

**DALIT EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION (DEF)
TALA , SATKHIRA**

**CODE OF CONDUCT for
DEF Staff Members**



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Code of Conduct of Dalit Empowerment Foundation (DEF)

INTRODUCTION

Dalit Empowerment Foundation (DEF) is a Women Rights Organization (WRO) that is led and managed by Dalit Women, located at Tala Upazila in Satkhira District. DEF has been working since 2008 but could not operate its development works due to a lack of funds, capacity and skills. DEF did some voluntary work for girls on a small scale. Essentially, it started working as an organization in 2018. DEF envisions a society, where Dalit Women and Girls enjoy the right and opportunity to live through gender equality, development and participation. DEF works with marginalized and untouchable women and girls called “Dalits” in Bangladesh to prompt human rights and social justice.

In accordance with vision, mission and core values, Dalit Empowerment Foundation (DEF) is committed to maintaining maximum standards of ethical conducts among all of DEF employees, and expects that all staff members act in a professional manner, considering the core values of respect, integrity, modesty, commitment and excellence while performing their organizational roles and responsibilities. This code of conduct is based on the very vision, mission and values of DEF. It provides a framework of DEF’s expectations of employees in several important situations, as well as narrates general descriptions of all the major points mentioned in the document. This manual is a living document, meaning subject to change over time. Its practical value and importance lies in the ability and communication of each and everyone involved with DEF – members of the Governing Board, employees, committees, volunteers – in applying these codes in their work.

I. CONDUCT OF STAFF MEMBERS

- a. Work Manner: By accepting appointment with DEF all employees agree to work in a responsible, respectful, productive and dignified manner. All employees should be loyal to the organization and stay active to accomplish the organizational objectives.
- b. Corrective Measures: DEF shall use some corrective measures to motivate its staff members to improve the behavior as well as their performance.
- c. Minor Offense: For a minor offense or for deterioration of any employee’s performance level or behavioral integrity level, a meeting between the employee and the relevant supervisor or a designated person will be conducted to resolve the situation informally as soon as possible. In some cases when documentation may be necessary, the supervisor with consultation of second supervisors of the concerned employee, will issue an advisory letter and send a copy to personnel file with HR. Other actions can be taken in case of minor offense, such as, temporarily withheld increment, or recover from pay any pecuniary loss caused to DEF by the negligence or breach of discipline/conduct.

¹ HR Policy and Procedures Manual of DEF



- d. Major Misconducts: Any of the following acts on the part of an employee will amount to major misconduct:
- Willful insubordination or disobedience to any lawful and reasonable order of the supervisors.
 - Participation in strikes or abetting, inciting, instigating violence or adopt a go-slow work model.
 - Theft or fraud or dishonesty in connection with DEF's property or property of another.
 - Taking or giving bribes or illegal gratification.
 - Habitual late attendance for a long time without taking permission or giving reasons.
 - Breach of any terms and conditions of service rules or employment or any law applicable to DEF or any rules made there under.
 - Without proper approval, collection or receiving any DEF money except as sanctioned by policies or rules of DEF or authorized by Executive Director - DEF.
 - Without proper approval by Executive Director - DEF, doing consultancy for or employment with other organization/s.
 - Riotous, disorderly, aggressive, indecent or vulgar behavior by the employee within DEF premises and encouraging such activities by others.
 - Breach of any rules or instructions, for the maintenance or running of the office.
 - Habitual neglect of work, or willfully lying or neglecting office work, deceiving office or DEF staffmembers.
 - Doing secret discussion, fabrication or plan for harming or degrading any staff members of DEF.
 - Deceiving office by doing uninformed/unapproved personal work either in DEF or outside DEF – in the name of doing official work (such as meeting, workshop, seminar, etc) or a short break for personal work outside (such as banking matter, tax matter, etc).

II. GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Without prejudice to the other provisions contained in these rules, a staff member who commits any or more of the following will be subject to disciplinary action:

- Commits a breach of these rules/disciplines contained herein.
- Is found to be negligent, inefficient or corrupt at work and in performing assigned responsibilities.
- Is threatening, intimidating or assaulting to any other staff member of DEF.
- Knowingly does anything prejudicial to the interest of the organization.
- Contravenes instructions issued to him/her in connection with official work.



- Is guilty of any other act of misconduct or insubordination.
- Is convicted of a criminal offence by a court.
- Is engaged, or reasonably suspected of being associated with others engaged in subversive activities and whose retention in service is, therefore, considered prejudicial to national security.
- Is habitually absent without leave request or intimation for more than 5 (five) consecutive working days.
- Is habitually late attendant for a long period of time.
- Is involved in falsifying or tampering with, damaging or carrying loss of DEF's official.
- Is engaged in organizational political for damaging other staff member's career.

III. PENALTIES/DISCIPLINARY ACTION

There shall be two kinds of penalties, which may be imposed under these regulations, namely: minor penalties and major penalties.

Minor Penalties - The following are the minor penalties:

- Censure;
- Withholding of increment or promotion for a certain period of time as decide by the SMT;
- Recovery from pay of the whole or part of any loss caused to the organization by negligence or breach of rules.

Major penalties - The following are the major penalties:

- Demotion to a lower post or grade;
- Termination from service;
- Recovery from pay any pecuniary loss caused to DEF by negligence or breach of contract;
- Removal/Dismissal from service;
- Compulsory retirement.

IV. ANTI-FRAUD & CORRUPTION CONDUCT

Employees are expected to:

- Act with integrity, honesty and propriety in all their dealings as a DEF representative and lead by example.

² Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy of DEF



- Carry out their duties to the best of their ability for the interest of DEF and not to take advantage of any situation for personal gain, for themselves, members of their family or friends.
- Take the risk of both internal and external fraud seriously and to follow systems and procedures designed to prevent or detect fraudulent activities.
- Secure all passwords, information, documents, money, equipment etc in their control which can be stolen or used to per perpetrate fraud.

As part of its culture, DEF will provide clear routes by which concerns can be raised by both employees and management in regard to fraud and corruption and necessary actions against them as per rules.

Senior management is expected to deal swiftly and firmly with those who defraud DEF and who are corrupt in their act and behavior. DEF, including members and senior management, should be robust in dealing with financial malpractices, exploitation of the organization and suppression of fellow staff members. DEF has in place both the internal and external audits and due diligence practices, which review overall activities including reports of any significant investigations and the management responses to the recommendations having been put forward.

V. USE OF ORGANISATION'S ASSETS AND AVAILABLE FUNDS

DEF employees are responsible for the proper management of all DEF assets, funds or other property entrusted to them. DEF equipment and property, including files, documents and software, etc are provided for DEF work and may not be removed from office premises, or accessed, except in the regular course of business. All are expected to treat the organizational property with the same care and respect as a person would do for his/her own, and are required to return DEF property in good condition prior to his/her separation from the organization. While ordinary wear and tear is expected, any damage or loss of DEF property should be reported promptly to the line manager and HR head. Any damage due to negligence is not acceptable to DEF and the organization may ask for compensation against such damage. It is strictly prohibited that DEF staff members will not use any office equipment, property or vehicles for personal use. In case of emergency need for personal use, permission has to be sought from the Admin head.

VI. CONFLICT OF INTEREST CONDUCT

In work, conflict may arise between individual and/or group interests of DEF. The staff members need to disclose and discuss such conflict and resolve in a manner in keeping with the interest of DEF. For the purposes of this manual, a staff member's family includes a spouse, brother or sister, parents, child or live-in partner. A conflict of interest may arise in a variety of situations wherever DEF interests, such as relying on staff duties of loyalty and confidentiality, compete with the personal or other professional activities or engagements of any DEF staff member. A clear conflict of interest arises when an employee or a member of his/her family directly or indirectly:

- a. Gets monetary or other commercial benefit or is in a position of authority, regulator, influence or governance as to any party doing business with DEF, programmes or related entities and as DEF staff member a person is involved or potentially influence that transaction.

