



ACORD UGANDA

**PREVENTION OF
SEXUAL ABUSE AND
EXPLOITATION POLICY**

AGENCY FOR COOPERATION IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (ACORD-U)

Plot 1272, Block 15 Ggaba Road, Nsambya.

P. O. Box 280, Kampala, Uganda

Tel: +256 414 267 667

Website: www.acorduganda.org

E-mail: acordU@acorduganda.org

Facebook: /ACORD-UGANDA

Twitter: @AcordUganda

Signed: Bajenja

Name: Ellen K Bajenja

ACORD Uganda Country Director
Secretary to the Board of Directors

Jan 2019



Signed: Damulira

Name: DUNSTAN DDAMULIRA P

Title: DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | 2 |
| Key Definitions..... | 3 |
| Scope of the PSEA Policy | 4 |
| Policy statement | 5 |
| Core Principles | 5 |
| Prohibited Conduct..... | 6 |
| ACORD-U's commitment: | 6 |
| Investigation of Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment Complaints..... | 7 |
| Reprisals and Retaliation | 7 |
| Association to Other Policies..... | 7 |
| Safeguarding Acknowledgement | 9 |

Abbreviations and Acronyms

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| ACORD (U) | Agency for Cooperation in Research and Development (Uganda). |
| BOD | Board of Directors |
| Dr | Doctor |
| MEAL | Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning |
| OVC | Orphan and Other Vulnerable Children |
| PSEA | Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse |
| PTIPA | Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Abuse |
| SEA | Sexual Exploitation and Abuse |

Key Definitions

SEA: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Sexual Exploitation: "Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual Abuse: "The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Transactional Sex: The exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours.

Sexual Harassment: A person sexually harasses another person if they make an unwelcome sexual advance or an unwelcome request for sexual favours or engage in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. This applies to all circumstances in which a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the subject of the request or conduct would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Harassment: includes any unwelcome verbal, physical, or visual conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or their relatives, friends, or associates. Harassment may also have the purpose or intention to interfere with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment, or otherwise affect an individual's employment status or opportunities.

Fraternization: Any relationship that involves, or appears to involve, partiality, preferential treatment or improper use of rank or position including but not limited to voluntary sexual behaviour. It could include sexual behaviour not amounting to intercourse, a close and emotional relationship involving public displays of affection or private intimacy and the public expression of intimate relations.

Scope of the PSEA Policy

Humanitarian Aid and development workers are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal and professional conduct at all times to protect beneficiaries of assistance.

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) contradicts the principles upon which humanitarian and development action is based. SEA inflicts harm on those whom the assistance agencies are obligated to protect, as well as jeopardizes the credibility of all assistance agencies.

All ACORD-U employees and related personnel are required to behave irreproachably with the project beneficiaries or members of the community, using particular care with the most vulnerable classes: minors, women, the elderly and social outcasts.

ACORD-U commits to create a zero-tolerance organizational culture against complacency and impunity on SEA.

ACORD-U Management, among the others, is expected to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse. ACORD-U management staff must be familiar with and enforce this policy, being proactive in overseeing their team.

Through the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy, ACORD-U clearly expresses its determination to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and members of the community by ACORD-U employee and all related personnel.

ACORD-U PSEA policy sets minimum standards to be followed to protect beneficiaries and members of the community from sexual exploitation and abuse.

The policy is principally addressed to all ACORD-U employees and related personnel included in the following categories:

- Board of Directors and ACORD-U Management;
- All the employees and collaborators in all ACORD-U structures and projects in Uganda
- Non ACORD-U entities and their employees and individuals who have entered into partnership, sub-grant or sub-recipient's agreement with ACORD-U, committees, associations of any sort – including their members and staff.
- Consultants and other freelance persons who act on behalf of ACORD-U on the basis of service contracts (understood as consultants and facilitators of intellectual services);
- All persons acting voluntarily on behalf of ACORD-U;
- Suppliers of any sort of goods, services, or works, including current and potential suppliers.
- All the other people not included in the above mentioned categories who have signed a contract with ACORD-U.

The principles set forth in this policy apply all times, during and outside the office hours and during the periods of leave, with no exceptions.

Policy statement

SEA are a violation of ACORD-U Code of Conduct. ACORD-U does not tolerate any form of sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse, as well as non-sexual abuse of power perpetrated by ACORD-U employees and related personnel against any individual regardless of age, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or ethnic origin. ACORD-U commits to do the needful for preventing programmes having any negative effects such as SEA perpetuated by ACORD-U employees and related personnel against beneficiaries and members of the community. ACORD-U takes seriously all the complaints and concerns about sexual exploitation and abuse and it initiates rigours investigation of complaints that indicates a possible violation of this policy and the ACORD-U Code of Conduct. It is the responsibility of all ACORD-U managers to ensure the delivery of this policy and to promote it as relevant in all aspects of their work, to hold themselves and others to account and to help create a safe environment for all.

