



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

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Robert Mugabe Road, Plot No. 17, Mbuya Zone 1
P. O. Box 75198, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256 704 714526
E-mail: info@ucobac.co.ug
Website: www.ucobac.org
Twitter: UCOBAC_

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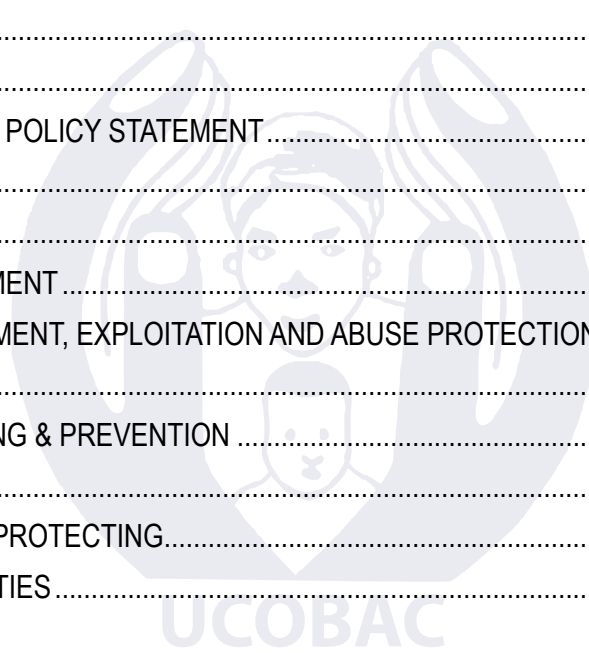
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UCOBAC IDENTITY

STRATEGIC VISION, MISSION, VALUES AND OBJECTIVES

VISION

We envision empowered communities free from poverty and able to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedom.

MISSION

To promote human rights and improve the welfare of women and children through community based initiatives.

VALUES

We are guided by the following values; Honesty, Transparency, Accountability, Excellence, Integrity and Teamwork.

OBJECTIVES

- To clearly identify and define vulnerable women and children, assess their needs and prioritize programs aimed at their protection and welfare.
- To actively advocate for and influence the development and implementation of effective policies and programs that address the critical and priority needs of vulnerable women and children.
- To strategically plan, design and implement comprehensive programs that promote and safeguard the rights, safety and welfare of women and children.

ABBREVIATIONS

SoC Subject of Complaint

UCOBAC Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare

DEFINITION OF KEY WORDS

- 1) **Sexual harassment;** Any behavior or remarks perceived to be unpleasant, threatening, offensive or demeaning to the dignity and self-esteem of the recipient or subject. 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.
- 2) **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.
- 3) **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. It is when a person forces sexual acts on another against their will or without their consent.
- 4) **Survivor:** The person who it is alleged has been the subject of sexual harassment, abuse or exploitation.
- 5) **Complainant:** The person who raises a complaint (this may or may not be the survivor).
- 6) **Subject of Complaint/Subject of Concern:** The person against whom the allegation, complaint or concern has been raised
- 7) **Suspicion of misconduct:** A concern that has been raised through any of the reporting pathways. This suspicion of misconduct is assessed at an initial case conference / stakeholder panel
- 8) **Allegation of misconduct:** If, at case conference / stakeholder panel stage there is a decision to investigate the suspicion of misconduct then it is treated as an 'allegation of misconduct.
- 9) **Outcome of Investigation:** Once an allegation is investigated and the investigation report is reviewed, the resulting recommendations are referred to as the 'outcome of investigation.

INTRODUCTION

This Safeguarding policy is an official policy statement of the UCOBAC's commitment to to promote human dignity and social justice within our own organisation and maintain a safe and respectful workplace by protecting and ensuring safety of all individuals involved with the organization from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. It clearly states the organization's guidelines and procedures that will be undertaken to keep all people safe and respond to their safety concerns and protection needs. This safeguarding policy serves as a framework for promoting a safe and respectful environment for everyone involved with the organization.

