

MASHAL
CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY



Mashal
20-c, Patliputra Colony, Patna,
Bihar

FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT

It gives me great pleasure to present the *Mashal Conflict of Interest Policy*, an essential guide to safeguarding the integrity, transparency, and trust that form the foundation of our work. Mashal's mission to restore human dignity and empower marginalized communities demands the highest standards of honesty and accountability from each of us.

Conflicts of interest—whether real, potential, or perceived—can compromise our credibility and the quality of our service. This policy ensures that all “Mashal Persons,” including staff, volunteers, board members, consultants, and partners, are fully aware of their responsibilities in identifying, declaring, and addressing such situations.

We are committed to fostering a culture where disclosure is encouraged, concerns are addressed promptly, and decisions are made solely in the best interest of the communities we serve. By upholding the principles outlined in this policy, we strengthen our ability to act with fairness, impartiality, and respect for the trust placed in us.

I urge every member of the Mashal family to read this policy carefully, integrate its principles into daily practice, and help us sustain an environment free from undue influence or favoritism. Our shared commitment to ethical conduct is key to achieving our vision for a just and inclusive society.



Sister Mary Alice,
President
Mashal

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1. SCOPE

The policy applies to all MASHAL staff, and those associated with the delivery of MASHAL work, consultants, volunteers including, Board members and Directors, Coordinators, and invited visitors residing, working and/or travelling on behalf of MASHAL, both during and outside normal working hours, hereinafter “MASHAL Persons”.

This document focuses on conflict of interest and sets the minimum procedures for MASHAL Units to follow to effectively manage conflicts of interest, to create an environment where “MASHAL Persons” are comfortable declaring any conflict they might find themselves in. This will enable MASHAL to manage its exposure to fraud and corruption. This policy is in line with the MASHAL Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy as well as MASHAL’s Staff and Non-Staff code of conduct, hereinafter “[MASHAL Code of Conduct](#)”.

Units can implement the policy using their own procedures and forms. The policy supersedes individual units’ Policies on Conflict of Interest except when the affiliate’s own conflict of interest policies are more restrictive.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

All MASHAL staff, and others as specified in the policy scope, are obliged to adhere to the following:

MASHAL employees shall perform duties and conduct private life in a manner that avoids possible conflicts of interest with the work of MASHAL. They shall declare any financial, personal, family (or close intimate relationship) interest in matters of official business which may impact on the work of MASHAL (e.g., contract for goods/services, employment or promotion within MASHAL, partner organizations, beneficiary groups). They shall advise MASHAL of any intention to seek a nomination as a prospective candidate or another official role for any political party or public office to clarify whether any conflict, or perceived conflicts, with their duties with MASHAL may arise. Even when the giving and acceptance of gifts is normal cultural practice, they shall reject monetary gifts or inappropriate gifts from governments, beneficiaries, donors, suppliers and other persons, which have been offered to them as a result of their employment with MASHAL. Where the giving and acceptance of gifts is normal cultural practice, they shall ensure that such gifts are within the limits of reasonable

judgements and in accordance with procurement policies and they shall report gifts to the management and where appropriate hand them onto MASHAL. They shall assure that assistance by MASHAL is not provided in return of any service or favor from others. They shall act against any form of corruption and not offer, promise, give or accept any bribes.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this Policy is to prevent Conflicts of Interest where possible and if not possible, to deal with them in an ethical and responsible manner, to disclose them and to mitigate the risk of Conflicts of Interest.

4. DEFINITIONS

Conflict of Interest: A situation in which a person's loyalties or interests are, might be, or might be perceived to be, in conflict with those of their organization. This could be as a result of a private relationship or association with a person, group or entity with whom you might also have a professional relationship or association. It could also be as a result of a private interest or activities conducted during or outside of working hours.

5. DUTIES TO DISCLOSE AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

1. Current and Prospective Disclosure

- a. It is the continuing responsibility of all "MASHAL Persons" to scrutinize their transactions and outside business interests and relationships, and to make immediate disclosure in writing of any transactions or relationships which may be considered to represent actual or potential conflicts. Disclosure is to be made as soon as the person becomes aware of the conflict, and prior to entering into the transaction or relationship involved. If in doubt about whether something is a conflict of interest, please disclose it to your line manager, so it can be further discussed;
- b. All existing and new employees shall read and attest that they have read the conflict-of-interest policy;

2. Annual Disclosure Statement

In addition to any disclosures made above, certain designated employees will complete a Disclosure Statement every year. Such designated persons will generally be officers of the organization, senior management, and other specialized positions, including but not limited to, procurement and HR staff and others as appropriately determined by different

affiliates.

3. **Confidentiality**

Disclosures submitted under this policy will be considered confidential and will only be communicated on a need-to-know basis.

