

## ACORD UGANDA

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# CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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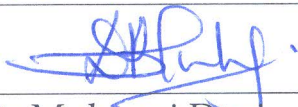
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## Message from the Chairperson

Agency for Cooperation and Research and Development (ACORD Uganda) has a commitment to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom our staff come into contact. The Board, Management and entire staff of ACORD commit to upholding the rights of Children to protection: that the decisions and interventions undertaken should take cognizance of their privacy, views and aspirations.

The Child Protection policy is guided by the key policies included in the UN Convention on the right of the Child (UNRC) which promotes the following rights;

- rights to things children need, such as a home, food, health care, places to play and learn;
- rights to be kept safe from harm;
- rights to take part in deciding how they live their lives.

The ACORD child protection policy is consistent with Government of Uganda Constitution, Child Act and other laws addressing issues that affect children's rights to protection. These include but are not limited to the following;

- The Penal Code
- The Trafficking in persons Act
- The Domestic Violence Act
- The Prohibition of FGM Act

I am pleased that this policy has been formulated, and I strongly believe that it will be used as a tool to enhance the rights of children that ACORD serves. I therefore call upon all ACORD staff, partners and stakeholders to embrace this policy and to fully utilize it to protect, promote and realize the rights of children.

Name: Dr Denis Muhangi

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 About ACORD Uganda

### 1.1.1. Background

The Agency for Cooperation in Research and Development – Uganda (ACORD-U) is a Ugandan National Non-Governmental Organization that has worked in Uganda since 1979 as a local branch of ACORD International. ACORD-U is now registered as an indigenous Non-Governmental organization with headquarters in Nsambya, Kampala. Currently, ACORD's Regional Offices are located in Tororo (Eastern), Adjumani (West Nile), Gulu (Northern), Mbarara (South Western and Western) and Kampala which coordinates interventions in central Uganda.

ACORD-U aspires to contribute towards Uganda's Development and Humanitarian Responses for Vulnerable Communities in Rural and Peri-Urban Areas and interventions, internal processes as well as procedures promote participation, non-discrimination and accountability.

ACORD places specific attention to people living in poverty and vulnerable groups. Focus is placed on children, women and young people who are considered disproportionately affected by calamities and many who face additional barriers that prevent them from seeking and receiving support. Similarly, ACORD views Uganda as a State with an obligation to ensure equality and non-discrimination in laws, policies and distribution and delivery of resources and services. This requires identification and targeting of vulnerable groups to ensure that entitlements also reach all populations at risk.

### 1.1.2 ACORD's Vision, Mission and Values

#### *Vision*

A society in which all people are able to achieve their rights and fulfil their responsibilities

#### *Mission Statement*

We work in partnership with marginalized communities and those who have been denied their rights to analyze their situation and jointly find sustainable solutions to improve their wellbeing.

#### *Core Values*

- People are the primary actors in their own survival and development.

- Working for social justice and equality, especially for the poor and marginalized.
- Working in partnership with communities and in alliance with other organisations.
- Social justice and equality are the basis of meaningful peace.
- Integrity and courage in carrying out our work.
- Respect and celebration of diversity, both within the communities and our organisation.
- Seeking excellence in what we do.

### 1.1.3 ACORD's Strategic Direction 2016 - 2020

In the period 2021-2025, ACORD Uganda will strengthen and scale-up interventions targeting the most marginalized groups of people in Uganda who face injustice, inequality, live in poverty and other vulnerabilities in rural and urban areas. We will directly target both Ugandan nationals and refugees. The primary beneficiaries will include children, youth in and out of school, women, elderly, People living with HIV, persons with disabilities and orphans and vulnerable children.

To achieve the strategic objectives, ACORD Uganda, will work in partnership with target communities, government, NGOs, CBOs and the private sector to analyse community issues and implement priority interventions to improve livelihoods, health and wellbeing; conduct research, policy analysis and influencing; build the capacity of communities and actors; combine advocacy with direct service delivery; mainstream cross-cutting issues including gender, human rights, HIV and environment in all programs; and leverage on information and communication technology for development.

ACORD intervention areas are:

- Health and productive lives
- Sustainable livelihoods, climate change resilience and natural resource management
- Engaged, peaceful and just communities free of violence
- Capacity building for ACORD Uganda and partners for effective management, research and advocacy

Implementation of program interventions will build on the successes of ACORD Uganda over the past four decades in meeting the needs and promoting the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups among Ugandan and refugee populations. The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and participation of target communities will be central in all ACORD'S work.

#### *Goal*

A transformed and vibrant society: A society that is productive, resilient and actively exercising their rights and responsibilities in a safe and supportive environment.



## *Strategic Objectives*

To achieve the promised goal, the following four strategic objectives (SOs) were formulated:

SO 1: To Contribute to health and well-being and access to universal health care

SO 2: To achieve engaged, peaceful and just communities that are free from violence

SO 3: To build sustainable livelihoods, increase climate change resilience and enhance natural resource management

SO 4: To Strengthen the capacity of ACORD Uganda and partners for effective management, research and advocacy

### **1.1.4 ACORD's Contact with Children**

ACORD and partners' contacts with children are mostly at the levels of project design, activity implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Most of the contacts are direct through activities such as sensitization and training sessions, ranging from sessions with children at risk and OVC and other children during WATSAN, YAPs, youth spaces, apprenticeship programme and Anti-SGBV school club activities,

Some of these contacts are done in the presence of school teachers (in the case of school children) and caregivers in the case of OVC. In the different ACORD project implementation settings, both humanitarian and development, contacts are mainly by the ACORD selected and trained community volunteers.

### **1.1.5 Policy Statement**

ACORD-U recognizes that all children have a right to be protected from abuse, exploitation, and harm. We recognize that some children can be additionally vulnerable because of their gender, ethnic origin and disability status. We therefore have a responsibility to protect the welfare of all children, recognizing their different needs and experiences.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that procedures are in place to protect children from deliberate or unintended actions that place them at risk of abuse, exploitation, discrimination or other harms carried out by any member of the ACORD-U or a representative

#### **1.1.6. Who this Policy Protects**

Children below 18 years including other young adults that participate in our work.

Who is bound by this policy – it is binding for all staff, board members, volunteers, contractors, visitors to our programme, partners, and any other persons that act for, with or on behalf of ACORD.

#### **1.1.7. Methodology for Development of the ACORD Child Protection Policy:**

ACORD was inspired to develop a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy so as to protect one of its target groups

- Children, including adolescent girls and boys, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse because of their age, gender, size and dependency on others.
- ACORD found it necessary to develop guidelines so as to establish a safe environment for children during implementation of its interventions and to promote the welfare of children.

