



UGANDA COMMUNITY BASED ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN AND
CHILDREN WELFARE (UCOBAC)

THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS POLICY

FOR BOARD, MANAGEMENT, STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND CONSULTANTS

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INTERPRETATION OF KEY WORDS

In this Code, unless the context otherwise requires:

- 1. Bribe:** Refers to any form of gratification, monetary or otherwise, offered, given, or received with the intention of influencing the actions, decisions, or behavior of a person in a position of trust, power, or responsibility. It is typically aimed at securing an unfair advantage, favor, or benefit in return.
- 2. Code:** Means the Code of Conduct and Ethics for all staff, volunteers and consultants.
- 3. Conduct;** Refers to the behavior, attitude, and character exhibited by staff and volunteers both within and outside the working environment.
- 4. Conflict of Interest;** Refers to a situation where an individual or entity has competing interests or loyalties that could interfere with their ability to make unbiased, fair, or ethical decisions
- 5. Ethics:** Refers to a to a set of moral principles or values that guide an individual's or organization's behavior, decisions, and actions in determining what is right or wrong. Ethics serves as a framework for maintaining integrity, fairness, and accountability in both personal and professional contexts.
- 6. Gift:** Refers to any item, money, service, or favor given voluntarily without expecting something of equal or greater value in return. In professional or organizational contexts, a gift can be offered as a token of appreciation, goodwill, or celebration, but it may also raise ethical concerns if intended to influence decisions or actions.
- 7. Sexual harassment;** Is a behavior or remarks perceived to be unpleasant, threatening, offensive or demeaning to the dignity and self-esteem of the recipient or victim. It is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favor, inappropriate verbal comment or unwanted touching or gesture of a sexual nature, that creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive environment. It may not necessarily involve actual sexual act or explicit demand for sexual favors. While typically involving a pattern of behavior, it can take the form of a single incident. Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the opposite or same sex. Both males and females can be either the victims or the offenders.
- 8. Sexual Exploitation:** Is taking advantage of someone sexually for personal, financial or other gains, often involving power imbalances or vulnerability. Exploitation happens when one party (often with power or in position of authority) threatens, manipulates or coerces another for sexual purposes. It involves taking advantage of someone's financial, emotional, social or situational vulnerability.
- 9. Sexual Abuse;** Any non-consensual sexual act or behavior inflicted upon another person often involving physical force, threats, or manipulation – Often includes acts of molestation, rape, or forced sexual contact. It also includes forced marriages, sexual slavery and sexual activity with a minor Its when a person forces sexual acts on another against their will or without their consent.
- 10. Suspension:** Refers to the temporary removal of an individual from their duties, responsibilities, or privileges, usually as a result of disciplinary concerns, pending investigations, or as a preventive measure in response to a specific situation. It does not necessarily imply guilt but serves as a means to ensure fair proceedings or address misconduct.

INTRODUCTION

This Code of conduct outlines the ethical principles, standards of behavior, and professional expectations for all Board, Management, staff, volunteers, and consultants working with or providing services on behalf of Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children welfare (UCOBAC). Our mission is to promote human rights and welfare of women and children in Uganda with integrity, respect, transparency and accountability. This Code ensures that everyone associated with the UCOBAC operates in a manner that upholds the highest ethical standards and practices. By adhering to these guidelines, we ensure a safe, inclusive, respectful and transparent environment for all.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy sets out a set of principles, values, and rules that outline the expected behavior of employees, management, and other stakeholders within the organization. It serves as a guide for ethical decision-making, integrity and professional behavior in the workplace.

The policy also sets out the organization's procedures and measures of disciplinary action that will be undertaken when there is failure to comply with the provisions in this policy or any other related organisational guidelines.

The policy will complement existing policies in the organization with a purpose of prescribing acceptable standard of behavior and conduct of all individuals associated with the organization.

This Code of Conduct applies to all staff members including other stakeholders associated with the organisation.

CORE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

We are committed to:

- **Integrity:** The quality of being honest, ethical, and adhering to moral principles, even when no one is watching. *Doing the right thing*
- **Accountability:** Taking responsibility for our actions, decisions including their outcomes. *Taking ownership*
- **Transparency:** The practice of being open, honest, and clear about decisions, actions, and processes. *Ensuring others can see and understand decisions and processes.*
- **Respect:** Treating everyone with dignity, fairness, and equality.
- **Team work:** Working together to achieve our mission effectively.

Together, these core principles promote trust, respect, and credibility within the organization, as well as externally with stakeholders and the communities we serve.

