

Code of Conduct

Approved by IGC in June 2003.

Introduction

Nonviolent Peaceforce is an international NGO seeking to contribute to peace and justice through providing a trained, international civilian nonviolent peace force for nonviolent intervention in conflicts. The Peace Force is sent to conflict areas to prevent death and destruction and protect human rights, thus creating the space for local groups to struggle nonviolently, enter into dialogue, and seek peaceful resolution.

For its work, it has for now defined the principles and guidelines described below.

This Code of Conduct is a working document of an interim character. NP realises that it may have to re-assess and revise parts of this Code when it has begun to engage in practical work in the field. Therefore, the Code will be revised regularly, and both those within and outside NP are invited to comment on it and give their criticisms and feed-back.

St. Paul, in June 2003

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1. Principles of NP

1.1 Primacy of those involved in the conflict

NP believes that a conflict can only be solved/transformed by those directly involved in it. Its role as an international intervenor is to support the parties in conflict to do so.

1.2 Nonviolence

Nonviolent Peaceforce is committed to nonviolence by which it means that it will never actively engage in or support actions which may result in physical or mental or spiritual harm, or loss of life. NP's adherence to nonviolence is unconditional, because it asserts that conflict transformation between and within countries cannot be achieved by violent means.

1.3 Nonpartisanship

The Nonviolent Peaceforce will remain nonpartisan. It will not take the side of any party and seeks to offer its protective services upon request to unarmed civilian groups committed to nonviolent and peaceful resolution. In doing so, the NP opposes the use of violence and dedicates itself to the safety of all while justice and durable peace are sought.

By not taking sides NP means it will refrain from taking a position on political demands or views by either side in a conflict. NP is not neutral in terms of the principles and values of international humanitarian and human rights law, and seeks to support them everywhere.

1.4 Independence

NP is an independent organisation, independent from any interest group, political party, ideology or religion, and free to formulate policies and operational strategies in accordance with its decision-making procedures, goals and principles.

1.5 Human Rights and International Law

While recognising that the notion of universality of human right has been challenged on the grounds of different value priorities, NP sees the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the other Covenants and Pacts regarding human rights as the broadest common denominator the peoples of the modern world have found so far.

NP is committed to the principle and practice of promoting human rights in its work. It seeks and urges compliance with international humanitarian law and principles, and respect for human and peoples' rights amongst everyone.

2. Responsibilities, Accountability, and Relationships of NP

2.1 To all people

NP holds itself accountable primarily to everyone living in the areas of conflict it intervenes in, seeking the safety of everyone. It holds itself also accountable to its supporters and members, sponsors and funders and to the international community as such.

2.2 Partners

Nonviolent Peaceforce's aim is to be a broad-based international civil organization, working in partnership with local groups whenever possible.

Based on the conviction that only those who are in a conflict can eventually solve it, NP will when in doubt rather orient itself on the guidance of local NGOs or other local actors before that of other international intervenors.

NP will seek co-operation with other NGOs as well as with governmental organisations working for justice and conflict transformation. It will not duplicate efforts others are already undertaking. NP will avoid actions that may cause rivalry or competition between its partners or other NGOs committed for peace and justice, and will not intentionally and directly compete with them for funding or other resources.

2.3 Staff and Volunteers

As an organisation with a global constituency, NP seeks to put its principles into practice by not only avoiding any discriminatory practices in hiring procedures (equal opportunity policy), but actively striving for diversity by including people from different geographical origin, ethnicity and nationality, religious orientations and of women.

While working with Nonviolent Peaceforce may at times involve considerable risk, and those working with NP should be willing to accept that risk, NP will do everything possible to guarantee the safety of its staff and volunteers.

In the case of emergencies, NP will never discriminate or differentiate between its international and local staff.

2.4 Governments

NP will respect the laws of the countries it is working in, but does not exclude accepting as partners groups which use civil disobedience as a tool of resistance.

NP will not act as an instrument of foreign or domestic policy of any government or other sponsor.

2.5 Confidentiality and Transparency

As a means of enhancing accountability, NP seeks to be transparent in its work. But it will, when necessary for the safety of people or the effectiveness of their work, always respect confidentiality towards its partners and others it is working with.

2.6 Criteria of Involvement and Disengagement

The Peace Force will be deployed at the invitation of local organisations or nonviolent movements working for peaceful change/ resolution. Attempts will be made to gain approval from all sides involved in the conflict.

NP will only consider a project and/or deploy a team if:

- there is a specific proposal and partner(s),
- if the proposal meets NP's mandate and expertise,
- if it would allow to maintain a nonviolent and non-partisan stance,
- if the risk level for NP field staff is acceptable,
- if there is sufficient organisational and logistical backup, and reason to assume that there would be sufficient funding and commitment in the organisation for the duration of the project, and
- if there is sufficient previous assessment to assume that the presence of NP would enhance local efforts for peaceful conflict transformation and justice.

It will not duplicate activities of other organisations already in the field.

NP will end a project only if:

- the project's objectives have been reached,
- or if the invitation by those who invited NP is withdrawn,
- or if a further stay would endanger those NP is working with in the country,
- or endanger to a irresponsible degree the safety of its own NP's staff.

2.7 Internal Organisational Ethics

As an organisation of citizens with a global constituency, Nonviolent Peaceforce has defined the following operational principles for its dealings within its different constituent parts – member organisations, Governing Council, volunteers and staff:

Commitment to active nonviolence while participating in the Peaceforce.