This Child Protection Policy clearly outlines the steps ACORD will take in our work and with our people, to ensure we do no harm to children.

The process of developing the ACORD Child Protection Policy (CPP) started in 2015 and was undertaken through the following processes:

- A committee to draft a CPP was set up. This developed the Zero CPP draft that was adapted from guidelines shared by the ACORD International Secretariat based in Nairobi. The draft was used for consultations with ACORD staff in Uganda. The committee was composed of members of the ACORD Senior Management Team (Country Director, Director of Programmes, the Programme Development Coordinator), the Transitional Justice Coordinator and the Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator.
- Consultation on the key areas in the policy was done at project levels in ACORD field offices in Mbarara, Gulu and Adjumani. Consultation were done among field staff most of whom were involved in implementation of child focused projects.
- One member of the committee (the Country Director) was selected to adopt the suggestions and recommendations from the consultations leading to a fair draft that was shared during the Kindernothilfe (KNH) Child Protection Policy in April of 2018.
- The suggestions got from the KNH training were adopted and the draft policy was shared with the KNH selected consultants in April 2018. The consultant revised the CPP, made some suggestions and held a meeting with the ACORD Senior Management Team to refine the policy.
- The policy was finally reviewed by the Board members and presented to the Board for approval
- The ACORD CPP has been revised after the training in child safe guarding supported by USAID in June 2021, to fill identified gaps and adopt

recommendations during the training on standard guidelines for child safe guarding.

## 1.2 Principles

This Child Protection and safeguarding Policy is premised on Keeping Children Safe; and Child Safeguarding Standards; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (and its optional protocols); the UN Statement for the Elimination of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and all child-related UN conventions; The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (Constitution) which recognizes and provides for the rights of the child, the Children Amendment Act which puts into effect the Constitutional provisions on children and emphasizes the protection of the child by upholding the rights, protection, duties and responsibilities as contained in the Convention on Rights of the Child and the Organization for African Unity Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. The Constitution of Uganda provides for the following specific rights of children:

- a) The right to know and be cared for by their parents or other people
- b) The right to basic education which must be provided by the Government and the parents of the child;
- c) The right not to be denied medical treatment or any other social or economic benefits;
- d) Protection from all exploitation (being taken advantage of)
- e) Children who are below the age of 16 years must not be employed or do work that is harmful to their health or that interferes with their education
- f) A child offender shall not be detained with adults
- g) Orphans and other vulnerable children must be specially protected by the laws of Uganda.

### *The policy is guided by the following principles*

- Zero tolerance to child rights abuse.
- Right of children to protection and survival under any circumstance
- Every aspect of our work must be carried out in a way that ensures the rights, dignity and empowerment of children
- Best interest of the children in all the decisions made regarding the welfare of the children
- Right to hear the views of children; allowing them to express themselves
- Non isolation, exclusion and discrimination of children irrespective of the age, level of understanding, socio economic status, health status among other factors.
- All actions on child safeguarding are taken in the best interests of the child, which are paramount.
- Respect of confidentiality such that access and use of information relating to the policy standards must be under strict observance of confidentiality. Accessing such information in regards to children must be strictly official.

### 1.3 Definitions of terms

- Child:** According to the Ugandan Constitution any human being below the age of 18 years.
- Child Safeguarding** Is the responsibility that ACORD has to make sure that staff, operations and programmes *do no harm* to Children. That is to ensure that they do not expose children to the risk of harm and abuse, and that any concerns the organisation has about children's safety within the community in which ACORD works, are reported to the appropriate authorities
- Child Protection:** An activity or intervention for the purpose of preventing or responding to child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children.
- Child Abuse:** The act (or failure to act) by parents, caregivers, other adults or older adolescents that endangers a child's physical or emotional health, development or dignity. Both boys and girls can suffer all types of child abuse. Examples of types of abuse are; physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, exploitation, bullying and harassment. Children often experience more than one type of abuse simultaneously:
- Child abuse material:** Materials that depict (expressly or implicitly a child as a victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse)
- Child exploitation:** The act of using a minor child for profit, labor, sexual gratification or some other personal or financial advantage.
- Child safe practices:** Interventions which protect children from all types of violence, exploitation and abuse.
- Contact children:** Working with or participating in an intervention which brings one to interact with children.
- Staff/ employee:** Any one person in the service of ACORD including contracted staff, volunteers and interns.
- Partner:** Any organization with which ACORD has implemented work for or to whom ACORD is sub granting/contracting.
- Sexual abuse:** Any sexual behavior or a sexual act forced upon a woman,

manor child without their consent.

**Physical abuse;** The actual or likely physical injury to a child, causing bodily harm beating or battering, burning and isolation or a failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

**Neglect:** The persistent failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in a significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive. (NB: Neglect may be wilful or otherwise). Hence, the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for the child's physical and emotional development and well-being.

**Emotional abuse:** Persistent or emotional ill treatment of a child that adversely affects their development. May involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate, there only to meet the needs of another; or where inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. In addition, it includes children who are regularly frightened, exploited or corrupted.

**Child Sexual abuse:** The actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or young person. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest, and all forms of sexual activity involving children, including pornography. It entails forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities that he or she does not fully understand and has little choice in consenting to. This may include, but is not limited to, rape, oral sex, penetration, or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching. It may also include involving children in looking at, or producing sexual images, watching sexual activities and encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

**Child labour:** Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, interferes with their schooling, or that is harmful to physical and mental development.

**Child Pornography:** In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention

on the Rights of the Child, 'child pornography' means 'any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.

#### **1.4 Aim and Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to all staff and associates.

Staff includes:

- all staff, national and international
- all volunteers and interns

Associates includes:

- all contractors, e.g., consultants
- all Board Members
- all partners including local community based partners
- Guests and Visitors

## 2. CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING

### 2.1. Preamble

ACORD recognizes that children can be more vulnerable due to their age, gender, race, ethnic origin or socio-economic status. Children with disabilities, who are orphaned, displaced, living with HIV, are indigenous or from ethnic minorities, can face multiple vulnerabilities. Natural disasters, disease, armed conflict and displacement expose children to additional risks. Many of these risks can impact the children we work with, so we regularly assess and manage risks at all stages of our activities. We promote children's rights as described in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

### 2.2. Some of the indicators and effects of abuse

- The child suffers from or shows signs of retardation in physical development
- Depression, anxiety, **withdrawal** or **aggression**.
- Lack of active participation in activities with other children
- Recurrent crying and sobbing with no clear cause
- Poor clothing and are ill-fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather.
- Poor hygiene (dirty, uncombed and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor)
- Untreated illnesses and physical injuries.
- Is frequently unsupervised or left alone or allowed to play in unsafe situations.
- Child keeps or runs away from parents, adults or other family members who he/she should be free with.