This safeguarding policy complies with national and international legal and best practices of safeguarding including the duty of care that is a legal responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of individuals under an organization's care. Others include; the legal requirement to report suspicions or evidence of harassment, exploitation and abuse to appropriate authorities. The legal requirement to conduct criminal record or background checks for individuals working with vulnerable groups of people. The obligations to ensure a safe physical and emotional environment through regular risk assessments and anti -bullying/harassment policies. Further still, it complies with data protection laws that protect the confidentiality of sensitive information related to safeguarding cases, as well as and compliance to safeguarding laws including the child protection laws, adult safeguarding laws, equality and anti - discrimination laws.

This safeguarding policy is also based on ethical obligations that focus on moral principles and professional standards to protect individuals and promote a culture of respect and safety. These include, the respect of dignity and rights by treating all individuals with dignity, respect and equality. It also includes acting in best interests of the individual through prioritizing the well-being and safety of vulnerable individuals above all. It is also based on the principle of professional accountability through maintaining the highest standard of conduct and transparency in safeguarding practices as well as upholding confidentiality by ensuring information about safeguarding concerns is shared only on need-to-know basis and in line with legal requirements. It is further anchored in the obligation to prevent harm by taking appropriate measures to prevent harm before it occurs, for instance through regular training on safeguarding as well as the obligation to promote empowerment by supporting individuals to make decisions and take control of their own lives, for instance through encouraging disclosure.

This safeguarding policy therefore meets both legal and ethical obligations of safeguarding through ensuring compliance with the law, while fostering a culture of respect, care and accountability in the organization.

PURPOSE AND AIM OF THE POLICY STATEMENT

The safeguarding policy aims at providing procedures and measures to ensure that all individuals involved with UCOBAC are safe and protected from all forms of actions that harm, abuse and violate their human dignity, rights, freedoms and hinder their full development and welfare.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy sets out UCOBAC's commitment and approach to preventing and addressing sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse as well as ensure effective action is taken when such cases and concerns are reported or occur. It further spells out the principles upon which to base decision and actions in case of a sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse concern or case is reported or occurs. The policy also spells out the expectations and code of conduct of all those who work on behalf of all individuals involved with the organization

This Safeguarding policy applies to all individuals involved with the organization including children and adults as well as both male and female genders that work for, offer services and resources to, or are served by the organization. These may include Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, partners, donors, sponsors, visitors, consultants, journalists, project participants, child caretakers/parents/guardians etc

POLICY STATEMENT

- UCOBAC recognizes that the terms sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse represent a wide spectrum of behaviors and is not limited to the act of sexual intercourse.
- UCOBAC refers the term sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse as any unwanted or forced sexual act committed without consent of the other person
- UCOBAC recognizes that sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse can be done by and to persons of all ages and gender that are involved with the organization.
- This policy applies to all individuals involved with the organization. This involves people that work for, offer services and resources to or are served by operations and activities financed or managed by UCOBAC.
- UCOBAC recognizes the existence of unequal power dynamics and relations within the organization and in society in which its operates and as such, vulnerable people are at risk of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse by those in positions of power for personal gain.
- UCOBAC has a zero tolerance approach and policy towards sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. We carefully examine allegations, investigate and take appropriate disciplinary action..
- UCOBAC believes all people, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, disability, religion or ethnic origin, have a right to live their lives free from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.
- UCOBAC commits to supporting survivors, improving safeguarding capacity, reporting, investigating, responding to, and preventing sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.
- UCOBAC's appointed responsible focal point person for safeguarding will use this Policy in conjunction with relevant employment/labor laws, and relevant criminal laws to make decisions about how to respond to any complaints and concerns raised.
- This policy enters into effect immediately.
- Related internal policies, procedures and contractual documents will be amended to reflect the measures contained herein, including the implementing procedures, UCOBAC complaint mechanisms and other internal processes.

PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENT

UCOBAC is committed to achieving full, ongoing implementation of the Six Core Principles relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2019) by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by UCOBAC employees and anyone working on behalf of the organization constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for facing disciplinary action and dismissal/termination of employment/contract.
- Sexual activity with children and adolescents (below 18 years) is prohibited and is grounds for disciplinary action and dismissal. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defense.
- Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior towards project participants, beneficiaries, fellow employees, partners, visitors, by UCOBAC employees and anyone working on behalf of the organization is prohibited.
- Any sexual relationships between UCOBAC employees or anyone working on behalf of UCOBAC and organization project participants, beneficiaries are forbidden. Given the contexts where UCOBAC operates, such relationships may be based on inherently unequal power dynamics and may undermine the credibility and integrity of UCOBAC's operations.
- Where a UCOBAC employee or anyone working on behalf of the organization develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms through the organization's safeguarding focal point person.
- UCOBAC employers and employees are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse for all those who work on behalf of UCOBAC and those in the communities that participate and benefit from UCOBAC's interventions and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. UCOBAC management at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.
- UCOBAC will establish a robust prevention and response mechanism within the organization, offering support to survivors, and holding those responsible for sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse accountable.

UCOBAC SEXUAL HARASSMENT, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE PROTECTION PROCEDURES

The organization will follow the following procedures to safeguard and protect its employees, persons working on behalf of UCOBAC and project participants/beneficiaries from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. **(i) Awareness raising** on sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and associated risks and the organizations safeguarding policy and procedures, **(ii) Prevention** by providing guidance on how to safeguard against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse **(iii) Reporting** by setting up clear reporting procedures and mechanisms to promote reporting of cases and concern **(iv) Protection and Responding** by ensure clear action is taken when cases/concerns of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse are suspected, reported or occur.

a) AWARENESS RAISING & PREVENTION

- Ensure that all employees, those working on behalf of UCOBAC and partners know the organization's sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse protection policy, code of conduct and procedures, reporting and complaints channels.
- Ensure that all old and new employees, those working on behalf of UCOBAC and partners are educated/trained and informed about forms of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and the associated impacts to the victims and the organization.
- Providing public awareness on sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and its associated impacts to the victims and the organization and the existing safeguarding procedures and standards to prevent and respond to cases and concerns of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.
- In compliance with applicable laws, UCOBAC is committed to prevent perpetrators of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse from being (re)hired or (re)deployed or contracted to offer services on behalf of UCOBAC. Managers and Human Resource teams will ensure robust recruitment screening processes and background checks for all potential personnel, including employees, volunteers, consultants and other.
- UCOBAC's employees and others working on behalf of UCOBAC are required to take proactive measures to avoid causing inadvertent harm to people contribute to actively reduce existing threats and ensure programs are conflict sensitive. This includes embedding sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse protection good practice prevention measures throughout the program and project cycle, including project design, grant proposals, assessments, complaints and feedback mechanisms, and monitoring and evaluation.

b) REPORTING

- Ensure that have multiple channels for UCOBAC employees, anyone working on behalf or representing the organization, project participants/beneficiaries, and others to safely report sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. These channels should be designed in consultation with local communities and staff to ensure that they are safe and accessible.
- Ensure that UCOBAC employees, anyone working on behalf or representing the organization, project participants/beneficiaries, and others have information about how to access these safe reporting channels. This should include posting reporting procedures in local languages and regularly explaining these channels.
- Provide training and information to all UCOBAC employees, particularly safeguarding focal points for receiving complaints, to ensure they understand their obligations and how to discharge their duties should they receive a complaint. A particular emphasis should be made on confidentiality.
- Encourage and create an enabling environment for affected persons to report incidences of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. There is no obligation for an individual to report any incident that has happened to them.
- Everyone who works on behalf of UCOBAC is required to report any suspicions or incidences of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse of others. Individuals can raise a concern/complaint to UCOBAC about an incident they have experienced, witnessed, or heard about concerning a UCOBAC staff member or partner (suppliers, funder, contractor, visitor etc.) without fear of retribution. Failure to report to a relevant person suspicion or incident of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse is a breach of UCOBAC's policy, and could lead to disciplinary action being taken against them and the termination/dismissal.
- Individuals can report directly to UCOBAC verbally or in writing to UCOBAC's management or safeguarding focal personnel or to a whistle blowing helpline if available.

