4. Codes of Ethics

In his article "Developing an Ethics Program," Charles Kolb stated that "the principal rationale for having a code of ethics is to express a shared vision of the organization's beliefs, culture, and values." In the Institute's work with organizations, we've come to realize that the simple statement, "This is how we do things around here," said with pride, often reflects the success of a good code. Kolb went on to say that the code is valuable not only to employees and volunteers, but also to people outside the organization—"the general public, which includes those who are receiving services and donating money, as well as those who are not." A code correctly implemented, said Kolb, "sends a strong signal to an organization's personnel and board members that certain standards must be met in conducting the organization's day-to-day business."

Here are some useful definitions for this discussion.

Ethics: The study of standards of right and wrong behavior.

Value: 1. That which has worth
2. A principle, standard, or quality that is intrinsically worthwhile

Ethical Values: There are values of all kinds that help us make choices about what to eat, where to live, what music to buy, and so on (Definition 1 for "value" above). These values might be culinary, aesthetic, or financial. When we make choices about how to behave or how to treat others, we will be applying ethical values (Definition 2 above). Ethical values are positive and help to describe the ideal human character. Ethical values are the bedrock of ethics—the very stones that are the foundation of civilization.

Independent Sector recommends "developing a set of codes or standards, involving all constituencies in the process, and infusing the process and documents into the culture of the total organization." What's in a code? Most authorities agree that successful codes of ethics are:

- General, not detailed
- Brief and easily memorized
- Statements of shared, basic values—positive terms that describe attitudes and behavior

John Gardner, in his lecture and essay "Shared Values," (*Readings in Ethics,* Camden, ME, Institute for Global Ethics, 2001, pages 25-29) noted that although religion and science disagree about the notions of absolute values, and that social values can change, "the men and women who must keep a society functioning are always seeking the common ground that will make a concerted action possible." He goes on to say that, for instance, the Constitution of the United States contains as its basis, "pledged values or covenanted values whose legitimacy stems from the fact that diverse groups are explicitly committed to them." He notes that, unlike social contract theory, in which communities arise based on kinship, common religion, language, and geography, "for a community in which pluralism threatens fragmentation, pledged values may be the only answer." Francis Fukuyama declares in his book *Trust* that communities develop trust relationships only in the presence of shared values or norms such as honesty, loyalty, and dependability. Shared values are more than lists of words hung on walls. They are operative beliefs that people of any description can apply in their labor toward a common vision.

During the last decade, the Institute for Global Ethics has surveyed thousands of people worldwide, conducted focus groups, and worked with organizations to define sets of core, shared, moral values. Sometimes these values sets become codes of ethics. Not surprisingly, the important values chosen by people everywhere tend to look rather similar, even when the value definition exercise is conducted in a language other than English. Five values have typically dominated the landscape:

- **Honesty**
- **Responsibility**
- **Respect**
- **Fairness**
- **Compassion**

Creating a code by seeking and listing the values is not enough. The sincere organization will request employees at all levels to decide how to apply those values in their everyday activities. They will look at how the values will affect planning and strategy setting. The values will also function as analytical tools in making mission decisions and in setting policy for personnel. Take the opportunity in the next pages to think about how the values important to you can be applied in your daily life. Then, review the sample codes of ethics we have assembled at the end of this section for inspiration as you create and implement your own code.

5. Putting a Code into Action

Creating a list of fundamental shared values is your organization's critical first step. To connect the meaning of these values to the day-to-day activity of your organization, you have to "operationalize" them. What does it mean for a fund raiser to be "responsible?" How does the office staff demonstrate "compassion?" When every worker has thought about applying the code to their duties and interactions with other staff, clients, donors, and regulatory authorities, the code is well on its way to being an authentic part of your organization's fabric. Try the exercise below to get a feel for how "operationalizing" your values might work in your job.

Using the values you selected for the CD-ROM *Leading With Values,* write down one or two examples of what it means "to be" that value at work, at home, or in other areas of your life.

Word	Meaning
1 _____	_____
2 _____	_____
3 _____	_____
4 _____	_____
5 _____	_____
6 _____	_____
7 _____	_____

6. Sample Codes

CARE-Bangladesh Core Values
United Way Code of Ethics
West Point Honor Code
The 4-Way Test
Gandhi's List of Evils to Remember
The Girl Scout Law

You'll find a copy of each of the above codes of ethics on the pages that follow.