Core Principles

- I. Sexual exploitation and abuse by ACORD-U employees and related personnel constitute acts of sexual harassment misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary actions and/or termination of employment contract within the applicable and current regulations.
- II. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence and in no way shall ignorance of the age of the person be accepted as a justification. A specific Child protection Policy further sets the principles and the operationalizing guidelines for guaranteeing children safeguarding in all domains of ACORD-U transactions.
- III. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited.
- IV. Sexual relationships between ACORD-U staff and beneficiaries or members of the community are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of the organization.
- V. Where ACORD-U employee and related personnel develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or by a fellow worker, whether the individual works for ACORD-U or for other organization, partners, suppliers or other related stakeholders, he or she must report such concerns through the means and tools available within the Organization.
- VI. The Supervisory Body must be informed about all the concerns and suspicions, including rumours in good faith arisen about sexual exploitation and abuse.

- VII. All ACORD-U staff members, whatever their levels are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of the Code of conduct.

Prohibited Conduct

Examples of prohibited harassment conduct include, but are not limited to:

- Any form of sexual or non-sexual bullying, derogatory language, intimidation, insults, or threatening behaviour.
- Sexist, sexually suggestive, or intimidating remarks or behaviour.
- Unwelcome sexual advances. Examples of unwelcome sexual advances include: Lewd jokes or sexual anecdotes or innuendos;
- Rude or offensive sexual gestures.
- Inappropriate touching or contact.
- Unwelcome calls, letters, or emails.
- Questions about past sexual history.
- Jokes about sexual preference or activity.
- Staring in a suggestive or offensive manner.
- Sharing sexually inappropriate images or videos;
- Inappropriate comments about a person's clothing, appearance, or body parts.
- Offensive comments about gender identity or sexual orientation;
- Sexually oriented "kidding," "teasing," or "practical jokes".
- Explicit sexual propositions.
- Requests for sexual acts or favours (with or without accompanying coercion, promises, or threats of reciprocal favours or action).
- Foul or obscene language or gestures.
- Display of foul, obscene, or sexually explicit printed or visual material, including pictures, greeting cards, articles, books, magazines, photos, or cartoons.
- Physical contact such as patting, pinching, or intentionally brushing against another's body
- Slurs, jokes, or degrading comments concerning gender, gender-specific traits, age, race, colour, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.

ACORD-U's commitment:

- Create a safe working culture for all those whom ACORD-U serves and those working for and representing the organisation.
- Ensure that all concerns or allegations of sexual harassment, abuse or exploitation are responded to in a timely and appropriate manner and there are multiple channels through which staff and other stakeholders can raise concerns.
- Ensure zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse in the organisation through robust prevention and response work, offering support to survivors and victims and holding those responsible to account.

- Always adopt a survivor centric approach, that respects the confidentiality and decision making rights of survivors where possible and appropriate to do so.
- Build a culture where all those whom ACORD-U serves and who work for ACORD-U feel empowered to insist on non-discriminatory and respectful behaviour from each other, where poor behaviour is not accepted, and where power is not abused.
- Be transparent about safeguarding issues occurring within ACORD-U, sensitive in our communications about our practices and open to learning and improving.

Investigation of Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment Complaints

All allegations of harassment and discrimination will be taken seriously. ACORD Uganda will undertake a prompt, discreet investigation of all reported incidents of sexual harassment and/or retaliation, ensuring confidentiality to the maximum extent possible. All managers, supervisors, and employees have an obligation to cooperate with any investigation. Should the investigation result in a finding of misconduct, ACORD Uganda will take appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action. Any employee found to have engaged in harassment will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination.

Reprisals and Retaliation

ACORD Uganda will not permit any reprisals or retaliation against an employee who reports known or suspected harassment. In addition, ACORD Uganda will not tolerate reprisals or retaliation for initiating or assisting in any investigation, action, or proceeding resulting from a harassment claim.

Prohibited reprisals and retaliation include but are not limited to:

- Demotion
- Suspension
- Failure to hire or consider for hire
- Failure to give equal consideration in making employment decisions
- Failure to make impartial employment recommendations
- Adversely affecting working conditions or otherwise denying any employment benefit to an individual

Association to Other Policies

ACORD Uganda has a series of policies that support a safe workplace and project implementation environment. All staff, consultants, members of the Board of Trustees, sub-grantees, and other stakeholders must adhere to the organization wide and location-specific policies, many of which include language that contribute to SEA. These policies include:

- Code of Ethical Conduct

- Confidential Information
- Child Safe guarding and Protection
- Human Resource management
- Gender Equality
- Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment



Safeguarding Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I understand ACORD Uganda's:

- Child Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policy Code of Conduct
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Policy
- Child Protection and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment Reporting Process
- Gender Policy
- Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and Abuse (PTIPA) guidelines

I agree to comply with the Policies, Code of Conduct and Reporting Process.

I understand that a breach of the Policies, Code of Conduct or Reporting Process may provide grounds for my engagement with ACORD Uganda to be terminated. I also understand that a breach of the policies or Code of Conduct may result in criminal prosecution.

I understand that it is my responsibility as a person engaged by ACORD Uganda to avoid actions that are sexually abusive or exploitative or could be construed as such.

Signature

Date

Name

Title

Company (*in case of service provider*)

ⁱ Global Standard Operating Procedures, May 2016

ⁱⁱ Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Inter-agency cooperation in community-based complaint mechanisms

ⁱⁱⁱ The six Core Principles are from the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.