

## CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Approved by the Trias Board of Directors – 23 April 2019<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The success of Trias in achieving its mission and strategic objectives depends on our staff. Trias believes that every individual, group and MBO possesses the power for self-development and that they need to collaborate in order to be socially and economically stronger. Trias attaches much value to supporting these processes of self-development in the fight against poverty and in working together for a better distribution of wealth and well-being. As a Non Governmental Organization, Trias is accountable to and should deserve the trust of its donors, stakeholders and partner organizations in all the countries we work. We gain trust by respecting laws and upholding rules of irreproachable behavior and conscientiousness. People are our most important asset and the highest standard of conduct, competence and performance is expected of all Trias staff and Board members in order to reflect the Trias ethical principles, which are also partially reflected in three of our **core competencies**.

- ❖ **Commitment**
- ❖ **Respect**
- ❖ **Act as we**
- ❖ Integrity
- ❖ Accountability
- ❖ Impartiality
- ❖ Inclusivity /Gender sensitivity

These principles apply to all Trias staff and Board members, independent of their location or job level, and including temporary staff and junior assistants. They are also expected of all Trias collaborators<sup>2</sup>, notwithstanding their contractual or remuneration status.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an updated version. Changes were made on 7/12/2023 to include Board members, and on 23/05/2023 to clarify some points with regards to impartiality, please see Annex for details.

<sup>2</sup> Collaborators are defined as individuals who work for Trias as non-staff members including consultants, holders of

This document refers to Trias staff and Board members with the understanding that in principle, the code of ethics and professional conduct applies to all staff, Board members and people involved that Trias collaborates with. In the event of a breach of this code, consequences and/or sanctions will be determined depending on the degree of severity, on the basis of underlying agreements, local laws and regulations and in coherence with the current HR policy in Trias.

This [Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#) is not exhaustive. Rather, it serves to remind staff and Board members of the basic principles of ethical behavior and the relevant standards of conduct that should guide their thoughts, decisions and actions in responding to the wide range of situations and problems they are likely to be confronted with in the course of their employment or Board commitment with Trias. Trias expects its staff and Board members to familiarize themselves with the Code and internalize it, and to seek further clarification and assistance with their leading officer, the focal point integrity, with the internal counsellor in their department, the HR coordinator at Head Office or the general management, in cases of uncertainty.

It is important to understand that some principles or the violation thereof might cause tension to uphold the other principles. The staff and Board members need to be well briefed about the ethical principles and how to deal with them. Teams and Board are expected to discuss these and particular situations with their teams or Board to increase appreciation and compliance with the ethical principles of Trias.

### 2. The Code

- ❖ **(Professional) Commitment**  
*To demonstrate a high level of professionalism and loyalty to the organization, its mandate and objectives.*

agreements for Performance of Work (APW), Technical Services Agreement (TSA) holders, Special Service Agreements (SSA) or letters of agreement, Temporary Advisers, Interns, and Volunteers



Trias staff and Board members are expected to:

- \* know the broad outline of the goals, priorities and culture of Trias, accept them and bring their own behavior in line with them;
- \* deliver on the duties of their position in an ethical and professional manner;
- \* keep in mind the long term objectives of Trias when managing short and medium term activities or operations;
- \* ensure their own professional development and that of their staff (for supervisors) in their domain of activity to maintain excellent technical standards;
- \* use their professional expertise constructively for the benefit of Trias;
- \* uphold and promote the standards of their professional codes of conduct;
- \* demonstrate openness to new ideas and approaches, and favor new thoughts and concepts.

❖ **Respect**

*To respect and value the dignity, worth, equality and privacy of all persons, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, social/sexual background and (dis)abilities, anytime, anywhere.*

Trias staff and Board members are expected to:

- \* acknowledge, respect and value differences in cultures, and tune their communication and behavior to take into account diversity;
- \* have an interested attitude towards peoples goals, feelings, needs and ideas and demonstrate sensitivity when responding to them
- \* treat others with tact, courtesy and respect;
- \* demonstrate awareness that statements or actions not necessarily intended to be offensive to another person may be perceived as such by exercising restraint, and refrain from unpleasant or disparaging remarks or actions;
- \* maintain a professional environment characterized by good working relations and an atmosphere of courtesy and mutual respect;
- \* abstain from and actively discourage all forms of harassment, including verbal and nonverbal abuse<sup>1</sup>, written or physical abuse;
- \* never personally engage in acts of sexual harassment, and report acts they become aware of;

- \* never personally engage in any acts of sexual exploitation and abuse and report acts they become aware of;
- \* never report erroneous facts in bad faith.