CARE-BANGLADESH CORE VALUES

RESPECT: We affirm the dignity, potential and contribution of participants, donors, partners and staff.

Women and men are equal, should have equal rights and should participate equally in society.

- All CARE projects shall promote the empowerment and full participation of women in designing, planning and implementing project activities.
- All CARE staff shall have equal opportunities for employment and promotion based on their qualifications and experience. In order to achieve this, CARE shall proactively promote the development of female staff.

Cultural, religious and gender diversity can be achieved only through the appreciation of and respect for such diversity.

- Project approaches shall equally value the perspectives and suggestions of all project participants regardless of their age, gender or power.
- All projects, departments and committees shall strive for diversity and adequate representation.

People work best in a **physically and emotionally secure environment;** mistakes provide important learning opportunities.

- CARE projects shall promote full community participation.
- CARE staff shall be free to express their opinions without threat of punishment or censure. Staff should be encouraged to learn from their mistakes. Mutual expectations should be clearly communicated.

Workplace behavior:

- Before making decisions that affect staff, provide each of them the opportunity to express their opinions.
- Treat with courtesy and politeness our visitors, neighbors, and colleagues, especially those who drive and serve us in the workplace.
- In meetings and group work, focus as carefully on what others have to say as on your own ideas.

INTEGRITY: We act consistently with CARE's mission, being honest and transparent in what we do and say, and accept responsibility for our collective and individual actions.

Honesty, integrity and sincerity are the cornerstones for success of any individual or organization.

- CARE programs shall actively promote honesty, integrity, sincerity and transparency in all project activities with all project participants.
- The professional and personal conduct of all CARE staff shall reflect their honesty, integrity, sincerity and transparency.

Workplace behavior:

- All CARE funds have been donated to the organization; therefore treat them with the same frugality that one would spend one's own income.
- Politely decline all gifts valued at more than Tk.1250 that have been offered by a supplier or vendor, as this leads to conflict of interest.
- When responsible for the custodianship of CARE's assets, resources, materials, and equipment, always ask, "Am I doing the right thing?"

COMMITMENT: We work together effectively to serve the larger community.

Positive perceptions of capability and accountability are fundamental to commitment, self-esteem and ultimately success.

- Project participants possess the knowledge and capability to identify and solve their own problems. CARE shall continue to facilitate this effort.
- CARE staff shall take greater responsibility for the development and implementation of their own work plans. Constructive feedback will promote accountability and capability.

Workplace behavior:

- Be observant of the support needs of colleagues and those living around us, ready to lend a voluntary hand when such needs arise.

- Break down the "barriers" between and within sectors, programs, and projects, seeking the greater, collective good rather than individual recognition.

Excellence: We constantly challenge ourselves to the highest levels of learning and performance to achieve greater impact.

All people have a **right to fundamental human needs,** such as food, shelter, health, gainful employment, education and personal freedom.

- CARE shall help all project participants to obtain and maintain their fundamental human needs. CARE shall work with communities to increase the personal freedom of women.
- CARE shall assist all staff in fulfilling their fundamental needs.

Experience and learning skills are interrelated, self-sustaining and fundamental to human development.

- CARE shall promote the experience and learning skills of all project participants to ensure program sustainability.
- CARE and CARE staff shall share in the responsibility of ensuring a wide range of experience, knowledge and skills in order to build greater capability and creativity.

Everybody is responsible for the **world's environment and sound management of resources.**

- All project planning and activities shall be environmentally sound.
- All projects shall manage their resources cost effectively.
- Staff have the right to work in an office environment which is free from dangerous cigarette smoke. Garbage should not be thrown or left on streets, sidewalks or floors but rather put in appropriate collection places.

Workplace behavior:

- View each hour spent in the workplace as providing an opportunity to expand and deepen the quality of CARE's work.
- Never be satisfied with simply meeting expectations; always try to exceed them significantly.
- Recognize and reward innovation and responsible risk-taking by staff.

CARE Bangladesh
Dhaka, Bangladesh

United Way Code of Ethics, 1996

United Way of America is synonymous with charitable service. The general public associates the United Way name with thousands of worthy causes all over the country. Indeed, for many people United Way is the primary way they meet their desire to help their fellow human beings.

UWA has a unique role as a national leader of philanthropy to benefit human services and as a major resource to local United Way organizations. Throughout America, United Way organizations have earned public trust, nurtured by years of ethical, honest, and responsible charitable services by UWA and local United Way organizations. The continued success of UWA and local United Way organizations depends upon the ethical conduct of each organization, its employees, and representatives.

