and its inherent danger of abuse. The solicitation or acceptance of favors, loans, or gifts of substantial value by managers from colleagues with whom they work would be improper.

3.11 Policy of Zero Tolerance: An employee may be terminated immediately if he/she is caught stealing, using or possessing drugs in the workplace, willfully destroying or damaging property, perpetrating fraud, engaging in physical or mental violence, harassment or sexual abuse, is absent without leave for more than three calendar days, is habitually negligent in carrying out

assigned duties, or is engaging in activities that may be termed as conflict of interest. RTM International considers all these acts as under its Zero Tolerance Policy.

4. Working Environment:

RTM International is committed to develop healthy work environments. RTM International offices around the country should be healthy and safe places, free from any gender discrimination including any sorts of sexual exploitation and abuse irrespective of children and adult, reducing the risk of any SRH related health problem and other infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS.

- 4.1 **Discrimination:** Discrimination against any service seekers and any staff based on real or perceived social status, position and SRH issue is not acceptable. In the above said context, discriminatory behaviour or action by any employee, consultant, or any other person housed on any RTM International's premises is cause for dismissal.
- 4.2 **Smoking Policy:** As an organization committed to the improvement of human health and well-being, RTM International is particularly conscious of health issues raised by the use of tobacco products. It is the intent of RTM International to provide a healthy and clean environment for its employees and guests. Therefore, smoking is not allowed anywhere on the premises, at any location, inclusive of buildings, offices, and restrooms. Additionally, RTM International does not permit smoking at any meetings or training functions that it facilitates or sponsors.
- 4.3 **Sexual Harassment Policy:** It is RTM International's goal to provide a workplace free of tensions involving matters which do not relate to the organization. In particular, an atmosphere of tension created by sex-related remarks, un-welcome sexual advances, or other conduct of sexual nature is not condoned or tolerated. The ZERO tolerance policy is strictly followed as soon as cases/allegations are proved beyond reasonable doubt.
- 4.4 **Drugs in the Work Place:** It is against the law for any person to possess, sell or use any controlled substance in the work place. Any employee caught possessing, selling or using any controlled substance will be terminated for cause.

5. Whistle – Blowing Policy

- 5.1 **Definition:** Whistle-blowing can be defined as the disclosure of information through a preferable media, of a perceived wrongdoing in an organization, or the risk thereof, to individuals or entities believed to be able to effect action.
- 5.2 **Purpose:** RTM International aims to maintain the highest standards of openness, decency, integrity and accountability in its development and humanitarian work. This process enables concerns to be raised about anyone who works with or for all levels of staff and volunteers employed within RTM International.

Any individual or organisation working with or for RTM International, including its employees and volunteers, must be vigilant for signs of misconduct by individuals or organisations working with or for RTM International. They are encouraged to report any serious concerns that they have, without fear of punishment or unfair treatment, and guidance how to raise these concerns with the relevant individuals is provided. Concerns may include either financial

or non-financial nature in the form of emotional or physical harassment, blackmailing or sexual harassment, etc.

RTM International has a particular attention towards any suspicion or complaints about sexual exploitation or abuse by any RTMI staff/workers/volunteers in any form and locations. Such complaints if detected must be reported immediately to the established HOTLINE numbers without any fear or hesitation. Such reporting is mandatory as the soonest time possible. All RTM staff members/volunteers must follow the guiding principles for such a complaint for reporting:

- Report any complaints, concerns, suspicions or rumours regarding any sexual exploitation to any individual (What to Report?).
- By personnel of RTM International or its partner or anyone else engaged by RTMI (By Whom to Report?)
- Report to be made to the RTM International PSEA Focal Point (To Whom to Report?)
- A complaint or report could be made through email, phone, in person or in writing, etc. (How to Report?)
- All reports to be sent to the 24/7 Complaint HOTLINE number at 008801816068699 or at COMPLAINT@rtm-international.org or to the Whistle-Blowing HOTLINE email at RTM@rtm-international.org as well as to the Complaint Boxes at all service delivery points and offices of RTM International. (Where to Report?)

This process is intended to complement any laws and regulations of the country that aim to protect employees who disclose information about certain kinds of wrongdoing against dismissal or other adverse consequences. This process will protect all relevant individuals as long as suspicions are raised honestly and in good faith, irrespective of whether the allegation is later confirmed to be true. Not reporting a suspicion when there are clear grounds for doing so could result in disciplinary action or other sanctions. If confidentiality is requested, every effort will be made to protect the identity of the individual who has disclosed the relevant concerns. The reporting of suspicions will not be allowed to affect the relevant individual's current status within RTM International, or the future career prospects of RTM International staff or its volunteers.

If anyone who tries to deter, intimidate or victimize an individual in a bid to prevent them from reporting a suspicion, will be subject to serious disciplinary actions and, if appropriate, may be reported to the relevant legal authorities of the country.

5.3 Scope: Anyone with an interest in reporting a concern about RTM International is able to use the processes described herein. This process is separate from and in addition to RTM International's more specific grievance processes for staff or volunteers. If an individual is uncertain as to whether or not something is within the scope of this process, they should seek advice from their line manager or appropriate persons as specified below.