### 2.3. Preventive and Response Strategies

ACORD will meet its commitment to safeguarding and protecting children through the following:

#### 2.3.1 Risk assessment/risk mitigation

ACORD will ensure that all Organisational functions are not putting Children at risk and will develop strategies to minimise occurrence of those risks.

A risk assessment of all ACORD Uganda operations, programmes and project activities will be conducted. Risk mitigation strategies will be developed, which minimise the risk to children, and incorporated into the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes, operations and activities which involve or impact upon children (See Annex 7)

### *2.3.2. Prevention*

Ensuring, through dissemination of the Child policy and other organizational policies, that child rights are well known and appreciated among staff and other stakeholders. Prevention will aim at ensuring that staff and stakeholders have a full understanding of the principles and strategy for child protection and how to avoid child abuse.

ACORD management will also focus on guiding the development of implementation plans and decision making procedures that are informed by the need to uphold the interest and rights of children for the processes where they are involved. Stakeholders and staff interacting with ACORD are expected to minimize the risks to children in their decision making processes and action.

### *2.3.3 Response and Mitigation:*

Ensuring that all stakeholders and staff understand the complaints submission and witness protection mechanisms in place to support and protect children where concerns arise regarding possible abuse.

Concerns raised about child abuse and exploitation will be taken seriously and ensure that the process does not further cause harm to children who are the subject of concern.

ACORD will safeguard children, staff or other adults who raise concerns or who are the subject of concerns by upholding confidentiality during the investigation process. ACORD will as much as possible ensure that the investigations and mitigation process upholds the child principle of 'best interests of the child'.

### *2.3.4. Safe recruitment*

ACORD will ensure that all Staff, consultants and volunteers are recruited with clear job descriptions that include a statement on the position's responsibilities to meet the requirements of the organization's child safeguarding policy.

All interviews will include a discussion on child safeguarding, the candidate's understanding of this and the organization's commitment.

Contract offers for those whose work will bring them directly into contact with children, or gain them access to children's information, will be dependent on suitable references and criminal record checks where these are available.

ACORD will ensure that it applies the highest standards in its recruitment and vetting practices across the organization. Candidates are checked for their suitability for working with children and their understanding of child safeguarding.

Protection checks, such as disclosure of previous convictions or police checks (if disclosure is unavailable), forms an important part of ACORD's recruitment policy and covers all



those representatives that we have an employment relationship with. If police checks are impossible, other checks such as online searches are put into practice and noted. Checking evidence of identity and the authenticity of qualifications, requesting self-declarations about previous convictions, and a minimum requirement of at least two references are carried out in all cases (*refer to Annex 8 for a checklist of staff recruitment and selection*).

### **2.3.5. Education/training**

It is essential that all those employed or engaged by ACORD Uganda have access to regular training on child safeguarding that is appropriate for their role and responsibilities, beginning at the induction/orientation stage. Information on child safeguarding shall be available in an appropriate format and language to be accessible by all staff, children and carers as well as other ACORD associates.

As such, ACORD Uganda will provide all new staff, volunteers and interns with a child safeguarding briefing in which they will be introduced to the Child Protection Policy and Procedures, and Staff Code of Conduct within six months of commencement. Refresher training on the policy and procedures will be provided every two years. Additionally, ACORD Uganda will arrange focused job-specific training for staff on issues related to children protection on an ad-hoc basis.

Associates, suppliers, contractors and other service providers will be briefed on child safeguarding and their responsibilities under the policy upon engagement with the organisation.

Children and families will be informed on ACORD's commitment to child safeguarding and what to do if they have concerns about a child.

All staff and children are aware of the designated Child Safeguarding Focal Point at the various levels who is responsible for receiving reports of concerns and advising on assessing and mitigating risk in line with ACORD's policy and procedures.

### **2.3.6 Safe programme design**

ACORD Uganda is committed within the confines of its abilities to design and deliver programmes which are safe for children. Therefore, all programmes and projects will be risk assessed to ascertain Child safety and strategies to ensure and maintain safety shall be developed.

### **2.3.7 Communications - use of images and children's information**

ACORD Uganda is committed to undertake all communications in a manner that is safe for Children. All provisions in the ACORD Uganda communications policy (2021) shall apply to all communications related to children by staff, other stakeholders and associates.

In our use of information and visual images, both photographic stills and video, ACORD's overriding principle is to maintain respect and dignity in our portrayal of children, families and communities. Our communications policy/guidelines details our procedures.

ACORD Uganda will undertake a range of precautions when sharing information about children in all the organization marketing and communications. In consideration of Child Safeguarding principles, general Guidelines for Communications and Reporting on Children, and Consent Policy will be consulted. General principles include:

- Photographs of children shall not be taken without consent of children or their parents or guardians. ACORD Uganda staff, volunteers, community facilitators and partners will obtain permission from the child and informed consent of the parent, guardian, care giver or organization that is with the child. Informed consent entails giving information of what photo/video you want to take, why you want to take it, how you will take it, what it will be used for, leaving behind a copy of the same and getting a written consent that the above have been done and the photo was voluntarily taken.
- Clear guidelines on how children are portrayed in images and reporting. Children shall not be portrayed in a manner that further abuses them in any form. During photo shoots, children shall be adequately clothed and not staged to portray vulnerability.
- Where pictures of children are used to show change as a result of the intervention, care shall be taken to blur the face and hide identification information. In such a case it shall be stated that the child's information is withheld and picture blurred for protection reasons.
- All cases of child abuse in ACORD Uganda will be treated with utmost confidentiality that protect the children for any further harm.

These guidelines / conditions will also apply to the media companies engaged in documenting ACORDs work in the communities.

*(Refer to Annex for ACORD's Principles on Child related Communication)*

### **2.3.8 Staff Code of Conduct**

This section briefly describes how ACORD applies safeguards in her work. The code of conduct covers staff and service providers. It presents standards for acceptable and unacceptable behavior in relation to children protection. All staff are required to sign a code of conduct where staff agrees to upholding and abiding to the policies that guide the organizational operations. The child Act is listed as one of these policies.