UWA places the highest priority on its relationship with its members, the local United Way organizations. As part of this relationship, UWA responds to, serves, and supports its members in working to increase the organized capacity of people to care for one another. In an effort to achieve this goal, UWA strives to create a vision and direction that will generate leadership and encourage the local United Ways to be the best they can be in their communities and throughout the nation.

UWA employees set an example for other nonprofit organizations by their high standards of performance, professionalism, volunteer and charitable activities, helping of the less fortunate, and ethical conduct.

This Code of Ethics is the policy of UWA and expresses fundamental values. Accordingly, this Code guides the conduct of all employees of UWA, and is intended to foster an environment that promotes ethical conduct in carrying out their responsibilities.

Personal Integrity

A personal commitment to integrity in all circumstances benefits each individual as well as the organization. UWA employees:

- Respect and seek out the truth and avoid misrepresentation.
- Ensure fairness and objectivity in all activities.
- Set an example, as employees of a leading nonprofit organization, for high standards of professionalism.
- Honor the right to privacy of all people, including co-workers, contributors, and beneficiaries.
- Promote public confidence in philanthropic institutions.

Professional Excellence

As an employer, UWA promotes professional excellence and encourages open and honest communication among all employees to create an atmosphere conducive to personal growth and career development.

UWA's management:

- Encourages employee development, and communicates with personnel to help them achieve their goals and increase their self-esteem through job enrichment.
- Evaluates employees on a fair and consistent basis, so that all employees know what is expected of them and how they are progressing toward fulfilling expectations.

- Shows respect and empathy for employees, and is considerate while being mindful of managerial responsibilities.
- Regularly solicits and respects the opinions of subordinates.

UWA's employees:

- Strive to meet performance standards at the highest level.
- Refuse to engage in or tolerate any fraud, misuse, abuse, or waste of UWA resources.
- Encourage growth and self-improvement in themselves and their co-workers.
- Exhibit respect for co-workers and all those they come into contact with.
- Have the courage to face situations squarely and offer a minority opinion when necessary.
- Examine all alternatives with the understanding that the easiest action is not always in the best interest of the organization.
- Comply with all legal requirements concerning substance abuse.
- Comply with all other laws and regulations affecting the organization and their personal obligations.
- Discuss any questions concerning interpretations or compliance with the Code of Ethics with their manager, the UWA general counsel or other designated person.
- Encourage the reporting of breaches of the Code and protect those who report.

Accountability and Efficiency

UWA has responsibilities to its customers, which include local United Way organizations, donors and other stakeholders. These customers have placed faith in United Way of America. To uphold this trust, UWA employees:

- Make full and fair disclosures of all relevant information to customers, who have a right to know how their dollars are spent.
- Spend customers' money wisely, efficiently, and objectively.
- Are good stewards of membership fees, grants, and other contributions that are utilized by UWA to pay operating expenses, salaries, and employee benefits, and refrain from allowing expenditures of UWA funds that by their nature or amount do not directly advance UWA's mission.

Responsibilities to Volunteers

Volunteers who serve UWA through its Board of Governors or otherwise are crucial to the success of UWA. In order to assist volunteers to serve effectively and to obtain satisfaction from their service, UWA managers and employees:

- Support volunteers so they can perform to the highest level of their contribution and personal satisfaction.

- Treat all volunteers with fairness, equity, and respect, providing appropriate mechanisms for their views and interests to be expressed.
- Involve volunteers at appropriate levels and phases of the decision-making process.
- Assist in the development and the understanding of the roles of volunteers and employees, respectively; set clear standards of performance for volunteers; and appropriately recognize their contributions.

United Way of America
Alexandria, VA

West Point Honor Code

A cadet does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do.

United States Military Academy
West Point, New York

The 4-Way Test

Of the things we think, say, or do:

1) Is it truth?
2) Is it fair to all concerned?
3) Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
4) Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

Rotary International
Evanston, Illinois

Gandhi's List of Evils to Remember

- Wealth without work
- Commerce without morality
- Science without humanity
- Pleasure without conscience
- Politics without principles
- Knowledge without character

Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian Nationalist movement

The Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be

- honest and fair,
- friendly and helpful,
- considerate and caring,
- courageous and strong, and
- responsible for what I say and do

and to

- respect myself and others,
- respect authority,
- use resources wisely,
- make the world a better place, and
- be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Girl Scouts of the USA
New York, New York, 1996

Notes