

Ethical Code Viva Salud

Health is a fundamental right, but it is threatened globally by poverty, inequality, exploitation and war. Countries in the Global South are particularly hard hit by this reality. The right to health can only be guaranteed if politics and economics serve the interests of the people, not the profits of a wealthy minority. Today, economic and political power is often in the hands of the few, further exacerbating inequalities. However, history shows us that change is possible: victories have already been won for the rights of the people, including the right to health.

We reject the imperialist system in which the most powerful countries impose their interests on historically dominated nations. We want a world where nations, communities and individuals in the Global South can freely decide their future without foreign interference. To ensure equitable policies that meet people's needs, sovereignty is essential. This means that people must have control over their own resources and act for development that is suitable for them. Finally, strong social movements are indispensable. They represent the voice of the working class, caregivers, farmworkers and people in vulnerable situations. Together, they can challenge power imbalances and help build a more just system through collective mobilisation.

Viva Salud, a Belgian NGO, is convinced that every individual and every community has a right to health. We therefore support the fight for the right to health in Belgium, Europe and countries in the Global South. We defend the democratic space that allows social movements to continue playing an essential role in denouncing policies in Europe and Belgium that adversely affect our partner countries. In the Philippines, Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo and elsewhere we, through the People's Health Movement (PHM), facilitate exchanges between our partners and strengthen each other's efforts. We also provide financial support to our partners with fundraising through grants and donations. In addition, we support the struggles of our partners through our activities in Belgium and our work in various networks at the Belgian and international level, such as within PHM.

To achieve the global right to health, Viva Salud bases itself on the following core values:

Social justice

We stand for a socially just world, where everyone has equal access to basic needs and everyone's human rights are respected.

We focus on the social, economic and political factors that affect the health of people who are exploited and oppressed. Thus, with Viva Salud, we are committed to the accessibility of healthcare, but also pay attention to other social determinants such as housing, work and living conditions.

Solidarity

We work in solidarity with organisations in our partner countries that tackle the root causes of health problems. In Belgium, we organise trainings and campaigns, mobilise our supporters and engage in the global movement for the right to health. Together, we are stronger policy advocates.

Activism

As an activist organisation, we support and strengthen social movements fighting for real social change towards the right to health, social justice and international solidarity.

Sovereignty

We support grassroots movements and local initiatives because sustainable change grows from the bottom up and is not imposed from the top down.

Our code of ethics helps us to translate our vision, mission and values into our daily activities.

It provides guidelines for our permanent staff, board, interns, volunteers and members of the general assembly, and we also ask our partners to comply with it.

1. Our permanent staff, volunteers, donors, supporters and target groups

We expect our permanent staff and volunteers to act in line with the **human rights framework** promoted by Viva Salud.

We seek and value **diversity** in our staff and volunteers and promote equal opportunities regardless of age, religion, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, etc. When necessary, we take positive measures to promote diversity within our group. We do not tolerate discrimination or sexist behaviour. We rely on our gender charter to create a good and safe working environment for women, non-binary and transgender people.

Gender equality in particular is translated into concrete measures that we apply in our activities, projects and programmes. We encourage participation of all in decision-making processes, with special attention to minorities.

Regarding compensation and remuneration, we advocate **solidarity**. We therefore use fixed pay scales based on responsibility rather than qualifications, with limited pay differentials.

For our permanent staff, we apply flexibility in working hours and tasks to facilitate **work-life balance**. Permanent employees are given the opportunity to follow relevant training courses, and their job content and tasks can evolve during their career at Viva Salud according to their changing personal interests and organisational needs.

The physical integrity and mental well-being of our employees and volunteers is important, which is why we take appropriate measures for their health, safety and protection. We expect everyone to avoid unnecessary risks to the safety, health and well-being of themselves or others.

We expect everyone to respect the **dignity of others** in interpersonal relationships, and we do not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or abuse of power.

We show **respect for volunteers and donors** and listen to their needs. We make every effort to consider their interests and respect their privacy.

