Mangrove Foundation of India

No: 42, Mosque Street,
Jameelabath, Pulicat Post,
Ponneri Taluk, Tiruvallur,
Tamil Nadu - 601205.

MANGROVE FOUNDATION OF INDIA (MFI)

Educate | Restore | Sustain

CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

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1. PURPOSE

The Mangrove Foundation of India (MFI) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, accountability, respect and responsible conduct in all its programmes, operations and relationships.

MFI works with communities, farmers, fisherfolk, women and self-help groups, children and young people, volunteers, employees, government institutions, universities, NGOs, CSR partners, donors and other stakeholders.

This Code of Conduct establishes the standards of behaviour expected from everyone associated with MFI and provides a common framework for ethical, professional and responsible conduct.

The purpose of this Code is to:

- Promote integrity, honesty and accountability.
- Protect the dignity, rights and safety of all individuals.
- Ensure responsible conduct in communities and project locations.
- Prevent discrimination, harassment, exploitation, abuse, fraud and corruption.
- Promote responsible use of organisational resources.
- Protect MFI's reputation, information, property and assets.
- Strengthen transparency and accountability towards communities, donors, partners and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that MFI's environmental and social activities are conducted responsibly and sustainably.

2. SCOPE

This Code applies to all persons associated with MFI, including:

- Trustees and governing body members.
- Employees and project staff.
- Consultants and advisors.
- Interns and fellows.
- Volunteers.
- Field workers and community facilitators.
- Contractors and service providers.
- Partner organisations and representatives, where applicable.
- Individuals representing MFI at meetings, events, conferences, field activities or public forums.
- Any other person acting on behalf of MFI.

All persons covered by this Code are expected to understand and comply with the principles contained herein.

Where MFI engages partner organisations or contractors, MFI will encourage appropriate standards of ethical conduct consistent with this Code.

3. MFI'S ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

All individuals associated with MFI shall uphold the following values:

3.1 Integrity

Act honestly, transparently and ethically in all professional and organisational activities.

3.2 Respect

Treat every person with dignity, courtesy, fairness and respect, regardless of gender, age, caste, religion, disability, socioeconomic background, language, region or other personal characteristics.

3.3 Accountability

Accept responsibility for decisions, actions, resources and results.

3.4 Transparency

Maintain accurate records and communicate information truthfully and responsibly.

3.5 Inclusion

Promote meaningful participation of local communities, women, youth, children and vulnerable groups.

3.6 Environmental Responsibility

Protect ecosystems and natural resources and minimise environmental harm through responsible project implementation.

3.7 Community Partnership

Recognise local communities as important partners in ecological restoration, conservation and sustainable livelihood initiatives.

3.8 Professionalism

Perform duties competently, responsibly and in accordance with MFI policies and applicable laws.

4. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

All MFI representatives shall:

- Perform their responsibilities honestly and diligently.
- Maintain professional behaviour in offices, project locations and public events.
- Follow legitimate instructions and organisational procedures.
- Treat colleagues, community members, partners and beneficiaries with respect.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Avoid behaviour that could damage the reputation or credibility of MFI.
- Use organisational resources only for authorised purposes.
- Promptly report suspected misconduct or violations of this Code.
- Cooperate honestly with internal reviews and investigations.

No person shall use their position within MFI for personal advantage or improper benefit.

5. RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES

MFI works closely with coastal, rural, farming, fishing and other local communities.

All personnel shall:

- Respect local customs, culture and community practices.
- Listen to community concerns and feedback.
- Avoid making promises that MFI has not authorised or cannot fulfil.
- Avoid discrimination or preferential treatment based on personal relationships.

- Obtain appropriate consent before collecting personal information, photographs, interviews or other identifiable material.
- Ensure that project activities do not intentionally cause unnecessary harm to community members or their livelihoods.
- Treat community members as partners rather than merely recipients of assistance.
- Protect the dignity and privacy of vulnerable individuals.

Community participation should be encouraged wherever appropriate and practical.

6. SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS

MFI may undertake activities involving children, students, women, vulnerable communities and other potentially at-risk groups.

All personnel shall:

- Treat children and vulnerable persons with dignity and respect.
- Never engage in sexual exploitation, abuse or inappropriate conduct.
- Never engage in physical, verbal or emotional abuse.
- Never use threatening, humiliating or degrading behaviour.
- Never exploit a person's vulnerability for personal, financial or organisational benefit.
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries.
- Immediately report suspected abuse, exploitation or serious safeguarding concerns through the appropriate MFI reporting mechanism.

Any allegation involving a child or vulnerable person shall be handled seriously, confidentially and in accordance with applicable law and MFI safeguarding procedures.

7. ZERO TOLERANCE FOR HARASSMENT

MFI is committed to maintaining a workplace and project environment free from harassment, intimidation, bullying and discrimination.

Prohibited conduct includes:

- Sexual harassment.
- Verbal abuse.
- Physical intimidation.
- Threats or coercion.
- Bullying.
- Unwelcome sexual comments or behaviour.
- Offensive jokes or messages.
- Repeated unwanted personal communication.
- Discriminatory treatment.
- Retaliation against a person who raises a genuine concern.

MFI shall comply with applicable Indian laws relating to prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace, including the Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 (POSH Act), wherever applicable.

Complaints shall be handled through appropriate internal mechanisms and statutory processes.

8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

MFI does not tolerate unlawful discrimination.

Employment, volunteering, participation and professional opportunities should be based on relevant qualifications, competence, experience, organisational requirements and applicable law.

No person should be unfairly discriminated against because of:

- Gender.
- Age.
- Caste.
- Religion.
- Disability.
- Socioeconomic background.
- Region or language.
- Marital or family status.
- Any other protected characteristic under applicable law.

MFI encourages inclusive participation in its environmental, educational and community programmes.

9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All MFI personnel must act in the best interests of the organisation.

A conflict of interest may arise when personal, family, financial, professional or other interests could improperly influence organisational decisions.

Examples may include:

- Awarding work to a business owned by a close family member.
- Participating in procurement decisions involving a personal business interest.
- Accepting benefits from a supplier or contractor.
- Using confidential MFI information for personal gain.
- Using an organisational position to benefit a related person or business.

Any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest should be disclosed promptly to the appropriate authority within MFI.

The concerned person may be required to withdraw from the relevant decision-making process.

10. ANTI-BRIBERY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

MFI prohibits bribery, corruption and improper influence.

No employee, trustee, volunteer, consultant or representative shall:

- Offer or accept bribes.
- Make improper payments.
- Misuse organisational funds.
- Manipulate financial or project records.
- Accept benefits intended to improperly influence an organisational decision.
- Facilitate fraudulent or corrupt transactions.

- Misrepresent project results or expenditure.

Reasonable and legitimate hospitality or customary professional interactions may be permitted where they are lawful, transparent and do not create an improper obligation.

Any suspected corruption or fraud must be reported promptly.

11. GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

Personnel must exercise caution when accepting or providing gifts or hospitality in connection with their MFI responsibilities.

Gifts or hospitality must not:

- Influence a procurement or funding decision.
- Create an obligation or expectation.
- Be excessive or inappropriate.
- Be offered in exchange for preferential treatment.
- Violate applicable law or organisational policy.

Cash gifts or cash-equivalent benefits must not be accepted for personal use in connection with MFI activities.

Where required, gifts and hospitality should be disclosed to the appropriate MFI authority.

12. FINANCIAL INTEGRITY

MFI is committed to responsible stewardship of funds received from donors, CSR partners, institutions and other sources.

All personnel shall:

- Use funds only for authorised organisational purposes.
- Maintain accurate financial and supporting records.
- Submit genuine bills, invoices and expense claims.
- Avoid unauthorised expenditure.
- Never falsify financial records.
- Protect organisational assets.
- Cooperate with audits and financial reviews.

MFI's existing donation practices emphasise transparency, ethical stewardship and use of funds for charitable objectives.

13. PROCUREMENT AND VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS

Procurement decisions shall be made fairly, transparently and in the best interests of MFI.

Personnel involved in procurement shall:

- Follow approved procurement procedures.
- Seek appropriate quotations or competitive processes where required.
- Avoid conflicts of interest.
- Maintain proper documentation.
- Not favour suppliers for personal reasons.

- Not accept improper commissions or benefits.
- Ensure that purchases are appropriate for organisational needs.

Suppliers and contractors should be selected based on appropriate factors such as quality, suitability, cost, reliability, compliance and organisational requirements.

14. PROTECTION OF ORGANISATIONAL ASSETS

MFI's physical, financial, digital and intellectual assets shall be protected from misuse, theft, damage or unauthorised use.

Assets include:

- Funds and bank accounts.
- Vehicles and equipment.
- Computers and electronic devices.
- Documents and records.
- Project data.
- Photographs and videos.
- Intellectual property.
- Logos and branding materials.
- Digital accounts and passwords.

MFI assets must not be used for unauthorised personal, commercial or political purposes.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

MFI personnel may have access to confidential information concerning employees, communities, donors, partners, beneficiaries and projects.

Confidential information must be:

- Accessed only when required for legitimate work.
- Stored securely.
- Shared only with authorised persons.
- Protected from unauthorised disclosure.
- Handled in accordance with applicable law and MFI policies.

Personal information such as contact details, identification documents, financial information and sensitive community information must be handled responsibly.

Confidential information must not be used for personal benefit.

16. SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

MFI personnel are expected to use social media responsibly.

Individuals representing MFI shall:

- Protect confidential information.
- Avoid publishing misleading or unverified information.
- Avoid statements that falsely represent MFI's official position.

- Obtain appropriate consent before publishing identifiable photographs or personal stories of beneficiaries, children or community members.
- Respect the dignity and privacy of communities.
- Use MFI's name, logo and branding only as authorised.

Only authorised persons should issue official statements or represent MFI in the media on behalf of the organisation.

Personal opinions must not be presented as official MFI positions.

17. RESPONSIBLE USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND STORIES

MFI frequently documents environmental restoration and community activities.

Photographs, videos and beneficiary stories must be collected and used responsibly.

Personnel should:

- Obtain appropriate consent wherever required.
- Avoid humiliating or exploitative portrayals.
- Avoid misleading claims.
- Protect children and vulnerable persons.
- Avoid publishing sensitive personal information.
- Respect requests for privacy.
- Ensure that communications accurately represent the purpose and outcomes of MFI programmes.

18. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

As an organisation focused on ecological restoration and climate-resilient communities, MFI expects its personnel to demonstrate responsible environmental practices.

All project activities should, as far as reasonably possible:

- Protect native biodiversity.
- Avoid unnecessary environmental damage.
- Follow appropriate ecological restoration principles.
- Respect local environmental regulations.
- Minimise waste and pollution.
- Promote responsible resource use.
- Avoid introducing invasive species without appropriate technical assessment and authorisation.
- Promote community participation in environmental protection.

MFI's programmes include mangrove restoration, wetland protection, agroforestry, bamboo plantation, lake restoration, biodiversity conservation and climate education.

19. HEALTH AND SAFETY

MFI is committed to protecting the health and safety of its employees, volunteers, community members and visitors.

Personnel shall:

- Follow applicable safety instructions.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment where required.
- Report unsafe conditions.
- Follow field safety procedures.
- Not undertake activities while impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Take reasonable precautions during field visits, plantation activities, coastal activities, water-related activities and other project work.
- Report accidents and serious incidents promptly.

Field activities shall be planned with reasonable consideration of environmental, weather, transport, water and other location-specific risks.

20. DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND INTOXICATION

The possession, use, distribution or sale of illegal drugs in connection with MFI activities is prohibited.

Personnel must not report for work or field activities while impaired by alcohol or drugs where such impairment could affect safety, performance or professional conduct.

Alcohol must not be consumed during activities where doing so could compromise safety, professional responsibilities or the reputation of MFI.

21. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY AND USE OF MFI RESOURCES

MFI is a civil society organisation working on environmental and community development objectives.

MFI resources, facilities, funds, staff time and official communication channels must not be used for unauthorised political campaigning or personal political activities.

Individuals may exercise their lawful personal civic and political rights in their personal capacity, provided they do not falsely represent their personal views as MFI's official position.

22. PARTNERSHIPS AND REPRESENTATION

MFI collaborates with government departments, universities, NGOs, corporations, donors, technical institutions and community organisations.

Personnel representing MFI in partnerships shall:

- Act professionally and honestly.
- Respect partner organisations.
- Follow agreed roles and responsibilities.
- Protect confidential information.
- Avoid unauthorised commitments.
- Disclose conflicts of interest.
- Maintain accurate project information.
- Avoid making commitments on behalf of MFI without appropriate authority.

23. RESEARCH, DATA AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

MFI may participate in biodiversity studies, ecological research, field surveys and collaborations with universities and technical institutions.

All research-related activities should:

- Follow appropriate scientific and ethical practices.
- Maintain accurate records.
- Properly acknowledge contributors and partner institutions.
- Avoid fabrication or falsification of data.
- Respect community and environmental considerations.
- Protect confidential information.
- Obtain required permissions before conducting regulated activities.

MFI's website identifies collaborations with universities and academic institutions for biodiversity and conservation-related studies.

24. VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

Volunteers are important contributors to MFI's environmental and community activities.

Volunteers shall:

- Follow instructions provided by authorised MFI personnel.
- Respect community members and fellow volunteers.
- Follow field safety requirements.
- Protect MFI property.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Avoid making unauthorised commitments.
- Use photographs and social media responsibly.
- Report safety, safeguarding or ethical concerns.

Volunteers may be removed from an activity where their conduct creates a safety, safeguarding or reputational risk.

25. WHISTLEBLOWING AND REPORTING CONCERNS

MFI encourages employees, volunteers, community members, partners and other stakeholders to report genuine concerns relating to:

- Fraud.
- Corruption.
- Harassment.
- Abuse or exploitation.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Serious conflicts of interest.
- Financial misconduct.
- Misuse of organisational resources.
- Serious environmental misconduct.
- Breaches of this Code.

- Other serious unethical or unlawful conduct.

Reports should be made to the designated MFI authority or through the organisation's approved grievance/complaints mechanism.

MFI will seek to protect persons who raise genuine concerns from retaliation, subject to applicable law and the need to investigate the matter appropriately.

False allegations made knowingly or maliciously may themselves constitute misconduct.

26. NON-RETALIATION

MFI does not support retaliation against a person who, in good faith:

- Raises a concern.
- Makes a complaint.
- Reports suspected misconduct.
- Participates in an investigation.
- Provides information to an authorised investigator.

Retaliation may itself constitute a violation of this Code.

27. INVESTIGATION OF MISCONDUCT

Where a credible concern is received, MFI may conduct an appropriate review or investigation.

Investigations shall, as far as reasonably possible:

- Be handled fairly and objectively.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Provide relevant persons an opportunity to respond.
- Maintain appropriate records.
- Follow applicable law and MFI policies.

Depending on the nature of the matter, MFI may refer the matter to an appropriate statutory, legal or external authority.

28. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Violation of this Code may result in appropriate action depending on the seriousness and circumstances of the conduct.

Possible actions may include:

- Counselling or guidance.
- Written warning.
- Additional training.
- Removal from a project or activity.
- Suspension of responsibilities.
- Termination of employment or engagement.
- Termination of volunteer or consultant status.
- Recovery of unauthorised funds or property where appropriate.

- Referral to law enforcement or other competent authorities where required.

Disciplinary action shall be consistent with applicable law, employment terms and relevant MFI policies.

29. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGEMENT AND TRUSTEES

MFI's leadership and trustees have an additional responsibility to:

- Lead by example.
- Promote ethical conduct.
- Ensure appropriate oversight.
- Address reported concerns appropriately.
- Protect organisational resources.
- Support a safe and respectful working environment.
- Avoid conflicts of interest.
- Maintain appropriate accountability and transparency.

Leaders shall not knowingly ignore serious misconduct or credible safeguarding concerns.

30. TRAINING AND AWARENESS

MFI should provide appropriate orientation and awareness on this Code to:

- Employees.
- Volunteers.
- Trustees and governing body members.
- Consultants.
- Field personnel.
- Relevant partners and contractors.

New personnel should be made aware of this Code as part of their induction.

Refresher awareness may be provided periodically.

31. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND COMMITMENT

All employees and relevant representatives of MFI may be required to acknowledge that they:

1. Have received or accessed this Code of Conduct.
2. Have understood their responsibilities.
3. Agree to comply with the Code.
4. Will report serious violations through appropriate channels.
5. Understand that violations may result in appropriate action.

32. POLICY REVIEW

This Code shall be reviewed periodically by MFI to ensure that it remains appropriate for the organisation's activities, legal obligations and operational requirements.

The Code may be amended with the approval of the appropriate governing authority of MFI.

33. RELATED POLICIES

This Code should be read together with other MFI policies and procedures, as applicable, including:

- Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy.
- Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Policy.
- Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy.
- Conflict of Interest Policy.
- Whistleblower Policy.
- Financial Management Policy.
- Procurement Policy.
- Human Resources Policy.
- Data Protection / Privacy Policy.
- Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy.
- Volunteer Policy.
- Grievance Redressal Policy.
- Donation / Fundraising Policy.

Where another MFI policy provides a more specific requirement, the specific policy should be followed.

34. CONTACT FOR REPORTING CONCERNS

Organisation	Mangrove Foundation of India (MFI)
Registered Office	No. 42, Mosque Street, Jameelabath, Pulicat, Pulicat Post, Ponneri Taluk, Tiruvallur District – 601205, Tamil Nadu, India.
General Email	mfipulicat@gmail.com
Additional Email	businessmfiglobe@gmail.com
Website	www.mangrovefoundationindia.com
Code of Conduct / Grievance Officer	Mr. Meerasa, Founder & Director — mfipulicat@gmail.com

EMPLOYEE / VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I confirm that I have read and understood the Mangrove Foundation of India (MFI) Code of Conduct Policy.

I agree to comply with the standards and principles contained in this Code and to raise genuine concerns regarding serious misconduct through the appropriate reporting mechanism.

Name: _____

Designation / Role: _____

Department / Project: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Approved by: Board of Trustees / Governing Body, Mangrove Foundation of India

Name	Mr. Meerasa
Signature & Seal	 