Irrespective of what position they hold all staff are duty bound to abide by the following **Dos** and **Don'ts** concerning ACORD Uganda programmes or interventions involving children;

#### **Dos**

In their work and community all ACORD staff and others in contact with children must;

- Be aware of situations which may present risks and manage these for instance all activities involving children are supervised by personnel in particular of same sex if it enhances the protection of the children.
- Plan and organize the work and the workplace so as to minimize risks such as physical injuries to children.
- Secure written consent from parents/ guardians or the relevant authorities in the case of un-accompanied minors living in refugee settlements, of children involved in any programs /interventions.
- Ensure that all children are supervised when they come in contact with an adult / visitor during a program event or intervention.
- Staff must use child sensitive and friendly language. Ensure that a culture of openness exists to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed are discussed in a child sensitive approach.
- Ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behavior does not go unchallenged/unpunished.
- Talk to children about their contact with staff or others and encourage them to raise any concerns.
- Empower children – discuss with them their rights, what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem.
- Comply with all relevant national labour laws related with child labour. Staff must take age into consideration as they hire domestic workers to ensure that they do not hire children or engage them in other labour which is inappropriate given their age or development stage.
- When photographing or filming a child or using children's images for work related purposes, staff must obtain informed consent from their parents/ guardians or relevant official for the unaccompanied minors. Staff should explain the purpose for taking the photograph and how it will be used to the consent givers. Staff should also ensure that any material used in reports, documentaries involving children are done in a decent and dignified manner. No photos of children dressed in a manner that could be sexually suggestive be used in documentaries or reports.
- Report all cases or offenses that occurred as part of ACORD work in the community that are related to child exploitation.

### Don'ts

ACORD Uganda Staff, Volunteers, Community facilitators and other programme participants must never:

- At any one time be in the company of unaccompanied minors /children like inviting them to their homes or going for unsupervised visits unless absolutely necessary. In that case the staff should not be of opposite sex.
- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others.
- Take children to your home, especially when they will be alone with you

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
- Develop physical/sexual relationship with children.
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive.
- Act in ways that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse. Staff and others must avoid actions or behavior that could be construed as poor practice or potentially abusive. For example, they should never:
  - Use language, make suggestions or offer advice which is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
  - Behave physically in a manner which is inappropriate or sexually provocative.
  - Have a child/children with whom they are working to stay overnight at their home unsupervised.
  - Sleep in the same room or bed as a child with whom they are working.
  - Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do for themselves.
  - Condone, or participate in, behavior of children which is illegal, unsafe or abusive.
  - Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children; or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
  - Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favor particular children to the exclusion of others.
  - Support any project or activity that promotes or is engaged in child labour.

### **2.3.9 Guidelines for other Stakeholders:**

During implementation of programs as well as other operational processes, ACORD will engage with various stakeholders including but not limited to the community, service providers, development partners, Local government structures and service providers.

ACORD will ensure that these stakeholders within their different categories are made aware of the organizational principles related to child protection and also presented with guidelines for grievance handling in case they come across instances of child abuse in the course of their interaction with ACORD staff and community beneficiaries.

### **2.3.10 Partnerships:**

As a prerequisite of organizational partnership, ACORD expects certain conditions to be followed by partner organizations, including contractors, consultants and media companies. However, we acknowledge the challenges of working in the developing world context where these conditions are often not standard. Rather than simply being risk averse, when they are not met when beginning a partnership, ACORD will provide capacity development support to partners in order to develop appropriate procedures within six months of engagement.

Contractors and partners will be expected to;

- Read and understand the policy principles highlighted in section 1.2.
- Formally acknowledge and comply with these key principles
- Commit to undertake immediate action should they have a reason to believe that the rights of children have been violated within their decision making processes or actions.
- Immediately notify ACORD Uganda management in the field or at the head office in case there is a suspected case of child abuse in their area.
- Ensure that the rights of children are upheld in and enhanced among their personnel/ workers.

### **2.3.11 Supporter/Donor Relations:**

ACORD Uganda has an active donor relations program and encourages communication between donors and the different project participants, some of which are children. This relationship might have the potential to positively impact on the development of the community/donor relationship; the cultural education and awareness of the donor, child and community; and is an effective fundraising model. The Child Safeguarding Procedures detail the range of strategies that are in place to ensure that any donor/support contact with children in the community takes place in the context of a safe environment for children. This includes:

- Welcoming of supporters;
- Monitoring of all correspondence (including social media)
- Where supporters will have in-person contact with children and communities, we will require:
- Criminal record checks; with police or any other relevant body/institution.
- Commitment to comply with the Child Safeguarding Policy and Behavioral Guidelines for supporter visits;
- Staff move and guide the development partners or donors on the following;
  - Consent of children and/or their parents/guardians is sought before taking photographs.
  - Information about children is only used for the purpose agreed upon between the supporter and ACORD Uganda.
  - On a visit to children, all gifts are declared and responsibility left to ACORD to distribute them.
  - All help to children and families is channeled through ACORD and not directly communicated or promised to children and their families.

## **2.4 Standards for Policy Implementation**

This child policy shall be interpreted and implemented in line with other

organizational policies and strategic documents that in one way or the other, promote child protection. These include:

- The ACORD Whistle Blowing Policy, March 2014
- ACORD Uganda Human Resources and Management Manual- Sections 2 on Staff recruitment, and Section 7 on Staff Code of Conduct
- Behavioral Guidelines for Supporter Visits;
- General Guidelines for Communications and Reporting on Children, and Consent Policy will be consulted.

#### **2.4.1 Recruitment:**

ACORD Uganda will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that our staffs, volunteers, community facilitators and interns do not pose an unacceptable risk to children. As a good child protection practice, ACORD Uganda will consistently apply robust recruitment procedures for all staff, community facilitators, volunteers and interns that include:

- During recruitment for jobs involving children, efforts will be made to ensure the following ‘
  - Job specifications/descriptions include responsibilities to protect children.
  - Advertisements and other relevant documents include a note of ACORD ‘s serious commitment to protect children and therefore expects all staff, volunteers that work with ACORD Uganda to do the same.
  - ACORD Uganda will ensure that during interviews, a subject matter expert (one who has experience in child protection) is part of the panel to assess the suitability of the candidates for a job that will involve interaction with children.
- At least two verbal referee checks.