- b. Participates in DEF or related entity in recruitment, evaluation, award or administration of a contract, loan, purchase, sale, investment order, donation or other transaction that will directly or indirectly benefit employee or his/her family.
- c. Stands to gain personally or individually from any transaction in which DEF, a DEF programme or a DEF related entity is a party.
- d. Accepts gifts, favours or anything of monetary value from DEF donors or vendors, including contractors, (except for unsolicited gifts of a nominal value, training, travel, materials, or other items provided for the benefit of DEF with supervisor approval).

In that case a neutral person or committee may be appointed to review the situation including conflicts of interest if appropriate or necessary.

The staff members are not permitted to solicit, obtain, accept, or retain any personal benefit from any supplier, vendor, staff of partners, beneficiaries or any individual or organisation doing or seeking business with DEF. No staff member of DEF shall maintain an outside business or financial interest, or engage in any outside business or financial activity, which conflicts with the interests of DEF, or which interferes with the staff member's ability to perform job responsibilities fully. Nor any staff member may benefit directly or indirectly from a third party, that furnishes products, materials, or services to DEF. In this regard personal Interest and relationship interest to be declared in the Register of Interest by the concerned staff and to be maintained by HR section.

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRANSPARENCY CONDUCT

All DEF employees must treat and register information obtained in the service of DEF with confidentiality, when its nature calls for it or when this is explicitly requested, and will not use any such information and materials to further a private interest. This refers to all verbal or written communication including, but not limited to, work created as part of your job, financial data, computer files, contracts, procurement materials (vendor lists, purchase orders, etc), marketing and donor information (donor names, mailing lists, contributions, etc), programme materials (project reports, fund applications, etc), personnel or staff information (personnel files, salary information, etc), and general organizational (corporate) documents (internal policies, procedures, meetings minutes, documents, notes, files). All are expected to protect and keep applicable information in strict confidence and practice a reasonable degree of care to prevent disclosure of any information regarding DEF in any manner adverse to the interest of or detrimental to DEF, or those with DEF works for the staff members are strictly prohibited from reproducing any confidential information for use inside or outside of DEF for any purpose whatsoever other than the performance of his/her duties at DEF. It is also expected that all staff members will be transparent in any dealings which require transparent conducts without hiding anything. Any staff member, violating confidentiality and transparency, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to punishable level and including dismissal, for knowingly or unknowingly revealing information of a confidential nature. The staff members are expected to undertake to remain faithful to this commitment even after separation from DEF.

³ HR Policy and Procedures Manual of DEF



VIII. STAFF RELATIONS CONDUCT

DEF staff members will treat each other with respect, modesty, recognition and consideration, with special emphasis on gender equality and equality of each other irrespective of sex, faith, identity, status, professional category and any other criteria. They will communicate and consult with each other openly, honestly, modestly and collegially and in a manner that assists each of the staff members to fulfill their duties and responsibilities faithfully, effectively and efficiently, and with commitment. If any staff member behaves roughly, rudely and/or with disrespect, then he/she would be warned by the administration, if necessary, repeatedly. A constant behavior of such kind may set the grounds for dismissal from the organization.

DEF staff members should respect the privacy and private lives of other colleagues when dealing with/discussing personal matters/information. All staff members should be committed to ensuring fullest possible participation of all staff members irrespective of status and position – in planning and implementation of our work. Before making any decision regarding any staff member, if it may impact upon that staff member, an adequate consultation must be done before reaching any conclusion.