- Complaints can be made anonymously. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality throughout the complaints process. Information that identifies individuals involved in a complaint will be limited to essential personnel and will not be shared further without obtaining the informed consent of those involved, except if someone's life is at risk, a child is at risk, or as required by law in consultation with legal counsel and where safe to do so. Non-identifying information will be shared as per reporting requirements. Staff involved in the complaints process will be made aware of the importance of maintaining confidentiality and may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. Employees who breach confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- Complainants, Survivors and Witnesses that report incidences or concerns/suspicious of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse must be protected from retaliation. UCOBAC will take action against anyone, whether they are the subject of a complaint or not, who seek or carry out retaliatory action against complainants, survivors or other witnesses which will involve disciplinary action, up to and including employment termination/dissmissal.

c) RESPONDING AND PROTECTING

- UCOBAC will respond in a professional and timely manner to all concerns or allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse.
- All concerns or allegations will always be taken seriously, and investigated and acted upon where appropriate.
- UCOBAC will undertake robust and accountable case management: All allegations and subsequent follow-up, will be documented in a secure and confidential database to ensure accountability.
- The cases must not be delayed. Immediate action should be undertaken as case delayed is justice denied – The case should be attended to within 24-72 hours of reporting.
- UCOBAC will carry out independent, safe, and discreet investigations, through the Safeguarding authority/team appointed at the organization, recognizing the rights of and duty of care to everyone involved, including the complainant and/or survivor, witnesses and the Subject of Complaint (SoC). An independent and gender representative decision-making panel will be assigned to the investigation team to ensure impartiality, transparency, and accountability.
- UCOBAC will take accountable decision-making through taking swift and appropriate action against anyone found beyond reasonable doubt to that have committed sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. This may include administrative or disciplinary action, and/or referral to the relevant local authorities if appropriate and safe to do so.
- Survivors of Sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse are entitled to specialized support services. UCOBAC commits to referring survivors to relevant support services based on their needs and preferences and service availability. Support may include; specialist psychosocial support such as counseling, medical assistance, legal counseling and access to UCOBAC's employee assistance programs/service (where available).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board of Directors – UCOBAC Board holds overall accountability for this policy and its implementation. The Board oversees and monitors the implementation/application of policy.

Senior Management (Executive Director, Deputy Directors): The UCOBAC Executive Director is responsible for the application/implementation of this policy within the organization. It is also responsible for developing systems that create and maintain a safe environment for employees and all that are in contact or relate with the organization. Senior management is also responsible for planning for safeguarding interventions in the organization including resource mobilization and planning for planned interventions. Management is also responsible for reviewing and updating the safeguarding policy in line with legislative and organizational developments, feedback and lessons learned.

Safe guarding focal point: An appointed Safe guarding focal point officer provides support to raise awareness, prevent, respond and protect against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and child and young people's abuse to alongside their substantive roles.

Safeguarding committee/advisors – Provide support to the focal point officer to raise awareness, prevent, respond and protect against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and child and young people's abuse to alongside their substantive roles. They for example support in raising awareness on the safeguarding policy procedures and code of conduct, conducting regular trainings and promoting best practices, with a particular emphasis on staff that are in direct contact with the people served by the organization as well as receiving concerns, conducting referrals to specialized services and supporting investigations among others.



UCOBAC employees / those working on behalf of UCOBAC – Understand and abide by the safeguarding policy guidelines, procedures and code of conduct, raise awareness among project participants about the safeguarding policy guidelines, procedures and code of conduct, Report any safety and abuse concerns or occurrences, Consult with beneficiaries in a safe, accessible, and culturally appropriate way to ensure that project participants to raise complaints and concerns, and provide feedback to the existing safeguarding policy.

Project participants - Understand and abide by the safeguarding policy guidelines, procedures, be vigilant and report any safety and abuse concerns or occurrences, provide feedback to existing safeguarding policy.

APPROVAL OF THE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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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