5.4 Classifying types of reports: Reportable misconduct may have happened, be happening, or be likely to happen. Misconduct is reportable irrespective of the seniority of staff implicated. Reportable acts include the following suspected activities and/or dangers at work (some examples):

- Breach of RTM International internal policies and procedures;
- Incidences of fraud or theft with irregularities with procurement;
- Incidences of bribery or corruption;
- Incidences of money laundering;
- Incidences of contracting with, or funding a terrorist organization;
- Failure to comply with any legal obligations or regulatory requirements;
- Abuse of position at RTM to obtain personal benefits either of monetary or non-monetary value;
- Showing undue favour over a contractual matter or to a job applicant;
- A criminal offence or planned criminal offence;
- Deliberate and serious endangerment of an individual's health and safety;
- Incidences of bullying, harassment or gender discrimination including emotional and physical harassment or sexual exploitation;
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and data;
- Causing environmental damage; and/or
- Concealment of information on any of the above or other similar nature.

5.5 Whom To Report: In most cases, staff or volunteer concerns should be raised with their immediate line manager, who has a responsibility to investigate allegations in line with RTM International's disciplinary procedures. However, if the complainant feel uncomfortable about discussing the matter with their line manager, or if they are not satisfied with the way reported concerns have been responded to, they should report their concerns to any of the following:

- A Senior Manager or Director of RTM International
- To the Complaint HOTLINE number at 008801816068699 or at COMPLAINT@rtm-international.org or
- To the Whistle-Blowing HOTLINE email at RTM@rtm-international.org or
- To the Complaint Boxes at all field /HQs offices of RTM International.

5.6 How to report a concern with confidentiality: Concerns should be raised as early as possible. Concerns may be raised verbally or, preferably, in writing or by email, giving any background and history, including relevant dates. The reports could also be dropped in the Complaint Boxes in any of the RTM International's office premises.

As noted above, RTM International will respect an individual's request for confidentiality and every effort will be made to protect the identity of the disclosing individual. However, RTM International does not encourage staff or volunteers to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if RTM International cannot obtain further information. It is also more difficult to establish whether any allegations are credible and have been made in good faith. Whistle-blowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed should come forward to the above mentioned focal points to preserve confidentiality.

It should however be noted that it may, in some circumstances, be obvious to RTM International who has raised the concern, or the investigation may lead to a point where the

individual is required to give evidence. In such circumstances, where finding the truth is hindered by confidentiality, RTM International cannot guarantee complete confidentiality to the reporting employee.

5.7 What happens next? Investigation: Immediate arrangements will be made to investigate a suspicion with sensitivity, in line with RTM International's disciplinary procedure or other review procedures if appropriate. The whistle-blower may be asked to act as a witness to the investigation. After investigating all the facts, the investigator will inform the whistle-blower of their decision on what action will be taken, which may be to do nothing or to follow the full disciplinary procedure. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent RTM International giving them specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. The whistle-blower should treat any information regarding the investigation as confidential.

If the whistle-blower has reason to believe that their suspicion has not been properly investigated, or that some material facts have not been taken into consideration in the investigation, they should raise their concerns with the Executive Director of RTM International at jpasha@rtm-international.org. After a second investigation, he will notify a decision as to what action will be taken for the case.

Assistance to Victims: Victims/Survivors ought to receive appropriate assistance and support in a timely manner:

- Medical care
- Safety and security
- Legal services
- Support for psychological and social care
- Immediate material care, including food, clothing and shelter as necessary

It is imperative for RTM International staff members to respond quickly and efficiently when any cases are reported.

6. Termination for Cause:

Strict disciplinary action will be taken against any employee of RTM International violating the above code of conducts. However, this would be based on RTM's regulations for initiating disciplinary action against any defaulter. Employees given termination for cause will receive all earned salary and unused annual leave and any voluntary contributions he/she has made to the Provident Fund. Employees terminated for causes are not eligible to receive RTM International's contributions to the Provident Fund.



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Commitment to the RTM International Code of Conduct

I have read and understood the core messages & instructions of the RTM International Code of Conduct in discharging my duties in the refugee camps (while interacting/treating/counseling the refugee population) and I commit to abide by the below Code of Conduct at all time.

I also have been informed by RTM International that a zero-tolerance policy will be applied on any breach of the Code of Conduct.

- 1) Treat all beneficiaries/refugees and other persons of concern fairly, and with respect and dignity.
- 2) Prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse including those following under PSEA of beneficiaries/refugees and other persons of concern.
- 3) Abide by the six core principles of PSEA or Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- 4) Uphold the integrity of RTM International by ensuring that my personal and professional conduct is and is seen to be, of the highest standard.
- 5) Perform my official duties and conduct my private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby preserving and enhancing public confidence in RTMI.
- 6) Contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding.
- 7) Promote to safety, health and welfare of all RTM International staff as a necessary condition for effective and consistent performance.
- 8) Safeguard and make responsible use of the information and resources to which I have access by reason of my employment with RTM International.
- 9) Prevent, oppose and combat all exploitation and abuse of refugees and other persons of concern.
- 10) Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that contravene human rights, or activities that compromise the image and interests of RTM International.
- 11) Refrain from any form of harassment as physical, emotional or sexual, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation or favoritism to any employee/ refugee volunteers or beneficiary in the workplace.
- 12) I have read and understood all the RTMI policies including PSEA for performing all of my duties.

(Signature of the Employee/Vendor/ Volunteer)

Name:

Designation: