Mangrove Foundation of India

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MANGROVE FOUNDATION OF INDIA

TRAVEL POLICY

Version	1.0
Effective Date	10/08/2024
Approved By	Board of Trustees / Governing Body
Review Frequency	When required
Policy Owner	Finance & Administration / HR
Applicable To	Employees, consultants, interns, volunteers, trustees and authorised representatives

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Travel Policy is to establish clear, fair, economical and transparent procedures for official travel undertaken on behalf of Mangrove Foundation of India (MFI).

The policy aims to:

- Ensure that official travel is undertaken only for legitimate organisational purposes.
- Ensure appropriate approval before travel.
- Provide reasonable and consistent travel benefits to employees and authorised representatives.
- Ensure economical use of organisational and donor funds.
- Establish procedures for travel booking, accommodation, local transportation, meals and reimbursements.
- Ensure adequate documentation and financial accountability.
- Address safety and security of personnel travelling for field activities.
- Ensure that travel expenses charged to grants, CSR projects or donor funds comply with applicable budgets and donor requirements.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Permanent employees.
- Temporary/project employees.
- Consultants and experts.
- Interns and fellows.
- Volunteers when travelling on behalf of MFI.
- Trustees/Board members when travelling for authorised MFI activities.
- Any other person whose official travel is funded or reimbursed by MFI.

The policy applies to:

- Domestic travel.
- Inter-state travel.
- International travel, where specifically approved.
- Field visits.
- Project monitoring visits.
- Training and workshops.
- Conferences and seminars.
- Government/partner meetings.
- Community visits.
- Environmental restoration activities.
- Child/resource-centre activities.
- Emergency and relief activities.

3. Definitions

3.1 Official Travel

Travel undertaken for an approved MFI activity or assignment.

3.2 Headquarters

The employee's designated place of work as recorded by MFI.

3.3 Field Visit

Travel undertaken to project sites, villages, restoration locations, schools, Child Resource Centres, partner locations or other programme areas.

3.4 Travel Advance

An amount provided to an authorised traveller before official travel to meet approved expenses.

3.5 Travel Expense Claim

A claim submitted after travel for reimbursement of eligible expenses.

4. General Principles

MFI shall follow these principles:

- Travel must have a clear organisational purpose.
- Travel must be approved before booking, except in genuine emergencies.
- The most economical and practical mode of transport should normally be selected.
- Personal preferences should not result in additional organisational expenditure.
- Travel funded by a donor or project must comply with the approved project budget and donor conditions.
- Expenses must be reasonable, necessary and supported by appropriate documentation.
- Employees should use organisational funds responsibly.
- Personal travel must not be charged to MFI.
- Travel arrangements should consider employee safety.
- Where children or vulnerable persons are involved, safeguarding requirements must be followed.
- Travel involving field locations should take local weather, environmental and security conditions into consideration.

5. Travel Approval

No employee or representative shall undertake official travel without prior approval from the authorised approving authority.

The travel request should normally include:

- Name of traveller.
- Designation.
- Purpose of travel.
- Destination.
- Dates of travel.
- Expected duration.
- Project/activity to which travel relates.
- Proposed mode of transportation.
- Estimated cost.
- Accommodation requirement.
- Advance required.
- Relevant donor/project budget code, where applicable.

6. Mode of Transportation

Travel shall generally be undertaken using the most economical and practical means.

6.1 Air Travel

Air travel may be permitted where:

- The distance/time makes air travel operationally necessary.
- It is more economical after considering total travel time and related costs.
- The traveller has prior approval.
- The project/donor budget permits it.

Economy class shall normally be used.

Premium economy/business class should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances with specific senior-management/Board approval.

6.2 Rail Travel

Rail travel is encouraged where practical and economical.

Employees should normally use an appropriate class based on organisational travel entitlement.

6.3 Bus/Public Transport

Public transport may be used where safe and practical.

6.4 Taxi/Cab

Taxi/cab may be used for:

- Airport/railway station transfers.
- Local field travel.
- Travel to project locations.
- Situations where public transport is unavailable or impractical.
- Safety/security reasons.
- Carrying equipment/materials.

Receipts or digital booking records should be retained where available.

6.5 Personal Vehicle

Use of a personal vehicle for official work may be reimbursed according to rates approved by MFI.

The reimbursement rate should cover fuel and normal vehicle running costs unless otherwise specified.

7. Accommodation

Accommodation should be:

- Safe.
- Clean.
- Reasonably priced.
- Convenient to the official work location.
- Appropriate to the employee's role and organisational budget.

Employees should use MFI-approved hotels/guest houses where available.

Accommodation expenses must be supported by:

- Hotel invoice/receipt; or
- Appropriate documentary evidence where formal accommodation is unavailable.

Where staff stay with relatives/friends without cost to MFI, accommodation reimbursement should not be claimed.

8. Daily Allowance / Per Diem

MFI may provide a daily allowance to cover reasonable expenses such as:

- Meals.
- Local incidental expenses.
- Minor travel-related expenses.

Daily allowance rates should be approved periodically by management and may vary by location.

The policy should clearly state whether:

- Actual meals are reimbursed; or
- A fixed per diem is paid; or
- A combination is used.

Double reimbursement must not occur.

For example, if meals are fully provided by the organiser/donor, the employee should not claim the same meal again.

9. Local Conveyance

Eligible local travel includes:

- Office to railway station/airport.
- Railway station/airport to hotel.
- Hotel to project site.
- Travel between project sites.
- Travel for official meetings.
- Community visits.
- Field monitoring.

Claims should contain:

- Date.
- From/to location.
- Purpose.
- Mode of transport.
- Amount.
- Supporting receipt where available.

10. Travel Advances

Travel advances may be issued after approval.

The traveller must:

- Use the advance only for official purposes.
- Maintain supporting documentation.
- Return the unspent balance.
- Submit the settlement within the prescribed period.

> **Suggested settlement period: within 7–15 working days of completion of travel.**

No new travel advance should normally be issued where an earlier advance remains unsettled.

11. Travel Expense Settlement

A travel claim should include:

- Approved travel request.
- Travel dates.
- Destination.
- Purpose.
- Transport tickets.
- Boarding passes where applicable.
- Hotel bills.
- Local transport receipts.
- Other eligible receipts.
- Advance received.
- Total expenditure.
- Balance payable/refundable.

> **False, duplicate or inflated claims constitute misconduct.**

12. Cancellation and Change Charges

Cancellation/change charges may be reimbursed where:

- The change was required for official reasons.
- The employee was directed to change the itinerary.
- There was an emergency.
- The cancellation was caused by circumstances beyond the traveller's reasonable control.

Personal cancellation costs should normally be borne by the employee.

13. Personal Travel

Official travel should not be combined with personal travel in a manner that increases MFI's cost.

If an employee extends a trip for personal reasons:

- MFI will pay only the amount that would have been incurred for official travel.
- Additional hotel, meal and transportation costs shall be borne by the employee.

- The employee must obtain prior approval.

14. Travel with Children / Vulnerable Persons

Where programme activities involve children:

- Staff must comply with MFI's Child Protection Policy.
- Children should not ordinarily travel alone with an individual staff member.
- Appropriate consent and safeguarding procedures must be followed.
- Transport providers should be appropriately vetted.
- Staff should avoid situations that create unnecessary one-to-one contact between an adult staff member and a child.

15. International Travel

International travel requires prior written approval from the appropriate authority.

The organisation should ensure:

- Valid passport.
- Appropriate visa.
- Travel insurance where appropriate.
- Foreign exchange compliance.
- Donor approval where applicable.
- Appropriate documentation.
- Compliance with applicable Indian laws and donor requirements.

16. Emergency Travel

During floods, cyclones, extreme weather, environmental emergencies, relief operations or other emergencies, management may authorise urgent travel outside normal procedures.

Such expenditure must subsequently be documented and approved.

This is particularly relevant given MFI's involvement in community relief and climate-related field activities.

17. Safety and Security

Staff undertaking field travel should:

- Follow local safety instructions.
- Avoid unnecessary travel during dangerous weather.
- Inform the appropriate supervisor about field movements.
- Carry appropriate identification.
- Use safe transport.
- Follow emergency communication procedures.
- Report accidents/incidents immediately.

For coastal, wetland, plantation or other field work, appropriate PPE and safety arrangements should be considered.

18. Travel Insurance

Where appropriate, MFI may provide travel/accident insurance for:

- International travel.
- High-risk field travel.
- Organised field activities.
- Large-scale events.

19. Non-Reimbursable Expenses

Unless specifically approved, the following should not be reimbursed:

- Alcohol.
- Personal entertainment.
- Personal shopping.
- Mini-bar expenses.
- Spa/salon expenses.
- Personal sightseeing.
- Fines and penalties.
- Expenses for family members.
- Personal upgrades.
- Expenses unrelated to MFI activities.
- Duplicate claims.

20. Fraud and Misrepresentation

Submission of false claims, altered receipts, duplicate claims or deliberately inflated expenses may result in:

- Recovery of funds.
- Disciplinary action.
- Termination of engagement.
- Reporting to relevant authorities where appropriate.

21. Records

Finance/Admin shall maintain appropriate records of:

- Travel approvals.
- Advances.
- Claims.
- Bills.

- Tickets.
- Settlements.
- Donor/project allocations.

Records should be retained according to MFI's document-retention requirements and applicable law.

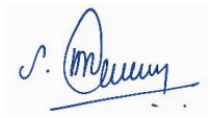
22. Exceptions

Any exception to this policy must:

- Be justified in writing.
- Receive approval from the appropriate authority.
- Be documented.
- Not violate donor conditions or applicable law.

23. Review

The policy shall be reviewed frequently whenever there is a significant legal, operational or organisational change.





Mr. Meerasa
Founder & Director, MFI