APPLICATION AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- This policy shall apply to all UCOBAC staff, volunteers, management, consultants, and stakeholders working on behalf of the organization.
- The Code of Conduct is reinforced by the Employment Act, UCOBAC's Human Resource Policy, Safeguarding Policy, and Child Protection Policy.
- All UCOBAC staff and stakeholders working on behalf of the organization shall have access to information on the Code of Conduct.
- All staff and relevant stakeholders are required to read, understand, and adhere to the provisions in the policy by taking an oath upon agreeing to its provisions.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

The Board, management, staff, volunteers, consultants, contractors and other organization stakeholders must adhere to the following provisions set out in this Code of conduct.

General conduct

- Uphold the values and mission of the organization.
- Conduct oneself in a professional and respectful manner at all times.
- Foster an inclusive environment free from discrimination, harassment, or bullying based on race, gender, religion, disability, age, or any other characteristic.
- Refrain from actions or language that could harm the organization's reputation.
- Perform duties with professionalism, respect, and adherence to morally accepted standards at all times.
- When in a position of authority, exercise it with diligence, integrity, and a high standard of performance and conduct.

Attendance of Duty

- Official working days are Monday to Friday.
- Official working hours are 9:00 a.m – 5:00 p.m, with a one-hour lunch break from 1:00 p.m – 2:00 p.m.
- Strict adherence to working days and hours is required.
- Attendance must be consistent and punctual during working hours, whether at duty stations or external events/engagements.
- Working hours must be dedicated to performing official duties.
- Staff must register their attendance, and records shall be maintained and periodically reviewed by supervisors.
- Planned activities should be completed on time.
- Employees must refrain from behavior that disrupts or interferes with colleagues' work, including but not limited to:
- Idleness or lack of productivity during work hours.

- Excessive reading of newspapers/magazines, playing loud music, playing computer games, or irresponsible internet/social media use (except for official online activities such as trainings, meetings, webinars, and video conferencing).
- Conducting personal business in the office or during office hours.
- Engaging in excessive private conversations or gossip during working hours.
- Wasting time on personal activities during work hours.

Absence from Duty

- During official working days and hours, notify your immediate supervisor or relevant officer of any absence from the office.
- Any deviation from the work schedule must be communicated in writing, with prior approval obtained from the supervisor.
- Seek and obtain permission from the supervisor for any absence from duty. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld or granted.
- Leave requests (annual, sick, maternity, paternity, or compassionate leave) must follow organizational procedures and require documented approval.
- Sudden or emergency absences must be reported immediately, with valid reasons provided upon return.
- Unexplained or unapproved absences from duty are unacceptable. This includes leaving the job/workplace without notice or permission and failing to complete assigned tasks.
- Chronic unapproved absences may lead to suspension or dismissal.

Safe guarding and protection

The organization's Safeguarding Policy outlines its commitment and approach to preventing and addressing sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, ensuring that effective actions are taken when such cases or concerns are reported or arise. According to the Safeguarding Policy, sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse refer to any unwanted or forced sexual act committed without the consent of the other person. The policy applies to all individuals involved with the organization—of all ages and genders—who work for, offer services to, or are served by the organization. The organization shall establish a robust prevention and response mechanism, provide support to victims/ survivors, and hold those responsible for sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse accountable.

The safeguarding provisions include:

Sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse by employees or anyone working on behalf of the organization are considered acts of gross misconduct and may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal or termination of employment/contract.

- Sexual activity with children and adolescents (under 18 years) is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action and dismissal. A mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a valid defense.
- The exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or any other forms of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior toward project participants, beneficiaries, fellow employees, partners, or visitors by employees or anyone working on behalf of the organization is prohibited.
- Sexual relationships between the organization's employees or anyone working on behalf of the organization and the organization's project participants/beneficiaries are forbidden. These relationships may involve unequal power dynamics that undermine the credibility and integrity of the organization's operations.

- If an employee or anyone working on behalf of the organization develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a colleague or anyone else working on behalf of the organization, they must report these concerns through the established reporting mechanisms.
- The organization's employers are obligated to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse for all staff, those working on behalf of the organization, and those participating in or benefiting from the organization's interventions.
- Any staff member, person working on behalf of the organization, project participant/beneficiary, or partner who files a complaint regarding sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse through the established complaints procedure shall not be subject to undue victimization.
- Proven cases of sexual harassment will result in immediate termination and potential legal action.