❖ **Act as we**

*Contributing actively to a shared result or to the resolution of a problem of conflict, even when the subject of that cooperation is not directly in one's own interest.*

Trias staff and Board members are expected to:

- \* urge colleagues and/or colleagues to work together, also with other disciplines or divisions inside and outside of Trias
- \* invite others to share their positions with the rest of the team; makes sure that every team or Board member has the opportunity to contribute
- \* help employees or colleagues to achieve goals that are not directly in the own interest
- \* look for opportunities to reconcile different positions and makes concessions to the own points of view in order to be able to make progress as a team
- \* initiate cooperation between different groups in order to achieve collective results
- \* nominate problems within the team and commit oneself to solving them jointly (or having them solved) jointly

❖ **Integrity**

*To behave in accordance with ethical principles, and act in good faith, intellectual honesty and fairness.*

Trias staff and Board members are expected to:

- \* observe national and local laws at all times
- \* uphold common and generally accepted values and norms that give direction to day to day behavior;
- \* avoid any action that could be perceived as an abuse of privileges and immunities;
- \* demonstrate the same standards of integrity in their personal pursuits as required in the workplace;

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<sup>1</sup> For example sexist language, discrimination, stereotyping and misogynic language / behavior



- \* demonstrate the highest standards of integrity as established in their functional and professional domains or specialized work fields;
- \* protect the security of any confidential information provided to, or generated by Trias and/or the partner organizations with whom we work;
- \* uphold the Trias values in their professional and private communication or social media activities;
- \* act in the interest of the organization and its values and principles;
- \* use correct information and fair judgements in negotiations and cooperation with colleagues and collaborators;
- \* treat colleagues and collaborators fairly and resort to negotiation and amicable settlement in case of conflict as much as possible;
- \* never engage in any level of physical or verbal violence or threat of violence;
- \* report (evidence based) suspected wrongdoing or breaches by staff or Board members or collaborators (as defined in the introduction of this Code) of Trias ethical principles, rules, regulations or policy through established mechanisms, being the management or the internal counsellors and/or the focal point integrity of Trias ;

❖ **Accountability**

*To take responsibility for one's actions, decisions and their consequences.*

Trias staff and Board members are expected to:

- \* Observe institutional and divisional policies and guidelines and/or report dilemmas they might encounter to their supervisor;
- \* Define clear and realistic objectives and deliverables for their activities in consultation and agreement with their supervisors;
- \* Be aware that Trias has no tolerance for fraud or corruption.
- \* Take responsibility for carrying out the duties of their position to the best of their abilities;
- \* Take responsibility for their decisions and for the consequences of their actions;
- \* In the case of supervisors, take responsibility for the performance of the division and staff members; assessment in a fair and factual manner, in line with agreed objectives, and in fairness to all stakeholders in the organization; take difficult decisions if those are to be taken in the interest of the organization and other staff;

- \* Ensure that the human, financial and material resources entrusted to the staff are used optimally for the benefit of Trias' mission and objectives;
- \* Provide advice and guidance to colleagues or collaborators, where appropriate, and exercise adequate supervision and control over tasks that they delegate;
- \* Record all financial transactions and prepare accurate and complete records, in accordance with established procedures; and know that Trias has a zero tolerance for corruption and fraud;
- \* Bear in mind that they speak for Trias only on subjects within their area of responsibility and expertise, ask for permission from their supervisor and seek advice from Trias communications officers as appropriate.
- \* Be co-responsible for team decisions and interventions as part of the team and be loyal to these.

❖ **Impartiality**

*To conduct oneself serving the interests of Trias and under the final authority of the President of the Board of Directors or the General Director or within the mandate of the leading officer in charge, and to ensure that personal views and convictions do not compromise ethical principles, official duties or the interests of Trias.*

Trias staff and Board members are expected to:

- \* disclose promptly and fully any conflict of interest or potential situation of conflict of interest in their own personal work situation or that of other staff or Board members through a form of declaration of interest or by seeking Internal Counselors' advice on a confidential basis, and/or by consulting their supervisor as applicable.
- \* refrain from seeking or obtaining, under any circumstance, undue instructions or assistance from any government official or from any other authority external to the organization;
- \* exercise discretion at all times in their personal political and religious activities and in expressing their personal political and religious opinions and beliefs in the workplace, while respecting others opinions and beliefs ;
- \* Ensure that any external experts and/or non-staff members that Trias collaborates with, are aware of the values and ethics of Trias and take responsibility for the final decision concerning their involvement with Trias. A declaration of interest form will be completed when relevant.
- \* An intimate relationship between a supervisor and the supervised staff is not allowed. Be aware that power abuse is not accepted within Trias and staff is



responsible to bring it to the attention of their supervisor. Intimate relationships are not accepted when there is a direct influence on power relations in Trias. Intimate relationships between members of the same team (i.e. in the lowest organisational work unit) are mentioned to their direct supervisor.