Democratic decision-making processes built into the leadership structure.

Multicultural perspectives built into all aspects of Peaceforce development, deployment, personnel, and governance.

Leadership drawn from men and women committed to nonviolence and the peaceful resolution of conflict and actively committed to living by the values of nonviolence and compassion.

Nonviolent Peaceforce considers itself a learning organisation. Through continuous review and evaluation processes it seeks to improve its work and organisation, and develop the skills of all its staff. It commits itself to make the lessons it learns public so that others may benefit from it.

Nonviolent Peaceforce seeks to solve internal conflicts by using the same mechanisms it wishes to see in the resolution of large-scale conflicts, namely through negotiation and consensus.

Any volunteer or staff member has access to a grievance process which will be set up by Nonviolent Peaceforce.

2.8 Gender

Nonviolent Peaceforce realises that gender is an important issue in conflict transformation and human rights protection. Therefore it seeks to ensure that half of its elected representatives and its personnel at all levels are women. It includes gender analysis and gender-related training in all the stages of project development, and it makes sure that the 'gender dimension' is duly considered in its work in the field. The latter will happen e.g. by ensuring women and women's groups as local partners, awareness of specific needs of local men and women, and awareness of specific roles women might play on the ground in conflict transformation.

2.9 Ethics of Funding

Nonviolent Peaceforce does not accept money from any government whose foreign policy has a pronounced and immediate exacerbating effect on parties to a conflict in which we are engaged or currently considering engagement.

Nonviolent Peaceforce does not accept money from any government or organization that is party to a conflict in which we are engaged or considering engagement.

Nonviolent Peaceforce does not accept money from any corporation that profits from weapons.

Nonviolent Peaceforce does not accept money if there is knowledge that it was earned illegally.

NP seeks to maintain independence by diversifying its sources of funding. Its goal is that no single source should provide more than 10% of its annual budget, realising that it may not always be possible to realise that goal. Special attention is given, however, to apply this rule to money from any government whose country is a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

NP recognises its responsibility and accountability towards its supporters and donors through regular and reliable reporting. Nevertheless, since the primary obligation of the NP is toward saving lives and it must work independently in areas where great sensitivity and nonpartisanship is needed, it wishes donors to understand that no money donated will influence decisions about the NP's nonviolent intervention.

3. Ethics of Field Work for NP Staff

3.1 Ethical Standards of Personal Behaviour

Team members will always behave at the highest moral level, during working time or off work.

They will show respect for every human being and of local customs.

They will take care not to disrupt community life or cause conflict, for example by offering privileges to certain members of the community, enter relationships considered illegitimate, or display culturally offensive behaviour of any sort.

NP team members will never seek to press their views, religion or other beliefs, on others, be it their team-mates or members of the local community. This includes inviting members of other religions or congregations to attend services organised by NP members.

If confronted with views and opinions varying from their own, NP team members will seek to listen and understand their partner. They will refrain from seeking to convert her/him to their own views and principles.

They realise that they are not there to solve the problems, but to enable local people to solve them. They are cautious against any urge “to do something”.

They will always put first the safety of those with whom they have dealings – be it in carrying out work tasks or in private matters - and avoid any action that may put the well-being and health of their partners at risk.

Accusations of sexual harassment or racist behaviour of any sort, be it within the team or outside, lead to immediate suspension, and, after careful exploration of the case by the Project Director or his/her representative, where the accused will be given a fair chance to defend her/his case, may lead to cancellation of the contract without notice.

NP members will not accept any gratuity or gifts which go beyond simple courtesy.

They will not take part in any illegal activities, including black market trade in goods.

3.2 Not to Do Harm

Nonviolent Peaceforce and individual team members will seek not to distort local market and prices by giving in to demands for exorbitant rent or prices for goods, while realising that in some countries there are different price rates for locals and internationals.

Team members commit themselves to live mainly upon their per diem and not use their salary within the country of deployment.

NP team members will avoid implicit ethical messages that imply accepting violence as a means of dealing with conflict.

NP team members will always analyse carefully if any of their actions (or non-actions) have negative impact on the local community or the conflict, and seek to abolish any such as soon as it is discovered.

3.3 Adherence to Mandate

Nonviolent Peaceforce team members will not engage in humanitarian aid, nor in any other activity not explicitly listed in the mandate for the specific project which is carried out. Any additional tasks outside the mandate need the previous agreement by the Project Director or her/his representative.

If confronted with urgent humanitarian needs, the teams will make sure that humanitarian organisations are informed of it and deal with the problem.

Unless the mandate of the specific project makes other provisions, team members are not allowed to assist with the work of the groups or individuals NP seeks to protect, nor in that of other local or international NGOs.

Unless the mandate of the specific project makes other provisions, NP team members will seek to refer requests from local citizens which are directed to them directly, to a local or international NGO. It will act on its own (for example in form of emergency aid when a NP member is qualified to provide it) only in cases of immediate threat to life or other serious human right violation, or if there is no local NGO available to take care of the problem.

Adhering to the principle of non-partisanship, NP team members will not get engaged in any protest activity of local or international NGOs, nor in any civil disobedience or otherwise illegal activity of local or international NGOs. They will – if requested – monitor such activities but not take part in it.

In their reports, team members will always strive to present the views of all sides to a conflict, be as objectively as possible, and refrain from judgmental comments.

Team members will not make press or media statements, or write public reports to local or international audiences, without authorisation by the Project Director or her/his representative.