Professionalism

- Upholding the reputation of the organization through appropriate conduct is mandatory.
- Act ways that reflect well on self, team and organization
- Behave, act and have an attitude that maintains a positive, ethical and productive workplace.
- Maintain a professional demeanor in all interactions, whether internal or external.
- Use of offensive language, discriminatory behavior, or disrespect towards colleagues, stakeholders, or project participants/beneficiaries is prohibited.
- Adhere to ethical standards of acting with integrity (being honest/avoid fraud, lies).
- Be objective by avoiding personal bias and maintain fairness.
- Be respectful of colleagues – Treat colleagues, supervisors, clients with respect, kindness, fairness. Promote teamwork and collaboration.
- Communicate respectfully using appropriate language, tone and medium of communication with colleagues, supervisors, project participants/beneficiaries and other stakeholders.
- Maintain a positive work ethic by being present and punctual, striving for excellence and maintaining attention to detail. Includes staying focused on tasks and minimizing distractions.
- Commitment to continuous learning and development through skills improvement and accepting constructive feedback while making efforts to improve.
- Maintain professional relationships at workplace. Romantic, personal and sexual relationships between employees especially between supervisors and subordinates are not encouraged. Such relationships may be based on inherently unequal power dynamics and may undermine the credibility and integrity of organization's operations.
- While the organization does not prohibit staff from having romantic, personal and sexual relationships with one another, besides relationships based on unequal power dynamics mentioned, staff and persons working on behalf of the organization must adhere to the following guidelines;
 - **Professional Conduct:** Behave professionally and ensure that their relationship does not negatively impact the organization's operations and reputation.
 - **Disclosure of the relationship:** Disclose the relationships as soon as possible to their line managers or the Human Resource Manager, even if the relationship is at an early stage and its continuation is uncertain. The organization will treat the disclosure with confidentiality and take the necessary steps to avoid conflict of interest.
 - **Consensus:** The relationship must be consensual and any form of harassment, coercion, retaliation will not be tolerated.

- **Avoid Conflicts of Interest:** Avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Those involved in a relationship must ensure that their relationship does not influence work-related decisions.
- **Prevent Fraudulent or Corrupt Behavior:** Ensure that their relationship does not result in fraudulent or corrupt actions. For example, members of staff in such a relationship should not organise work-related travel to the same destination unless it is genuinely required for work purposes.

Compliance with Laws and Policies

- Adhere to all applicable laws and regulations in Uganda, as well as compliance to internal policies, regulations and procedures of the organisation.
- Respect the customs and cultural practices of the communities in which the organisation operates, provided they do not conflict with human rights acceptable standards.

Financial Credibility

- Handle organizational finances and resources with honesty and integrity.
- Ensure responsible and appropriate use of company resources, assets, and property. They should be handled with reasonable care and used exclusively for work-related purposes.
- All financial transactions must be documented and verified through approved channels.
- Be transparent and accountable. Provide clear, accurate and timely financial information/reports to all stakeholders.
- Adhere to organization financial accounting and reporting standards, regulations, procedures and practices.
- Report any misuse or mismanagement of resources to the appropriate authority.
- Avoid using organizational resources for personal interest and gain.
- Perform organization tasks effectively and use organizational resources responsibly to maximize productivity.
- Misappropriation, falsification of financial records, or unauthorized expenditure will lead to dismissal and legal proceedings.

Confidentiality

- Protect and maintain the confidentiality of all organizational sensitive information, including staff data, project participant/beneficiary data, donor information, and organization strategies.
- Disclosing confidential information without authorization is strictly prohibited, both during and after employment with the organization.
- Ensure that all data is handled in compliance with relevant data protection laws and internal policies.
- Breaches of confidentiality will result in disciplinary measures and potential legal actions.
- The Organisation will implement a confidential reporting and investigation mechanism in order to protect the safety and privacy of everyone involved.

Conflict of Interest

- Refrain from situations where personal interests conflict with organizational responsibilities and objectives.
- Do not accept gifts, favors, or financial benefits from beneficiaries, partners, colleagues, suppliers, or other stakeholders that could compromise impartiality, lead to favoritism, or result in unethical conduct.
- Promptly disclose any potential conflicts of interest to management.
- Violating conflict-of-interest policies may lead to disciplinary action, including termination.