- \* Seek agreement from their supervisor before committing to any external professional (economical, political) activity that induces a potential conflict of interest or could negatively affect the quality of the job within Trias.
- \* As supervisor, mediate in terms of conflict in the interest of the organization and refraining from taking sides in the conflict but instead referring to Trias values and principles;
- \* Decline personal gifts, that can be considered as or appear to be a return service unless it would cause harm to Trias to refuse, in which case they must declare them to their supervisor before accepting;
- \* Seek authorization from the management, before individually accepting any decoration or honor related to Trias (team)work;
- \* Seek authorization from the management for being in a political campaign and be aware that initiating a political campaign or a nomination process making undue use of Trias reputation, resources or network or having a negative impact on Trias can be grounds for termination.

❖ **Inclusivity/Gender Sensitivity**

For Trias, inclusivity and gender equity are at the heart of our strategy. Building an inclusive society is the answer to the injustices and inequalities which lie at the heart of poverty. An inclusive society is key to social sustainability. Inclusivity means for Trias “every person has the right to develop him-/herself regardless of sex, age, race or economic status”. Trias’ vision on and advocacy of inclusivity is aimed at ensuring that individuals and groups who have a greater risk of being excluded, can participate in and benefit from the development processes. Participation is important and meaningful only if it serves challenging power relations with the final aim to achieve equal rights and opportunities for more excluded people. To act upon inequalities, Trias emphasizes the empowerment of women, young and “poor” and investment in capacity building of MBOs to assume their responsibilities in society to contribute to greater inclusion.

*This Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct was developed from the principle of setting the same standards for inclusive and gender sensitive conduct internally. This should be reflected in each and every paragraph, that every staff member of Trias will be held*

*accountable for his or her ethics and behavior to be in line with the Trias values and strategy and set an example for inclusive and gender sensitive behavior.*

**3. Using the Code of Conduct**

These principles are to be observed by Trias staff and Board members at all times. The Ethical Code is intended to provide guidance to help resolve ethical dilemmas and serve as a framework for decision making based on professional conduct. The issues listed in the Code are not exhaustive and do not seek to envisage every potential ethical dilemma. Trias makes resources available on ethical issues, which can be obtained from the management, one of the decentralized Internal Counsellors or the HR focal point at the Department of Quality and Resources at the Head Office. The Steering Committee Inclusivity plays a pivotal role in support, advice and competency development with regard to ethical awareness and culture development.

**4. Contract of employment**

The ethical code itself will become an integral part of every staff members contract and all staff and Board members are asked to undersign this document.

I..... (name employee/Board member), working for Trias  
..... have read and understood this code of ethics and professional conduct and agree with the content.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Annex

Changes made after Board's approval on April 23rd 2019

May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023

- Chapter 2. The Code; paragraph "Integrity"
  - 7<sup>th</sup> \*  
"uphold the Trias values in their professional and private communication or social media activities" used to be:  
*"demonstrate the same discretion and prudence in their professional and private communications, emails or social media activities"*
- Chapter 2. The Code; paragraph "Impartiality"
  - 4<sup>th</sup> \*  
"Ensure that any external experts and/or non-staff members that Trias collaborates with, are aware of the values and ethics of Trias and take responsibility for the final decision concerning their involvement with Trias. A declaration of interest form will be completed when relevant" used to be:  
*"Ensure that any external experts and/or non-staff members that Trias collaborates with, will complete declarations of interest forms when relevant, and review them systematically, and take responsibility for the final decision concerning their involvement with Trias"*
  - 5<sup>th</sup> \*  
"An intimate relationship between a supervisor and the supervised staff is not allowed. Be aware that power abuse is not accepted within Trias and staff is responsible to bring it to the attention of their supervisor. Intimate relationships are not accepted when there is a direct influence on power relations in Trias. Intimate relationships between members of the same team (i.e. in the lowest organisational work unit) are mentioned to their direct supervisor" used to be:  
*"Be aware that intimate relationships are not accepted within the same team and/or when there is a direct influence on power relations in Trias and bring an intimate relationship that they have with another Trias staff member or that they know of to the attention of their supervisor"*

- 6<sup>th</sup> \*  
"Seek agreement from their supervisor before committing to any external professional (economical, political) activity that induces a potential conflict of interest or could negatively affect the quality of the job within Trias" used to be:  
*"Seek written agreement from their supervisor before committing to any external professional (economical, political) activity and define together boundaries with regard to the material effects and other impact (efficiency, effectiveness, performance) of this activity on the job"*

December 7<sup>th</sup> 2023

- "Trias staff" has been replaced by "Trias staff and Board members"

