

CHARTER FOR GOOD SHEPHERD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE
Towards positive change in the areas of economic injustice and global poverty

We, members of the Asia Pacific Circle of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, believe that we are called to continue to bring about the kingdom of God, where every person is valued and lives a life of dignity and grace. We seek to realize this in our world, by the values we profess and practice in every aspect of our life and ministries

As employers of workers in our agencies, projects and communities, we commit ourselves to ensuring that all our workplaces are models of good and just employment practice.

The International Labour Organisation, the global body responsible for drawing up and overseeing international labour standards (www.ilo.org) says:

“Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”

In recognizing the issues of economic injustice and global poverty, we commit to making a positive change through enabling the provision of decent work which pays the worker a just wage.

This, we will do by pledging to conform to the legal requirements for employers in our respective countries. We acknowledge that in some countries, conforming to legal requirements may not be sufficient.

We therefore approve the following Charter for Good Shepherd Employment Practice and commit ourselves to implementing it as fully as possible in our various countries in the Asia Pacific Circle.

Charter for Good Shepherd Employment Practice

Our Core Values and Principles:

Good Shepherd values and principles form the basis of this Charter. As Good Shepherd Sisters, we believe:

- That each person is of more value than a world and that each human person is entitled to be treated equitably and with respect and dignity.

- That family relationships and responsibilities are also a priority for employees of the Good Shepherd and that working conditions should reflect this balance.
- That, in keeping with the long-standing social teachings of the Church, workers are entitled to a just wage and to good working conditions.

Our Employment Practice:

1. A Just Wage: We will pay the workers in our agencies, projects and communities a wage that:

- is at least in accordance with the minimum wage of our countries;
- where possible exceeds the minimum wage and allows the worker to provide for her/his family's most important needs: decent shelter, adequate nutrition, health needs, education.
- is negotiated with the worker prior to the commencement of employment and is stated in writing;
- is paid regularly, and on time, whether daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly.

We will review wages annually in negotiation with the workers, taking into consideration changes in the cost of living in our countries, the performance of the worker in her/his position and changes in our own capacity to pay increased wages.

2 Fair Working Conditions: Our workers will be entitled to minimum conditions that include:

- A working day of 8 hours maximum. In the event this is not possible, the worker should be compensated accordingly;
- Days off each week to ensure better work/life balance and time with family and friends;
- A minimum of one half hour (30mins) for lunch during work hours;
- A period of paid holiday leave each year (a suggested minimum of two calendar weeks);
- A week of paid personal leave each year which can be accumulated over a period of five years. This leave may be for reasons of personal sickness or to care for a family member who is ill (depending on the operational needs of the ministry/country's employment policies)
- Compassionate paid leave of up to 3 days in the event of the death of a family member.
- Maternity leave of not less than 60 calendar days for married female employees
- Provision of medical and accident insurance where possible
- Payment of medical fees subject to a maximum to be set by each Province

3 Job Descriptions and Contracts: There should be a clear job description for each position. If the employee is asked to do something that is not in her/his job description, this should be negotiated with her/him and s/he should have the right to refuse without incurring a penalty. The job description should be clearly explained as well as being in writing. At the commencement of employment, a written contract setting out the agreed wage and employment conditions should be signed by both employer and employee. A copy should be given to the employee.

4 Training: An annual review of the employee's work should be conducted and the employee should be affirmed and rewarded where possible for good work and informed about areas where s/he needs to improve. Opportunities for improving skills should be provided where possible, through short courses or other means.

5 Occupational Health and Safety: No employee will be asked to do anything that endangers her or his life or health. Care will be taken to ensure that workplaces are kept clean, that no objects that can cause harm are left lying around and that all dangerous substances are safely stored. Employees who may have to lift or move heavy objects will be instructed on how to do so without causing injury and where necessary aids for moving heavy objects will be provided.

6 Grievance Procedures: An employee who has a dispute/grievance arising out of her/his employment shall have the right for the dispute/grievance to be heard.

- Firstly, the employee should inform her/his immediate supervisor so that together they can attempt to resolve the matter.
- In the case of domestic workers, the grievance may be against the immediate supervisor. In this case, in serious matters where the matter cannot be resolved through direct communication between the employee and the employer, the assistance of a neutral mediator should be utilised to help resolve the dispute. The employee should have the right to be accompanied by a support person.
- If the matter remains unresolved, a more senior person in the project, the agency or the Province should consult with the parties and try to resolve the matter.
- These steps should as far as possible take place within 14 working days.
- While the dispute resolution procedure is being conducted, work shall continue normally in accordance with the custom and practice existing before the dispute/grievance.

7 Dismissal of an Employee: Fair practice should be employed in dismissing an employee.

- In the case of criminal activity or sexual abuse, the matter should be reported to the police. The employee should be suspended from employment pending the results of the case.

- In the case of non-criminal problematic behaviour, the employer should warn the employee about the problem behaviour and suggest ways to improve. The employee should be told that failure to improve will result in her/his dismissal.
- The employee's behaviour should be monitored and attempts made to assist her/him to make the necessary changes.
- If the employee persists in the problem behaviour, s/he can then be dismissed.

8 Employee Records: The employer should keep all job descriptions, contracts, time sheets (if used), pay records and other relevant documents securely. In case of any disputes that may arise after an employee has left Good Shepherd employment, these records should be kept for a period of 10 years.

9. Limiting Clause: The above Good Shepherd Employment Practice is minimum standards that should be interpreted and implemented within the legislated Employment Acts in each country in the Asia Pacific Circle.