We value **diversity among participants** in our activities and strive to encourage participation of underrepresented groups.

We **avoid conflicts between individual and organisational interests**. We encourage our permanent staff, volunteers, people from our constituencies, partners and other stakeholders to communicate openly about possible conflicts of interest of a business or political nature or the acceptance of gifts or rewards for services. When a potential conflict of interest arises and is reported, managers or management will take appropriate action.

We expect our permanent staff and volunteers to report any misconduct or suspected violations of the Code of Ethics through the relevant procedures.

2. Use of resources

Apart from the focus in our campaigns on structural change, we do not remain blind to our own accountability and work to demonstrate our stated values in our use of resources. We use our organisation's financial and material resources **properly and with care**:

- We try to maintain a reasonable level of **financial independence**, especially from sources of funding that are not in line with our values.
- **We do not tolerate fraud or corruption** and also expect our partners to take the necessary measures to prevent misuse of funds.
- We aim to **minimise any negative social or environmental impact** of our activities and ensure that our procurement policy respects the principles of environmental and social justice, including respecting the rights of workers, women and children.
- We prefer and promote **collective solutions** such as resource sharing, public services, collective and public transport.
- We value **responsible and thoughtful use of our funds for expenses** and actively avoid wasting resources, including energy.

3. Our partnerships

In Belgium and Europe, we are **part of a broader social movement and contribute to social struggles in line with our vision and values**.

We work with **partners who share our values and vision for change**. We favour long-term partnerships and build trusting relationships with our partners. These relationships are characterised by dialogue, transparency and joint decision-making, both at operational and strategic levels. We seek **partnerships based on equality and mutual respect** for rights and responsibilities.

4. Our communication and use of information

Our communications convey a sense of optimism and a belief that a **society based on social justice is possible** and that systemic change is necessary. We show concrete alternatives and models for alternative development. We take a stand and do not claim neutrality on social issues.

In our communications, we show **respect for the dignity and safety** of our partners and beneficiaries, who always have a say in how they want to be presented. Our communication reflects our vision of gender equality and diversity.

Our communication ensures an **active dialogue with our social base** and actively solicits their feedback.

Transparency is important to us, which is why we are as open as possible about our own activities. Nevertheless, we do not put our organisation, nor our partners or individuals, at risk by the information we share with others. When we are unable to disclose certain information (for reasons of privacy or security, for example), we explain why. For us, transparency is important not only in relation to our target groups and donors, but also our partners.

5. Roles and procedures

Viva Salud has appointed an employee as **integrity officer and advisor**. This person can be contacted at advice.integrity@vivasalud.be. As integrity officer, this person ensures that the Ethical Code and the Integrity Charter are known to all, adhered to and actively used. The integrity officer also monitors application of procedures to ensure that a culture of integrity is promoted within Viva Salud. This role is largely preventive and focuses on raising awareness and informing all stakeholders, both internal and external.

As integrity advisor, this person supports individuals who are considering filing a complaint in the area of integrity and advises them on all aspects of the process. With the complaints manager, she/he monitors and reports on integrity incidents. She/he annually evaluates and monitors preventive measures and complaint handling and participates in external meetings with federations.

The complaints manager can be reached at safeguarding@vivasalud.be. Through this **confidential alert channel**, anyone, anonymously or not, can report an incident or suspected breach of integrity. Our website contains a clear complaints procedure. Viva Salud has an internal integrity policy that explains in detail the steps to be taken when dealing with complaints and the action that should be taken. The complaints manager receives complaints and ensures appropriate follow-up as described in the procedure.

The Complaints Committee consists of the complaints manager, a member of the Board of Directors, the financial officer and the executive committee. When an investigation needs to be conducted, one or two persons from the committee (depending on the seriousness of the complaint) are designated to assist the complaints manager. These persons are selected on the basis of their expertise in relation to the nature of the complaint. If the accused is part of the committee, they are automatically excluded from the members involved in the handling. The committee is solely responsible for deciding on the actions and sanctions to be taken.