DEF staff members are also requested not to gossip about or show interest in private affairs at office premises. It should be borne in mind that gossip about private affairs may jeopardies one's personal life the impact of which may be detrimental to others. Therefore, gossip is absolutely prohibited. It is also expected that no staff member will try to impose his/her belief, learning, idea or taboo on others. Moreover, no staff member should make any gesture, sound and mimicking that may disregard, disrespect, irritate, disturb or undermine anyone.

All senior staff members are encouraged to show sympathy and affection towards the junior staff members and reversibly the junior staff members will show respect and modesty towards the senior staff members. Modesty should be the basis for such relationship.

DEF staff members are discouraged to discuss or whisper in pair or in group any unfounded or fabricated issues that may hamper the prestige and reputation of any employee. It is also strictly prohibited for all staff members to fabricate or construct any unfair issues or plans against any employee and communicate the same to others with the purpose of degrading or suppressing the employee for fulfilling someone's own individual interest. If such practice is detected and continues even after warning it will be deemed as setting the grounds for the dismissal of the personnel doing such act. DEF management also ensures that any attempt of placing unfounded or fabricated issues will be reprimanded and dealt with strongly forthwith.

IX. USE OF DEF MACHINERY AND VEHICLES

DEF staff members should optimise the best utilisation of all machineries (photocopier and printer). Regarding proper use of vehicles the staff members should avoid inefficient travel to and from DEF office to any place of events or field areas and keep the number of field/programme visits to the optimal level. All concerned are requested to try to accomplish a number of tasks by a single visit and make the best use of time and money, doing realistic plan ahead. The staff members are encouraged to coordinate their plans and programmes with other projects/departments/units through proper internal communication


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Employees must not drive DEF vehicles or their own vehicles while on DEF business, or operate machinery or other equipment, while under the influence of alcohol or prescription drugs that may cause drowsiness, or otherwise impair their ability to drive safely. To do so may set the grounds for dismissal from the organisation.

X. COMMUNICATIONS AND TELEPHONE USE CONDUCT

All of DEF's communication systems are owned by DEF and provided to employee for official business use only. DEF will monitor and may disclose the contents of an employee's electronic and telephone communications whenever necessary for the purpose of any organizational matter.

All employees are requested not be loud in-person on telephone conversations when they are taking calls while on work station. DEF encourages not to use the phone speaker for calls while staff are on owndesk. The staff members are requested to keep telephone/mobile phone ringtone volume in minimum level or vibrating (etiquette) mode. They are also requested not to leave mobile phone on desk while they are away from their desk even for a while, as any unattended ringing calls may disturb others. If anyone wants to leave their mobiles on their desks, they should keep it on silent mode. The staff members are also discouraged to carry long conversation at desk. If anyone needs a long conversation they may do it at the tea corner or at the stair-lobby.

XI. INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE WORKPLACE

All staff members are required to practice the following behaviour at office seriously:

Individual desk management: DEF staff members are required to keep their desks and work stations neat and clean. They are requested not to keep unnecessary things on the desk, not to post notes on the partitions, walls/glasses for an extended time period. In case of absolute requirement, one can keep paper files in own file cabinets or drawers. Staff members are also requested not to ask Office Support Staff to organise employee's desk or work station. Every employee is responsible for managing his/her respective desk, files and office spaces. Usage of other's office desks, work stations, floors around individuals' desks and other parts of the office space as storage is strongly discouraged. In case of project or other required materials, the staff members are requested to coordinate with Admin to assist them.

Sound level: It is imperative that no disruptive sounds are made by DEF staff members that may cause disturbance to others' work. It must be borne in mind that a big chunk of DEF's work needs silent environment for its workers and therefore DEF staff members always need to maintain a quiet environment strictly in the office premises. To reduce the extent of disruption due to open space environment in the office, every staff member is required to keep their voice to a minimum level and to refrain from doing any loud activities. As part of our job one may use his/her desk for having a short low noise discussion with any colleague for a while, but this should not be long and regular practice in any way. If anyone needs a long discussion with someone or a group or team then they have to use the tea-corner or any meeting rooms following the guidelines as practised at DEF. Loud one-to-one or over phone discussion is strictly prohibited. Moreover, if anyone wants to listen to song and watch video they should use headphones for suppressing the sound level.