Conflicts of interest may arise in the following situations, though not limited to;

- Nepotism and Favoritism – For instance providing organization opportunities like employment or contracts, to family, relatives, friends, or acquaintances without following fair recruitment/contracting/procurement processes.
- Awarding organization opportunities, contracts, works to a company or organization where you have financial interests.
- Working for a competitor or an organization that provides services/resources to your organization while still employed by the UCOBAC.
- Engagement in any work (paid or unpaid) or business outside the organization that could interfere with the employee's duties or pose a conflict.
- Membership in elected bodies or other organizations that could create competing loyalties.
- Accepting gifts, bribes and hospitality from a supplier or contractor seeking to influence procurement decisions.
- Having ownership or shareholding in a business that could influence decision-making related to the organization's operations or contract processes.
- Starting an organization that competes with your organization while still employed with UCOBAC.
- Personal romantic relationships with a subordinate and giving them preferential treatment like promotions or salary increments.
- Using organization funds, resources information to buy and sell stocks/investments or trading for personal gain.
- An employee serving on another organization's board who shares or utilizes organizational information or resources.
- An employee publicly supports a political candidate using organization name, logo and resources.
- An employee uses their job title or position to obtain personal favors or preferential treatment like discounts from suppliers/clients/service providers to their advantage.
- A procurement officer selects a supplier because of personal connections even though other suppliers offer better prices and quality.
- An employee receives a secret commission or kick back from the supplier after awarding them a contract.
- An employee leaves the organization and uses organization information, proprietary information and resources to start a competing organization.
- Use of company resources and equipment for personal projects or side businesses.

Chain of Command

- Respect for chain of command by following established hierarchy of authority when reporting issues, making decisions, and communicating within the organization.
- Communication and decision-making must adhere to the organisation's established hierarchy.
- Address all concerns/complaints or grievances through their immediate supervisors or managers or other official proper channels before escalating issues to higher levels of management.
- Respect the roles and decision-making authority of those in higher positions within the organisational hierarchy.
- Ensure effective issue escalation by following the proper chain of command. If an issue cannot be resolved at one level, it should be escalated to the next appropriate authority using the correct procedures.
- Ensure communication follows formal channels and remains professional, clear, and respectful at all times.
- Everyone in the chain of command should uphold accountability and responsibility, with leaders owning their decisions and employees adhering to instructions from their supervisors.
- Avoid "jumping the chain" by going directly to the senior management or officers without consulting their immediate supervisors.
- Persistent insubordination will result in disciplinary actions

Transparency and Accountability

Staff and persons working for and on behalf of the organization;

- Have a responsibility to complete assigned duties/tasks within the set deadlines or in time.
- Have an obligation to take ownership and personal responsibility for own actions, decisions and performance outcomes in the workplace.
- Should accept mistakes/failures/constructive criticism and seek solutions rather than excuses.
- Maintain transparency by communicating clearly, openly, and honestly about progress, decisions, actions, processes, challenges, outcomes, and resources. Use appropriate communication channels when engaging with colleagues, supervisors, and service providers.
- Regularly provide accurate, timely, reliable information/reports on the tasks, and resources provided.
- Undertake regular performance evaluations/assessments to ensure compliance with job performance expectations.
- Negligence or failure to perform duties diligently will result in disciplinary actions.

Handling of Gifts, Bribes, Favors, and Presents

- Receiving or offering gifts, bribes, or favors that could influence professional decisions is forbidden and will lead to disciplinary action.

Dress Code

- Dress appropriately for a professional work environment, ensuring attire is respectful and non-offensive to colleagues, project participants, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders.
- Clothing should respect cultural sensitivities and meet safety requirements specific to the work environment. Repeated failure to comply with dress code standards may lead to warnings or other disciplinary actions.

Reporting Misconduct

- Report any violations of this Code of Conduct, unethical behavior, or misconduct to the designated Compliance Officer or Supervisor.
- Utilize the organization’s whistleblowing mechanism if necessary and be assured of protection from retaliation for reporting in good faith.



Sanctions in Case of Breach

- Breaches of the code of conduct will be investigated, promptly, thoroughly and impartially, with disciplinary actions determined based on the severity of the violation.
- Sanctions may include:
 - a) **First offense:** Verbal or written warning.
 - b) **Second offense:** Suspension with half pay.
 - c) **Severe or repeated offenses:** Termination of employment and legal proceedings if necessary.
- The organization will ensure a fair hearing process before imposing any penalties.

APPROVAL OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

This policy shall take effect immediately upon approval and shall remain in force until revised or revoked by the Board of Directors.

Approved by:

<p>Name: Grace Angeline Chelimo Title: Board Chairperson</p>  <p>Signature</p>	<p>Name: Frances Birungi Odong Title: Executive Director</p>  <p>Signature</p>
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