#### **2.4.2 Child Protection in Emergencies**

ACORD acknowledges that children living in emergency situations may be more vulnerable than children living in a stable community. ACORD Uganda is therefore committed to reducing children’s vulnerability to emergencies by ensuring their right to have humanitarian assistance during crises, and their right to survival and development during and after an emergency. Staff will be required to utilize in addition to this policy, Standard Operating Guidelines for handling refugee or other vulnerable children issues.

#### **2.4.3 Case Management: Raising and Reporting Concerns in ACORD**

Child abuse is distressing for all concerned and it is often difficult to accept that it may have occurred, to the point that there is denial or that warning signs are dismissed. The danger is that under-reaction resulting from this lack of acceptance may mean children remain unprotected and exposed to further abuse. If this policy is to achieve its

intentions of preventing abuse and protecting children, it is essential that staff and others understand their responsibility to raise any concerns they may have regarding the safety of children. There are many reasons why staff and others may be reluctant to voice concerns. This reluctance usually stems from anxieties associated with some of the following factors;

- the person is worried they are mistaken.
- the person is worried they will not be believed.
- Even if believed, they may feel there is no specific 'evidence' of abuse.
- raising a concern will have serious consequences which will affect the work in general/other colleagues/ACORD Uganda.
- the impact on the child/children may be a negative/damaging one.
- the suspected abuser is the child's parent/career or member of the community for whom there may be serious consequences if abuse is alleged/confirmed.
- the suspected abuser is the person's line manager/a senior person.
- the person does not know what the sequence of events might be.
- a process may be triggered which the person cannot predict or control.
- the person may fear reprisals or possible victimization.
- Reluctance to be involved in the matter beyond raising the concern, e.g. where a prosecution may ensue.
- a sense of loyalty to a colleague/work friend who may be suspected of abuse.
- Concern about 'getting it wrong' is possibly the factor which most inhibits reporting of suspected abuse.

However, it is essential where concerns or suspicions do exist, to focus on the welfare of the child or children involved and to ask 'what if I am right?' In most incidents of child abuse, it is usually the case that someone other than 'the abused' and 'the abuser' is aware of the situation or at least suspects there is abuse. However, those who know or suspect abuse often do not act, or delay taking action, because of the kind of factors described above. It is also often the case that children who are abused try at some point to tell someone about it. It is essential that anyone connected to ACORD Uganda who suspects or knows of abuse raises their concerns in line with the process described in this document.

#### **2.4.5 Confidentiality:**

In all matters dealt with as part of this policy, it is essential to respect the need for confidentiality. In certain circumstances, any lack of confidentiality may have devastating effects for the lives of children and may also result in serious consequences for adults involved in the process. In responding to issues and concerns regarding possible abuse, staff and others must exercise extreme vigilance in protecting information and must pass on this information via the reporting process described in this policy, only to those people who need to be aware of it.

## 2.5 Roles, Responsibilities and Procedures

It is the responsibility of all managers to ensure that staff and others for whom they have line-management responsibilities are made aware of the policy and that the systems and procedures required to operate the policy effectively are in place. It is the responsibility of all staff to fulfil their part.

All staff and stakeholders with a reason to believe that a child is being exploited or abused or that their safety is compromised as a result of the actions of staff or other actors is dutybound to report the matter immediately. This will enable the relevant authorities to take timely action to save the child. The relevant recipients of these complaints is the human resource department or line managers in the field stations (Mbarara, Gulu, Adjumani and Tororo). The designate of the SMT or nominated staff at the head office will be responsible for receiving the complaints at the head office in Kampala.

### 2.5.1 Roles and Responsibilities of ACORD Uganda Extended Management team Members:

- 1) Ensure child safe recruitment, including screening of all staff;
- 2) Monitor and ensure compliance with Staff Code of Conduct
- 3) Induct new staff, including information and training on child safeguarding;
- 4) Arrange regular child safeguarding refresher training;
- 5) Conduct screening and risk assessment of partners;
- 6) Ensure monitoring and supervision of interactions between supporters and children/communities;
- 7) Undertake child protection risk assessment as part of program design;
- 8) Monitor child protection risks during program implementation;
- 9) Undertake humanitarian response in accordance with the UN Global Protection Cluster's Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Emergencies;
- 10) Ensure information held about children is safely stored;
- 11) Report to authorities suspected or known instances of harm or abuse in line with ACORD's procedures.

### 2.5.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Board members, staff, volunteers and Interns:

- Comply with this policy and Staff Code of Conduct;
- Follow the Child Safeguarding Procedures;
- Be alert to child safeguarding risks and incidents in their work; and



- Identify and seek continued understanding of child safeguarding through training

### **2.5.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Partner Organizations (including organizations engaged as contractors and consultants)**

ACORD Uganda acknowledges that the work we do is associated with child protection risks. We are committed to doing everything in our power to identify and minimize preventable risk, and mitigate the impacts of incidents when they occur.

In the interest of preventing risk, ACORD Uganda conducts a detailed child protection risk assessment as part of the development of all new projects. This risk assessment is reviewed during quarterly project monitoring.

In line with ACORD'S Partner Engagement Policy, all new organizational partnerships will include child protection screening. Partnership agreements include requirements to provide evidence of child safeguarding policies and active procedures and or a commitment to develop these with support from ACORD Uganda within six months of engagement.

Partner Organisations will:

- Comply with screening and risk assessment; and
- Provide or develop child safeguarding policies with assistance from ACORD Uganda;

Individual consultants and contractors will:

- Comply with recruitment and screening procedures (for their staff earmarked to work with ACORD)

Commit to and comply with our Child Safeguarding Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and Child Safeguarding Procedures.

### **2.5.4 Procedures for Investigation:**

#### *Committees for handling Cases of Child abuse*

Each of ACORD Uganda's offices shall identify two focal point staff to handle child protection related cases and other issues. The focal points will constitute an internal committee that will inform Senior Management of any cases arising as well as undertake independent investigations for any complaints registered from the community and staff.

At the board level one of the members will be nominated to handle child protection related matters and they will interface with the head office child protection internal committee when an appeal is submitted to board of Directors.

### *Internal investigation and response*

All allegations of child abuse and exploitation by staff during the process of work will be investigated by an internal committee and against the set standards in the code of conduct, this policy as well as the relevant national legislation. The process should last not more than five days and should as far as possible be fair and confidential. It shall be the duty of the human resource department to ensure that these cases are traced and followed up till their conclusion. In the cases of a violation of a criminal matter, the contract of the responsible staff member shall lead to immediate suspension pending investigation of the matter. Termination or other disciplinary actions shall be instituted in line with ACORD Uganda's human resource guidelines and this policy.