Importantly, everyone's privacy and confidentiality of information must be respected as per the relevant guidelines of DEF, hence not be uttered openly.

Food at desk: The staff members are encouraged to take food at the canteen. However, if food is taken at individual's desk or in any adjacent room, the concerned staff member/s will be responsible to keep the area clean. It is important to note that food may attract insects and thus contaminate the office premises. Office-provided foods will be allowed at meeting or dining rooms for the specific meeting/workshop participants only.

Work at night/weekend/holidays: DEF staff members can access the office from Sunday to Thursday from 08:00 - 18:00. Everyone is expected not to come to office too early and do not stay in the office after office hours. It is also strongly discouraged to attend office on weekends and holidays unless it is absolutely necessary. It is not only unhealthy but also requires huge utility and other administrative costs to keep the office open on/during non-office hours/days. In case of extreme requirement, pre-approval in writing from Admin Section and relevant supervisor will be required with copies to concerned project/programme/dept/unit head and supervisor with charging codes. Moreover, for safety and security reasons, Security Guards are instructed not to open the main gates and not permit any staff member to enter the office on weekends/holidays without such written pre-approval.

Light, fan use: To save energy and proper utilisation of natural day light, staff members are required to keep the electric lights off as much as possible. Fans can be switched on, when required. The staff members are requested to switch off all electronic devices used by him/her before leaving office every day to avoid any hazardous incident and wastage of power and to save cost.

Tea table: Office Support Staff will ensure availability of tea making materials at tea table. The staff members are encouraged to make their own tea/coffee. If you have any official guest (1-2), it is encouraged to serve tea by yourselves or otherwise, seek support from the Office Support Staff. It is requested to keep the tea bags, spoons, cups and other tea materials etc at the right place after using the tea table. All are also requested not use Office Support Staffs for collecting foods from the kitchen, unless it has become extremely necessary.

XII. SAFETY AND SECURITY OF STAFF

The staff members are always required to keep and carry ID cards with them while in office and visiting any office/other places for official purpose. For travelling in office vehicles by the staff members DEF Admin will ensure that the drivers are maintaining utmost safety and security while driving, respecting all traffic rules. On the part of travelling staff members it is expected that they will strictly maintain

Vehicle use policy of DEF and will refrain from any act that may cause the safety of the passengers. To violate so by the drivers or staff members may set the grounds for dismissal from the organization.



XIII. BRIBERY AND GIFT POLICY

DEF is committed to ensuring the highest standards of conduct in all that it does. As a global fund raiser, DEF must respect donor practices around the world.

Bribery is termed as corrupt practice which violates the public trust, threatens economic and social development. Gifts and hospitality can put DEF at risk if it is used to facilitate unethical practice. Thus, DEF employees when deal with suppliers, vendors and partner NGOs are expected to conduct themselves with honesty, fairness and high ethical standards.

DEF recognizes that gifts and entertainment is occasionally used to leverage relationship. Giving gifts is a way to express gratitude and appreciation. In certain circumstances, accepting gifts may further DEF's interest. While gifts are often given as a gesture of courtesy, overly generous gifts where professional obligation exists, tend to put pressure on the recipient to extend more than just courtesy to the giver. Thus, surprisingly the line between sincere giving and intentional gift is becoming increasingly distorted. Gifts even those of nominal value, can create the perception of undue influence. Therefore, it is unethical and in some cases illegal to accept gifts or taking hospitality where the intent is to get favor.

As per DEF policy, bribery is strictly prohibited and action will be taken in line with DEF disciplinary policy.