4. **Disciplinary action**

Any breach of this policy, including failure to make timely, complete, and accurate disclosure of an existing or potential conflict of interest, shall subject the person involved to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment/engagement.

6. **SITUATIONS WHERE CONFLICT OF INTEREST CAN ARISE**

Below and in Annex 1 are examples of situations where conflict of interest might arise, those examples are not exhaustive and are only meant to provide some common areas where conflict might arise.

MASHAL Persons are expected to comply with all requirements of their duties towards MASHAL, and should not get involved in activities which could interfere with the performance of their duties. Membership of not-for-profit boards or similar community activities is accepted to the extent that those activities do not interfere with their positions within MASHAL and should be disclosed as described below.

The mere fact that a “MASHAL Person” is, for example, affiliated in some way with an organization which receives MASHAL funding, does not necessarily result in a conflict of interest, depending on the person’s specific roles/duties for MASHAL and for the other organization. Similarly, the fact that a particular situation does not fit squarely within one of the examples listed in the below annex 1, does not necessarily mean that no conflict of interest is present.

Accordingly, determinations may be necessary about whether any given situation in fact constitutes a conflict of interest, or whether a potential conflict may be permissible (on the basis that it will not affect the MASHAL person’s performance of their duties to MASHAL and is therefore not material). In making such determinations, the objective is to ensure that actual conflicts are eliminated, and to err on the side of avoiding even the appearance of potential conflicts.

MASHAL employees must avoid Conflicts of Interest whenever possible and if not, address as soon as possible, the substance, potential for and appearance of any Conflicts of Interest, so that the associated risks will be minimized.

In the annex 1 you can find examples where conflict of interest might arise.

7. MINIMUM PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. New Starters

- a. Job applicants and newly hired or appointed employees are required to disclose any conflict of interest they may have immediately during the hiring or appointment process.
- b. They will be required to complete a declaration of conflict-of-interest section before their contract of employment.
- c. HR and the recruitment manager will be informed.
- d. Managers are responsible to discuss potential conflict with the new employee and relevant stakeholders in their Units.
- e. A conflict-of-interest assessment must be documented and kept in the employee files, if a conflict was reported.
- f. If measures cannot be put in place to avoid the conflict of interest, a decision may be made, with advice from HR, to withdraw the offer of employment on the basis that it represents a significant risk to MASHAL. Evidence would need to be provided.

2. All Employees

- a. All employees will be required to complete a Declaration of Conflict-of-Interest form according to the provisions of this policy.
- b. Employees must notify their line manager as soon as they know of a possible conflict of interest (this might be if their job or personal circumstances change).
- c. If the manager believes a conflict of interest is evident, they should talk to the employee to see if there is a way it can be resolved. Measures may need to be put in place to manage the conflict of interest.
- d. The manager must register this in writing, file it and communicate to relevant stakeholders in the Units.
- e. If the matter cannot be resolved or measures put in place are not working, then alternate procedures with advice from relevant stakeholders should be carried out.
- f. In general declaration of interest forms must be in writing, properly filed, ensuring that forms are up to date, properly approved and protected from unauthorized access.

3. Members of MASHAL in governance roles

Members of MASHAL in governance roles i.e. Executive Board and Management Team will maintain a central register administered by the executive secretary of the board.

8. ASSOCIATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. MASHAL Employee Code of Conduct
2. MASHAL Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Strategy

ANNEX 1

What kind of associations can give rise to a conflict of interest?

- Associations with organizations or individuals who have a trading relationship with MASHAL as its supplier or customer;
- Associations with organizations tendering work for MASHAL. You need to avoid a situation where your knowledge or involvement in the tendering process could be viewed as influencing a commercial decision in favor of an organization with which you have a link. This includes partner organizations.;
- Associations with Organizations that supply goods and services to MASHAL. This becomes a matter of concern if you are involved in decisions that might affect the choice of a supplier, the price paid for goods or services or arrangement for the provision of goods and services.;
- Active political involvement in a political party or organization (see below);
- Employing family members, or people with whom you have a close personal relationship, can create a conflict of interest (see below).
- Involvement in, oversight of, or influence over the selection, management or monitoring of MASHAL partner organizations with whom you have a business, personal or private association or interest. This includes associations with individual employees of partner organizations.
- Business or close personal associations with (so called) beneficiaries, program participants or other recipients of MASHAL funds or program support.

Personal and familial relationships that could give rise to conflict of interest

- The employment of people who are related in a direct management line can create a conflict of interest. Therefore, recognized partners, people closely related to, or in a personal relationship with, a MASHAL employee cannot be employed into a position where they would be in a direct management / Subordinate line. The same applies to the engagement of consultants and the taking on of volunteers, interns and students. Advice should be sought from HR and alternative line management arrangements made.
- Where existing employees are subsequently in a personal relationship or become related, they should discuss their employment position with their Human Resources team. The purpose of this review is to ensure that matters of management, supervision, audit and possible role conflict including avoiding (the perception of) nepotism and favoritism can be considered, as well as any possible benefits to MASHAL. The objective is to be reasonable, to safeguard MASHAL and to maintain good employee relations.
- In certain circumstances, where your family or close personal contacts work for organizations or partners with which MASHAL conducts business, it is important that such relationships are known in advance and you are not placed in a difficult position. Business dealings on MASHAL's behalf with someone in another organization whom you know well on a family or personal basis, could affect MASHAL's reputation and integrity. In these circumstances, employees should discuss the relationship with their manager.
- If, during their MASHAL employment, an employee is considering employment, a voluntary role or a consultancy contract for a close personal relative or friend, the relationship must be declared in writing, and any related decision referred to the employee's manager. If the employee has concerns about a relationship and is not sure if it comes within the scope of this policy, they are advised to discuss this matter, in confidence, with their Human Resources team.

Internet Web Sites

- If you are developing an Internet web site for yourself or an outside organization, you must not use MASHAL copyright material or information (whether confidential or otherwise) and must not link to any MASHAL website or online documentation without the prior written permission of MASHAL.

Purchasing

- Anyone involved in purchasing, tendering or commissioning must not have an undeclared association with any outside organization involved in the process. Where an association does exist, they are not permitted to become involved in the commercial processes. Unless their manager has given specific permission, you must not provide information or assistance to any organization or individual tendering work for MASHAL. Everyone tendering for work needs to feel that they have received fair and equal treatment.

Private Purchases and Gifts

- You and your immediate family must not accept gifts from organizations or individuals with whom you have or might have dealings on behalf of MASHAL. This includes goods and services in kind or at preferential rates, cash and entertainment outside the scope of normal business hospitality.
- As a rule of thumb it's always better to reject gifts, however, you can accept normal business hospitality on a reasonable scale when representing MASHAL and its interests. Those gifts should be reported on the gifts register. You should not place yourself in a position where the hospitality could be interpreted as a form of inducement. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your manager.

Political Activities

- MASHAL supports the right of employees to be politically engaged and active. However, active involvement in a political party or organization can give rise to questions of impartiality. What is acceptable is dependent upon the individual's job, their level in the organization and the extent of their political involvement.
- Standing for election requires consent from MASHAL which will not be unreasonably withheld. However, MASHAL retains the right to consult with you on how to conduct yourself so that MASHAL's name does not come into disrepute.
- In the case of local government elections, you must campaign in your own time and make sure that there is no conflict with your work at MASHAL. Polling day itself should be taken either as holiday or as unpaid leave. You can be elected to a position within local government and remain in employment if there are no issues of impartiality or conflict of interest. Employees are expected, where possible, to schedule council commitments outside core working hours but may agree a reasonable working schedule with their manager to make up lost hours. Active campaigning during working hours is not acceptable.
- If one of your family or a close personal contact is standing for election it is acceptable

to express personal support for the individual standing for election. You should however not use MASHAL's name and where your support extends to political support this will be subject to the considerations outlined above.

Trade Union/Staff Association Activities

- Employees are free to take part in activities organized by a union/staff association that is recognized by MASHAL.
- Employees who are elected as accredited trade union representatives may, from time to time, comment on political matters whilst representing the interests of their members.
- When expressing such views, employees should state that they are expressing these views as a trade union representative and that they are not necessarily reflecting the views of MASHAL.

Use of information and resources

- Anyone working for MASHAL must not use MASHAL resources to further their private interests or do any work for an outside company. You should seek the permission of your manager before using MASHAL information or making reference to MASHAL in any book, article, lecture or statement to the press.
- Employees must not reveal confidential information, including personal data, received in the course of their duty, to a supporter, supplier or other organization. This is a commitment to confidentiality gained during employment and continues after you have left MASHAL.
- Employees are not permitted to take their partner or any other personal contact on a business trip at MASHAL's expense, unless it is a requirement of the formal duties of the visit and has been approved in advance (in writing) by the appropriate Director. In any other circumstances, if you wish to be accompanied, you must have the authorization of your manager and all expenses for the companion, including, but not limited to travel and accommodation, must be paid for.

You should talk to your manager if

- You currently hold an elected position in Local Government at any level.
- You intend to re-stand for a position you already hold.
- If you seek nomination or are selected as a candidate (the immediate consideration being to safeguard MASHAL's reputation for impartiality).
- You act as a voluntary advisor to an elected politician.

- You hold an elected office in a political party.
- You wish to stand for election to local Council, parliament or political party.

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Chinnamma

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Secretary,
Mashal