Disciplinary plans shall include the following;

- Report the case to the child protection authority /police where the case committed is a capital offence of rape, defilement, physical harm of a minor.
- Ensure referral and support for the child (in terms of safety, health, psychological support),
- Keep a record of cases that have been handled on file to ensure proper conclusion of the matter.
- Take precaution to also put into consideration the respect of rights of the alleged victims of the crime as well as the offender.
- All reports made on the investigation will be considered in good faith and in the interest of the child regardless of the outcomes.
- Ensure that personnel who is found to have made false allegations against another will also be subject to disciplinary action should the outcomes of the investigation prove that the report was malicious.

### *External investigations – for criminal offence*

Criminal offenses committed against children shall be dealt with in line with the national legal laws and guidelines. The case shall be reported to the probation officer and police by the child protection officer or a representative of the child protection internal committee. The Child protection officer shall follow up to ensure safety of the affected child and brief the internal child protection committee on the outcomes to enable them take an internal disciplinary decision.

The plans undertaken to handle the criminal case will be the same as presented in handling internal criminal matters.

### **2.5.5 Decision making on handling cases of child protection/safeguarding concerns**

ACORD Uganda believes in social justice and therefore decisions made with regard to child protection and safeguarding will base on a fair investigative process that is confidential and timely. Disciplinary action decisions are made by the Senior management team. In not more than 3 days of receiving the investigation report. The

decision is communicated in confidence to the affected parties.

If the affected party is not satisfied with the decision made by management, s/he can appeal to the child protection focal point of the board to re-examine the evidence and make a final decision on the matter.

Decisions may include:

- Verbal/written warning, apology, reminder about the child protection policy – for simple cases
- Job reassignment/rotation, suspension for serious and repetitive welfare cases
- Dismissal for very serious and criminal offences.
- Hand over to police for further investigation and prosecution
- Deduction of salary and allowances in order to compensate the victim or meet their costs where appropriate.

Decisions shall be made in accordance with the Uganda Employment Act and internal human resource disciplinary procedures.

However, it is essential where concerns or suspicions do exist, to focus on the welfare of the child or children involved and to ask 'what if I am right?' In most incidents of child abuse, it is usually the case that someone other than 'the abused' and 'the abuser' is aware of the situation or at least suspects there is abuse. It is essential that anyone connected to ACORD who suspects or knows of abuse raises their concerns in line with the process described in this document.

## 2.6 Responsibility under this Policy

Responsibility of effective enforcement of this policy falls on all stakeholders, staff, management and board of ACORD as stipulated below;

Accountable	Role
Board of Directors	Ensure that ACORD Uganda work protects the rights of children, review and approve the policy. Hold Managers accountable to the policy and makes decisions regarding disciplinary action against offenders if they are senior managers.
Human Resource and Administration Manager	Ensure ACORD Uganda human resource management policies and practices protect children and that sensitization for all staff is provided. Ensure routine monitoring and tracking of compliance and implementation of the policy.

Managers (Senior Management and Extended Management Team)	<p>Promote awareness and understanding of the child policy among staff</p> <p>Ensure personnel have knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for their job responsibility to provide support and protection to the children.</p> <p>Ensure personnel are held accountable to the policy</p> <p>Provide leadership for planning, budgeting and resource mobilization and allocation for enforcement of the policy.</p> <p>Makes decisions regarding disciplinary action against Offenders</p>
Child protection lead /committee at head office	Receive and record concerns and ensures that they are documented and followed to their final conclusion
Child protection focal persons at field offices	Receive and record concerns
Community child protection focal points	Receive and record concerns
All personnel	Understand, advocate and apply the policy to their work as well as their personal lives.

### 3. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

The policy shall be implemented through the following actions below;

- Review and approval by senior and extended management
- Review and endorsement by the board of directors
- Policy disseminated and communicated to all staff, board members, volunteers, partners and children (for those with direct contact Setting up of structures at the different levels. Specifically, information materials including friendly versions of the policy made and where necessary, key sections of the policy e.g. code of conduct, contacts of child protection focal persons, commitment and case management flow chart
- Annual implementation and monitoring of the policy.

### 4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

ACORD Uganda acknowledges that the work we do is associated with child protection risks. We are committed to doing everything in our power to identify and minimize preventable risk, and mitigate the impacts of incidents when they occur.

In the interest of preventing risk, we conduct a detailed child protection risk assessment as part of the development of all new projects. This risk assessment is reviewed during quarterly project monitoring. Child protection monitoring shall also be undertaken during project reviews to address emerging risks, staff appraisals shall include aspects of assessing compliance of staff.

In line with our Partner Engagement Policy, all new organizational partnerships will include child protection screening. Partnership agreements with other implementing partners shall include requirements to provide evidence of child safeguarding policies and active procedures and or a commitment to develop these with support from ACORD within six months of engagement.