We do not accept and offer gifts and hospitality if:

- Accepting a gift or having hospitality undermines our credibility or creates the appearance of impropriety.
- Gift and hospitality is offered with actual or apparent intent to influence our official decisions.
- Acceptance of gift and hospitality might be perceived to compromise our personal judgment or integrity.
- Where professional and authoritative relationship exists, gifts and hospitality can occasionally be offered to celebrate special occasions (such as religious holidays or festivals or birth of a child) provided such gifts do not affect adversely our decision-making and do not exceed BDT 2,000/- in values.
- Within our official capacity, all staff must declare and record all gifts and hospitality whether accepted or declined that is value of BDT 2,000 and more.
- If anyone fail to declare a conflict of interest (actual, potential or perceived) through the offer of a Gift or Hospitality (accepted or declined), appropriate action will be taken in line with DEF disciplinary policy.

⁴ Bribery and Gift Policy of DEF



It is discouraged to give an expensive gift to or receive a gift from a person within DEF with whom there is either a superior or subordinate relationship, unless the gift is of nominal value. Giving a gift in group to a fellow staff member arising spontaneously and voluntarily from employees, is permitted. The DEF staff members will not accept directly or indirectly any discount, gift, entertainment, or favors from others outside of the organization that may influence or perceived to influence the exercise of his/her function or the performance of duties or judgment.

XIV. OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES AND EMPLOYMENT

While conducting DEF business and other affiliations outside DEF, all staff members are required to comply with all laws, policies and acts of the land; to be essentially fair with respect to rights, interests and responsibilities of others; and to protect DEF's reputation through accountable conduct.

DEF staff members will not be engaged in any activity or transaction or acquire any position or function, whether paid or unpaid, that is incompatible with or detracts from the proper performance of his/her duties, and that may bring DEF as a whole into disrepute. In case of doing consultancy a staff member will need to go through proper approval process.

XV. VISITORS AT THE WORKPLACE

Official visitors at office are allowed, but personal visitors are discouraged. However, occasionally staff members may receive personal visitors at office or at workstation. A staff member should make sure that his/her visitor does not disturb the work of others. He/she will be responsible for the conduct of the visitor while the latter is at DEF premises. The staff member receiving the visitor/s for both official and personal is responsible for the visitor's conduct and to make sure that s/he does not move around in any direction/work stations other than the intended location.

The staff members may sometimes need to bring their children to the office. Out of respect for other colleagues, employees are requested to keep this to minimum events. Children should be kept in the presence of their guardians at all times while he/she will be in the office premises.

XVI. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Since ideas about child care vary, all staff members should be required to sign a code of conduct regarding the protection of children, the behaviour expected of them and their responsibilities in relation to the children they come into contact with as a result of their work with the DEF. Individual partner NGO should develop this code of conduct to fit their local operating context.

The code of conduct should include:

- Agreement to work under the Child Protection Policy as a condition of involvement with DEF.

⁵ Child Protection Policy of DEF


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- Provisions regarding acceptable behavior in the workplace – for example, not to use physical punishment or chastisement, however acceptable or moderate it may seem, not to use language intended to belittle or humiliate children and not to abuse children in any way (including not to engage in any sexual activity with anyone below the legal age of sexual consent).
- To report any concerns they may have about the protection of children, in accordance with this policy.
- To observe confidentiality and not talk about any situations of actual or suspected abuse that occurs except in accordance with this policy. This is necessary to protect the privacy of those involved.
- Not to pay for sexual services, of any kind, with anyone under the age of 18 years old, even if the age of sexual consent is under 18 years.

XVII. RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff members of DEF will be responsible to follow the manual and cooperate with Admin department and their colleagues in other units for smooth operation of the office. Any intentional breach of and negligence in observing this manual will be taken very seriously by the management authority and necessary measures or actions will be taken in line with the existing relevant policy manuals of DEF. All are encouraged and requested to follow the code of conduct articulated herein and avoid any unpleasant consequences by intentionally or unintentionally violating it.

This manual is effective as on 20, December, 2023.

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