

CODE OF LEADERSHIP ADOPTED BY THE
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
IN INDIA, 2004

TRUTH AND PEACE THROUGH CORRUPTION-FREE
CHURCHES: PLAN OF ACTION UNANIMOUSLY
APPROVED BY THE NCCI QUADRENNIAL ASSEMBLY
9-13 FEBRUARY 2004

We, the delegates and fraternal delegates to the 25th Quadrennial Assembly, who participated in the Pre-Assembly Meeting on 'Life of the Church' that was held from 6-8 February 2004 at Tirunelveli (South India)

- strongly affirm that the Church embodies ethical and Christian values of truth, peace and justice that ensures equal opportunities to all, to enjoy the fullness of life;
- We also strongly affirm the heritage of eminent Church leaders and religious personalities who have been and are excellent stewards in the service of the Lord and society;
- However, we recognize that corruption which is rampant in society has penetrated the life of the Churches undermining truth, justice and peace, dividing the community and destroying the credibility of the institutions and of the life and mission of the Churches;
- We also recognize that the root cause of corruption lies in the misuse and abuse of power or privilege and therefore is an unethical act leading to moral crisis and conflicts.

Therefore, we recommend the following plan of action for approval by the NCCI Assembly.

NCCI, the member Churches, Regional Christian Councils, Related Agencies, All India Christian Organizations:

1. make anti-corruption a high priority in their mission and activities between now and the next assembly;
2. add anti-corruption clauses and mechanisms in the different regulations on Church-related free and fair elections of the respective bodies at all levels;
3. adopt and implement the 'Code of Leadership' (Appendix 1);
4. recommend that all candidates for elections of the respective bodies sign the code;
5. take immediate action to declare all church related institutions like schools, clinics, hospitals, offices etc. 'corruption-free zone' and conduct their business on transparent basis. The institutions should establish a mechanism of monitoring and control;
6. support efforts for sufficient and fair salaries for leaders of Churches and staff of Christian institutions in order to meet the basic needs and to overcome the temptation to increase income and allowances by corrupt practices;
7. promote an annual anti-corruption week including biblical reflection, practical action and publication;
8. encourage networking with Churches and NCC's in other countries and continents (e.g. All Africa Conference of Churches' program against corruption), other religious communities, civic society groups and governments committed to expose and end corruption;
9. improve mutual transparency and accountability between donors and the churches;
10. campaign effectively to eradicate corruption;
11. share annually with the NCCI information on their activities and action against corruption. NCCI secretariat will synthesize, coordinate and disseminate this information and provide an annual progress report to the members for their study and consideration.

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Assembly requests the NCCI, the member Churches, Regional Christian Councils, Related Agencies, All India Christian Organizations to implement these recommendations in order to eradicate corruption.

APPENDIX 1 CODE OF LEADERSHIP FOR LEADERS OF CHURCHES, CHURCH-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS AND CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA

Realizing that responsible leadership is a central part of the strategy to fight corruption, we urge on the NCCI, the member Churches, Regional Christian Councils, Related Agencies and the All India Christian Organizations to impress on the leadership that the adoption of the following code will be a crucial contribution towards overcoming corruption:

1. to give precedence to public interest over personal interest;
2. to refuse to accept money or gifts which can be construed as bribes;
3. to maintain and update inventories that list out the properties of the institution and to ensure that properties are registered on behalf of the institution;
4. to avoid leasing and selling of Church properties (both movable and immovable) on the plea that current liabilities have to be met;
5. to declare the personal assets (movable or immovable) to the governing body while taking charge and relinquishing the office;
6. to decentralize powers and duties to allow proper control and management of responsibilities;
7. to refrain from engaging in long term litigations and pending cases and to establish an 'Ecumenical Adjudicating Authority' to arbitrate between conflicting parties;
8. to encourage and support people who are working against corruption as well as to protect the whistleblowers who expose corrupt practices;
9. to avoid attempts to close institutions which are reputed centres of education and empowerment;

10. to strictly utilize the finance that is earmarked for specific programs and purposes without mismanagement;
11. to adhere to minimum labour standards with fair appointments and selection procedures, issuing of employment contract letters, medical and pension benefits to church employees and their families;
12. to avoid involvement of family members in the decision making as well as administrative bodies of the respective institution.

This code was designed and approved by the 25th Quadrennial Assembly of the National Council of Churches of India 9-13th February 2004.

The organ that plays the role of governing body, represented by its president, shall ratify this code.