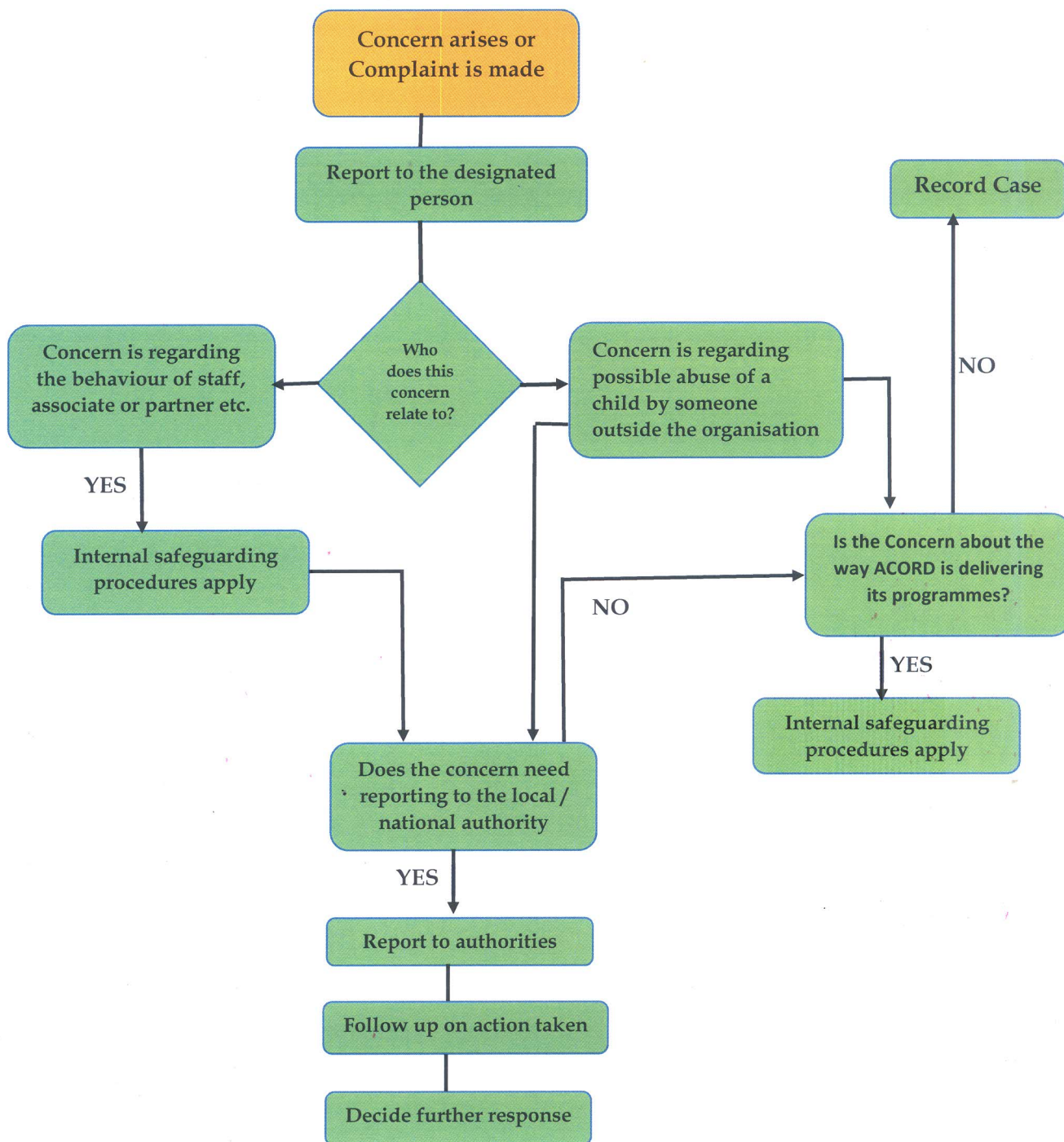
### 5. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The policy is subject to review depending on the changes happening with regard to child protection. It shall be reviewed within three years or as and when it becomes necessary and dictated by changing circumstances.

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## 6. ANNEXES

### Annex 1: ACORD Uganda Reporting flow chart





**Annex 2: ACORD Code of conduct** *(refer to organizational Human resource manual)*

**Annex 3: Statutory declaration by staff/ Human Resource**

I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the contents of this Policy and what is expected of me as I undertake my roles as a staff member of ACORD. I declare that i have not been convicted of or not currently suspected of any criminal or other offense related to child rights in my household, community and my country. I declare that there is no element which can affect my suitability to work with children and that I am aware of the seriousness if this declaration and that any untrue declaration may be considered as gross misconduct.

#### Annex 4: Commitment by contractors and Partners

The partner or service provider/contractor;

- Understands and complies with the key principles described in section 2.4 of the CPP
- Commits to taking action immediately they suspect or have a reason to believe that an employee or any of their activities might be violating the key principles
- Commits to notifying ACORD Uganda staff or any other responsible officers (police/probation office) in case any of the staff are accused, arrested, or charged of a criminal offence relating to child abuse
- Acknowledges that any contract or agreement entered with ACORD Uganda will be terminated /halted should there be any serious or recurrent breach of the principles of the Child Protection Policy;
- Allows ACORD Uganda delegated officers to assess the partner's compliance to the principles of CPP
- Ensures that their work at all times protect the rights of children.

#### Annex 5: Communication, storage and Content publishing.

- All content should be stored and shared using the data room, on sensitive information such as Child viral load; the database is only accessible to authorized persons. The database is to provide security and effective controls over access and correct levels of information and to ensure that these principles and practices are adhered to. Content not yet stored into the systems must be carefully stored on safe drawers and access is limited to only authorized staff.
- All forms of external communication whether it be media, marketing, donor engagement or social media need to adhere to the child protection policy and guidelines.
- Staff must not accept any friend requests from children engaged with ACORD under any circumstances. Parents/caretakers are asked to inform ACORD immediately if it appears that a member of staff has accepted a friend request All content posted online should have downloads disabled.
- Publications in any media must never include a child's full name, school or precise location that could lead to the identification of a child. Location should be kept broad e.g. Susan of Northern Uganda.
- Do not publish pictures which include school names in background or school badges on shirts, maps, etc..., that could identify the child and location.
- Check that fully informed consent consistent has been gathered before publication of case studies, photos or videos using on any platform.



- If any staff members find any content published by ACORD-U that contravenes the practices of this policy, the relevant line manager must be informed immediately.

**Annex 6: OVCMIS Form 009**

**Annex 7: ACORD Uganda Child safeguarding & protection Risk Assessment Tool**

Risk assessment:								
Risk no.	Who is at risk?	What factors place them at risk?	What is the risk?	What controls are in place?	Risk rating H,M,L	What additional agreed controls are to be put in place?	By whom?	By when?
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								

**Annex 8: Checklist for recruitment and selection**

1. When you are designing the job description, analyse the role and think about the issues of child safeguarding and risk in that job:  
 What contact with children will the job involve?  
 Will the employee have unsupervised access to children, or hold a position of trust?  
 What other sort of contact may the person have with children (eg, via email, telephone, letter, internet)?
2. Develop clear job descriptions, terms of reference/role briefs for all posts including where short-term contracts, consultants are being recruited.
3. Make sure that the selection-criteria outlines the relevant experience needed if the post involves direct work with children.
4. Make sure that the commitment to keeping children safe is included in details of any post sent to prospective job candidates.
5. Develop application forms that ask for consent to gain information on a person's past convictions/pending disciplinary proceedings.
6. Ask for documentation to confirm identity and proof of relevant qualifications.

7. Make sure you have a well-planned interview process and ensure the interviewers have the relevant experience of and knowledge about child safeguarding and best practice.
8. Include some specific questions in the interview that draw out people's attitudes and values in relation to the protection of children. Can they give examples of where they have acted to protect a child, what they learnt from this, what impact it has had their current practice?
9. Take up to three references including some from previous employees or others who have knowledge of the candidate's experience and suitability to work with children Adapted from Nolan, P (2004) <i>The role of HR in Child Protection, People in Aid</i>
10. Verify the identity of referees.
11. Conduct as many background checks as possible.
12. Consider the use of probationary periods of employment to ensure suitability once in post.

### Annex 9: ACORD Uganda Principles and Guidelines on Communication Related to Children

#### 1. We will respect the dignity of the subject.

We will always seek permission when taking photographs or video footage of individuals. Consent for taking and using photographs and case studies will be sought from parents and those with parental responsibility, or from the children directly when they are of sufficient age and understanding.

Special consideration will be given to photographs depicting children with disabilities, refugees and those in situations of conflict and disasters, to accurately portray context and maintain dignity.

Wherever possible, we will explain to the subject the likely use of the images.

We will never take pictures of people who say they don't want to be photographed.

#### 2. We will not exploit the subject.

We will not manipulate the subject in a way which distorts the reality of the situation (e.g. we will not ask them to cry for the camera).

If necessary to protect confidentiality, the names of children and families will be changed. Never will a child's full name or contact details be published.

#### 3. We aim to provide a balanced portrayal of reality in the developing world.

We will avoid stereotypes (e.g. Western aid worker tends helpless victim). We aim to show people helping and working for themselves, not as victims.

4. We will use images truthfully.

Case histories/descriptions will not be fabricated, although they may be adapted or edited to preserve the dignity and confidentiality of the subject.

We will not use an image of one thing and describe it as, or imply it is, an image of another (e.g. We do not use an image of one project to illustrate the work of another). Where possible, we will use a balance of images (e.g. positive and negative) to reflect the reality of a situation.

If we use an image in a general way (e.g. illustrating a project similar to the one being described), we will make this clear in the caption.

We will not use an image in a way which deliberately misinterprets the true situation. If an image represents an exceptional situation, we will not use it in a way which suggests it is generally true.

We aim to be confident that, to the best of our knowledge, the subject would regard the image and its use as truthful if s/he saw it.

5. We will maintain standards of taste and decency consistent with our values and those of our supporters.

We will not use images which are erotic, pornographic or obscene.

Images of dead or naked bodies will only be used in exceptional circumstances.

We will not make gratuitous use of images of extreme suffering.

6. We will respect the views of our overseas staff and partner organisations.

We will be sensitive to the concerns and advice of our overseas staff and partner organisations in our gathering and use of visual material.

7. In disaster situations, we will treat in a positive manner the people whom we are helping.

In any publicity material dealing with disasters, we will follow the policy in the Code of Conduct of the International Committee of the Red Cross information: "In our

information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects". In doing this, we shall portray an objective image of disasters, in which the capacities and aspirations of those affected are highlighted, not just their vulnerabilities and fears

We will not lose respect for those affected, but treat them as equal partners in action.

We will co-operate with the media in order to enhance public response, but we will not allow external or internal demands for publicity to take precedence.

8. We will maintain high technical standards.

We aim to use only high-quality images.

We may use digital manipulation of images for creative or iconic effect, but not in a way which deliberately and misleadingly distorts the reality of the situation depicted. We will not crop an image in a way which misleadingly distorts the reality of the situation.

In video editing, we will not misleadingly distort the reality of the situation.

9. We will maintain a suitable photo library.

Images will be current and appropriate.

All images will be kept centrally and fully documented.

Old images will be archived.

**Guidelines for obtaining communication materials.**

Discuss the use of communication materials at the beginning of a programme or project with children and communities – do not wait until the material is needed.


Obtain general consent for the gathering of communication materials at the beginning of a programme or project, and agree with children and communities the general messages and types of images that would be appropriate.

Obtain images and any other private information for publication purposes in a safe and confidential manner.

Children should be prepared for specific interviews prior to being interviewed.

Pictures of children should always be decent and respectful.

All children must be appropriately dressed according to their country of origin. In countries where children wear few items of clothing be particularly careful about the images you choose.



Recorded images should focus on an activity, and where possible feature groups of children rather than individuals

Make sure that photographers and film-makers are not allowed to spend time with or have access to children without supervision.

Permission for the taking of photographs should be sought prior to events. Children that do not have permission for photographs to be taken should not be included in individual or group photographs. Where possible, event photographs should be taken in group settings at prearranged times.

Any complaints or concerns about inappropriate or intrusive images should be reported and recorded, as with any other child safeguarding concern.

### **Guidelines for publishing information**

Only use the first names of children. Be careful not to reveal too many details about where they live, their school, hobbies etc.

Ask for children's permission to use their photographs.

Get their parent/guardian's consent, and ensure everyone understands how and where the images will be used. (See Appendix 3; Example Consent Form.)

Where the risk of harm and stigma is high, take mitigating steps; for example, by concealing faces, using pseudonyms and vague geographical locations, and by non-disclosure of personal information (eg. HIV status).

Try to take images that represent a broad range of children – boys and girls of various ages, abilities and ethnic groups.

On websites, make sure any images you use are not tagged with the location of the child.

Individuals or organisations requesting the use of resources depicting children, such as personal information, videos or photographs, should sign an agreement concerning the proper use of such materials. Failure to adhere to the terms could result in the termination of permission and the return of information.

Pictures, materials and personal information regarding children should be held in a secure area where practicable, and every caution should be exercised to ensure its security.

Access to these must be by way of permission only.

**Annex 10: Referral Form**

<b>Child's name:</b>	<b>Case no:</b>
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<b>Referral details:</b>		
Time:	Date:	
Place:		
<b>Referrer's details:</b>		
Name:		
Address:		
Contact telephone no:		
Occupation:		
Relationship to child		
<b>Child's details (where available):</b>		
Name:		
Age:	Date of birth:	Gender:



Employment details: Nature of job:

Identify if ACORD Uganda or partner agency is the employer:

Relationship, if any, to child:

Current location of alleged perpetrator:

**Current safety of child including location:**

**Has emergency medical attention been required?**

**Provided by:**

**Who else knows? Include contact details.**

Agencies:

Family members or other individuals:

**Actions taken to date** e.g. Referral to police, children's services, social welfare, other. Give contact details and date and time of action.

**Referral taken by (where possible, line manager):**

Name:



Position and Location:

Date: Signature (on hard copy):

**Action to be taken**

**Decision made by Country Director for immediate action as agreed in Child Safeguarding Policy?** (Please specify who is to do what and when and give names and contact details of people to be contacted.)

Referral to police (if not, why not?) Yes/No

Referral to Local Authority for child protection / welfare  
Yes/No

Other action required to ensure child not at further risk from alleged perpetrator:

Referral for medical treatment/ to meet health needs Yes/No

Signature of person arranging above action: