



# Friends of Humanity Uganda

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## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FOR FRIENDS OF HUMANITY UGANDA.**

### **Introduction:**

The Government of Uganda enacted the Child Protection Policy and this has been reviewed with amendments by the Ministry of Gender and Social Development from time to time Friends of Humanity Uganda (FOHU) which is fully registered by the government of Uganda as a CBO (Community Based Organization) had to adopted and implement these national child protection policies which the charity has tried to customize to its operations.

One of the core values of FOHU is to embrace the intrinsic worth of each child, create a positive environment in which children grow up with assured hope, rights and social justice.

The policy provides a frame work for addressing the issues related to children's rights and well-being in a holistic and coordinated manner.

### **This policy especially caters for children in four major aspects of life.**

- (a) Child's health and survival
- (b) Child's education and development
- (c) Child's care, rights and protection
- (d) Child's participation and being heard (being listened to)

### **Key Policy Objectives.**

- (i) To strengthen and provide certain key services to vulnerable children and their families and ensure good and friendly health services.
- (ii) Ensure food security and proper nutrition for good body growth and development.
- (iii) Ensure accessibility to quality education and holistic learning opportunity
- (iv) To provide care and secure legal services for those deprived of certain rights and services.
- (v) Create awareness and capacity for effective response against any moral abuse like sexual exploitation, early marriages, violence, child labor, neglect and denial of sharing family properties.
- (vi) Ensure that children are valued as key stakeholders of the family and society and inculcate in them positive cultures and beliefs.
- (vii) Ensure that the staff and service providers serving under FOHU do not exploit and abuse children whom they are serving.

Therefore, the child protection policy for FOHU is focused at promoting a child's holistic development, strive for the promotion of his best interests and create a positive environment where hope, social justice, respect and acceptability are paramount.

### **Child Protection Policy Priority Intervention And Implementation Standards.**

#### **1. Discrimination:**

FOHU will ensure that children under its care and those within the reach of its knowledge are not discriminated against. This charity will not withstand any form of discrimination based on religion, gender, ethnicity, nationality, personal physical characteristics like disabled people etc.

Discrimination also in offering program services, demeaning or labeling or stigmatization based on one's health status or economic background are totally not acceptable in the operations of FOHU.

The Charity will ensure equity of all children and the charity will stand in to defend this; using the policy adopted in line with the institutions of Government. Equally the charity staff caught in this vice will be disciplined to exemplary levels.

#### **2. Harassment and moral abuse;**

These include very negative comments that demean a person, offensive statements or some physical harm. They are further divided to include sexual harassment which could be conduct of sexual nature, sexual advances, sexual orientations and jokes. Also sexual exploitation where one may use his/her position to exert sexual pressure is also a category which is highly detested by FOHU.

Therefore, in line with the FOHU Child Protection Policy and the Uganda government position on this issue, these acts are totally prohibited, unethical and are a violation of not only children's rights but against general human rights standards. FOHU stands in to denounce such for the good of its beneficiaries.

#### **3. Child Abuse, Neglect And Safety:**

This is the kind of life faced by children which exposes them to harm. This mainly occurs where the parents and caretakers fail to give or where they withdraw their protection to children under their authority. Such may include child labor, severe punishments, abandoning of children, exposing children to adult acts e.g sexual union.

The position of FOHU on this is that it has no compromising position as the culprits must face the wrath of the law and thus help in building the positive future of children under this charity.

#### **4. Education:**

A number of children have always remained backward, ignorant and generally less privileged in matters of getting an opportunity to open their minds (State of Tabura rasa)

The target of FOHU is to ensure equitable access to quality education for optimal development and intellectual stimulation. FOHU will ensure that it implements systems that will address social, cognitive and emotional development. For children with special education needs, FOHU commits itself to providing appropriate learning devices and equipments like hearing aids, reading glasses etc.

#### **5. Plight of Children at Family and Community level.**

It is noted that some children are denied some rights and privileges at family and community level. The majority under this category are those who are from very venerable families, orphans, those under the care of relatives and other caregivers. Such children are often denied of sharing family properties and not recognised as bonafide members of the family.

FOHU will ensure that the plight of such children are fought for and use its position, community and legal procedures to ensure that such children's rights and recognition are not infringed on.

#### **How to receive allegations from the victim of an abuse**

Receiving allegations of abuse from a child requires sensitivity and a child-centric approach. Here are some ways in which FOHU will facilitate this.

**(i) Child Friendly Reporting Channels:**

Providing easily accessible and child friendly reporting channels such as online forms, or designated personnel trained in handling such cases. The designated personnel is a very well trained person to handle such sensitive reports and can provide support and assistance to the victim.

**(ii) Anonymous reporting platforms**

At FOHU, we implement anonymous reporting platforms such as suggestion boxes and other secretive platform where children feel more comfortable coming forward especially if they fear retaliation.

**(iii) Peer support network**

FOHU established peer support networks within schools or communities where children can confide in trusted peers who can then report the allegations to adults or authorities on their behalf. Actually, this is one of the most commonly used channel as children tend to open up to such cohorts (peers) comfortably and with ease.

**(iv) Child helpline**

We collaborate with child help lines staffed with trained counselors who can receive reports of abuse from children and provide immediate emotional support and guidance of next step.

**(v) Online chat services;**

For children who can access online platforms, online chats with trained professionals are forms of receiving a disclosure of an abuse. Children can use this opportunity to communicate in real time and report an abuse in a secure and confidential manner.

By implementing these additional strategies, the organization enhances its ability to receive allegations from children under abuse and then provide them with the required support and assistance as may be required.

### **Process of Handling Allegation**

Friends of Humanity Uganda (FOHU) has safety standards meant to be a benchmark for protection of children who are under its support. For any emerging report of child abuse and given the different allegations involved, a well defined procedure and course of action is vital in addressing the allegations at hand.

#### **Step One: Reporting and Disclosure of Allegation**

FOHU being a charity that serves children who are at the age of 12 up to 25, finds some relative ease in sensitizing them to know any kind of abuse, how to have it disclosed and the channels of disclosure. In circumstances where care givers or any other responsible citizen witnesses or come to know any alleged abuse, they then step in to report that incident.

Reporting any allegation of child abuse by the victim or any other person with moral responsibility is paramount. People to receive the breaking news of this report may include the staff or member of the Board of Directors of FOHU, the probation office which is the line department, under the ministry of gender, the police or to register the case in the courts of law.

#### **Step Two: Respond to an Emergence and have safety planning.**

When the child has an immediate harm or at a very high risk of harm, FOHU has a procedure of going over it as given hereunder;-

- (a) Ensuring that the child's immediate health and safety are supported by the appropriate FOHU staff or a member of Board of Directors.
- (b) Be close or even stay with the child if the situation warrants so and also if the child is comfortable being in company of the FOHU staff. Therefore, the child can even be removed from their home if there is an immediate threat of harm. Temporally placement with relatives, foster care etc may be arranged until the situation is resolved.
- (c) Ensure that, the alleged offender does not have access to the victim (abused child)
- (d) Arrange for an urgent medical attention and where necessary, provide first Aid.
- (e) Take reasonable steps to preserve evidence such as clothes, the scene or environment of the incident, or exhibits until the police and other relevant authorities visits that scene.

#### **Step Three: Make initial assessment and validate the allegations.**

Upon receiving , a complaint and after responding to the emergence where it warranted so, the appropriate FOHU staff or a board of trustees' member will go for a deeper assessment to determine the level of the risk. This will involve gathering more information.

The initial assessment involves attaining inform from the victim and the one reporting or any other knowledgeable person. The one receiving the complaint should;-

- (i) Listen to the child carefully, and let him/her use his own words to explain the occurrence.
- (ii) Reassure the child that what he is saying is being taken seriously and that what he has done to speak out is a right thing.
- (iii) Promise the child that he will be safe and have the matter handled up to its conclusion.
- (iv) Complete the incident form with the child or with the one who reported the incident.

Note that for any sensitive allegations, probing and conversation, during this assessment level should be done under seclusion (in a private place) and the following should be adhered to by the one investigating (The one whom he reported to)

- (i) Remain calm
- (ii) Be empathetic to the feelings
- (iii) Validate the concerns.
- (iv) Let the complainant provide appropriate details of the incident.
- (v) Outline the actions the organization is going to take.
- (vi) Inform him that the organization may make referrals for more and productive intervention.
- (vii) If found necessary, inform him and those concerned about the allegations, provide them with the contacts of the investigative police officer or court for proper coordination.

#### **Step Four: Medical and Mental Health Evaluation.**

Part of the Health and medical services were handled in step Two. But this was merely for Emergence with first Aid being provided. However now, a more comprehensive medical and mental attention may be necessary when the child suffered physical or emotional harm. Such a person should receive medical and mental evaluation followed by an appropriate treatment.

Examination by health care professionals who are trained to identify signs of abuse or neglect will be asked to take on this. Also, a well trained councilor will be brought in to have a personal interaction with the victim and have different therapy sessions until that victim gains mental stability, if such was prevalent.

#### **Step Five: Legal Proceedings.**

If the investigations dictates that the abuse or neglect has occurred and confirmed by police or any investigative arm where applicable, the legal proceedings gets initiated. This could involve criminal charges against the perpetrator, as well as civil proceedings to protect the child's welfare status and Health

#### **Step Six: Support Services.**

Throughout the process, the child and their family; where it becomes relevant, are provided with support services to address their needs. The support should come in for, counseling, therapy, treatment costs and other resources to help in preventing future incidences of similar forms and nature in regard to child abuse.

### **Step Seven: Follow-up and Monitoring.**

After addressing immediate crisis follow-ups and monitoring are essential to ensure the ongoing safety and well being of the child. Relevant agencies like the gender liaison office of probation and the Board of Directors will always conduct periodic visits for assessments to ensure that the child is receiving adequate care and support.

### **Step Eight: Prevention & Education.**

In the operation of FOHU, efforts will be made to prevent future incidents of child abuse or neglect; This will be done through sensitizations, education, community outreaches, and trainings. This is purposed to raise awareness about the dangers of child abuse, its signs and then promoting positive parenting practices.

By following these steps, the organization will achieve its goal of child's safety and respond effectively to the allegations of child abuse or neglect thus ensuring safety and well being of children under the care of FOHU.

### **Child Protection Policy Intervention channels: Who to Report to.**

At Friends of Humanity Uganda, several authorities and bodies are involved in the child protection and welfare. Intervention mechanisms are meant to ensure that justice is achieved.

Where to report to also depends on the magnitude of the alleged abuse. Issues of physical assault, rape and other sexual offences cannot have the same direct channels of reporting like the case of demeaning or verbal attacks on the nature of somebody. Therefore, the basic institutions to report to include;-

1. **Community level approach:** This can be a channel to report to especially where there are mild allegations of child abuse, local community members and leaders can address issues like denial of recognition of a child in a given family & denial to share on family properties. Community members and their leaders can step in to reprimand such an occurrence or use the local set laws and principles to clear the alleged abuse.
2. **At institution level:** This is like in school, charity level, or religions belonging. The responsible person who will have received a disclosure of a child regarding abuse, can report to the school authorities, religious leaders whom the child or parents may trust in as their hope for the issue at hand. In schools the office of the headteacher or discipline master can sort out some small and light issues and then diffuse the stand-off.
3. **NGOs CBOs and CSOs** have a joint bureau that coordinates issues of violation of any policy guidelines. These provide a range of services, including medication, counseling, legal assistances, shelter and education support. These organizations often work with government agencies and community stakeholders to address child protection challenges FOHU closely collaborates with other child projects offering similar services to facilitate resource sharing, enhance expertise and general approach to abuses of children in contravention of the child protection policies, hence being a key area to report any case of child abuse.

4. **Local Government authorities:** Reporting alleged child abuse cases can also be to the local government structures. These include district councils, probation office which is a line department of Gender and community service and any relevant authority at the district level. These may handle and provide solutions to issues put before them, provide support to vulnerable children and families, coordinate community based interventions and raise awareness about child rights and protection issues.
5. **Uganda Police force:** This is paramount in receiving and handling of allegations which are criminal in nature. It plays a crucial role in responding to reports of child abuse, exploitation and other crimes against children. The police is responsible for investigating cases of child abuse, visit the scene of crime to build up evidence and keep exhibits and then work closely with the Director of public prosecution to prosecute offenders in the courts of law. Therefore reporting to police provides an optimal solution and channel of addressing issues of child abuse.
6. **Prosecution in the Ugandan courts of law:** This may be inevitable in some circumstances. This is done to let justice prevail, seek for damages, offer corrective punishments and meant to make others learn from them. All this will make justice to be seen and implemented which may be deterrent to others and show the victim that real follow up and action was taken.
7. **The Uganda Human rights commission (UHRC):** This is an independent body tasked with the duty of promoting human rights. It is another institution that is reported to, in case of any alleged child abuse. This could be a high level point of reporting but where the situation warrants so, this institution can be another level of reporting. It intervenes in cases of child rights violations, advocates for policy reforms to address systemic issues affecting children and many others.
8. **Ministry of Gender, Labour and social development:** This is the government ministry responsible for formulating and implementing policies and programs related to social protection, including child protection. It oversees the implementation of the children's Act and others relevant legislations concerning child welfare and protection. As FOHU's operations and registrations concerning child welfare and protection are under this ministry, any violations of the existing policies do get a fall back to this ministry of its line department at the District or regional level.
9. **The National Child Helpline (116).** For ease of reporting, the national child help line provides a toll free telephone service for children and caregivers to report cases of child abuse, seek assistance and access to information and referrals to support services. For cases that are beyond our scope, this alternative can be used to provide redress of the alleged abuse. With the above bodies and authorities, needed collaboration and step-in intervention is eased for the promotion of the rights of children and thus address their challenges appropriately, legally and expeditiously and ensure that the perpetrators of child abuse are held accountable for their actions.

### **Actions to be taken by the one receiving the report of Child abuse.**

Each of the intervention, channels mentioned has clear actions meant to ensure that there is due child protection and justice to be seen done.

#### **(a) Community level approach;**

- They can reprimand the perpetrator in this, when the matter is looked at to be simple and thus can be sorted out at the community level.
- They can help the child get equal shares and treatment and be helped to be treated well by the family members and any other demeaning category.
- To effectively handle this, they can use the local set norms and principles to give due protection to the child.

#### **(b) Institution level;**

- At institutional level in a school, the one receiving the allegations should be able to summon the perpetrator and punish him or her exemplarily. If this is a teacher, the teacher's code of conduct and other ministry of education principles can apply.
- School authorities or the perpetrator can be caused to meet some expenses, in case there were any.
- Guidance and counseling can be given by the school councilor or the Head teacher.
- In case the matter is from colleague children (students), the school can change for him the dormitory or stream as it keeps monitoring the situation and response.

#### **(c) The non governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs).**

- After receiving the report of abuse, they can provide direct services to support the victim, and if need be, remove this child from that environment as the matter is being addressed.
- Conduct training and capacity building initiatives for local communities and government agencies.
- Mobilize resources and coordinate efforts among members of the organization to address emerging child protection challenge and provide quick response to the victim of the abuse.

#### **(d) Local government authorities;**

- If the matter of abuse has been put before these authorities, they then handle it administratively, cause a serious action on the perpetrator like fines and paying costs incurred in the whole process including medication or return of property destroyed.
- Establish and strengthen child protection committees and structures.
- Allocate resources and support for grassroot initiatives aimed at preventing child abuse.
- Provide an emergence support to the victim like medical care, guidance and counseling.
- Monitor and report about the implementation of child protection measures and interventions that are within their jurisdictions.
- Follow up the source and cause of the alleged child abuse and follow up the actions taken by relevant institution over the identified wrong doer.



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**(e) Uganda Police Force.**

- On briefing and reporting to police, FOHU will ensure that the culprit is arrested, depending on the nature and gravity of the crime committed.
- Start investigations into the matter.
- Visit the crime scene and if there are exhibits, they secure them to help in providing empirical evidence to be aligned in courts of law.
- Compile the file to be submitted to the director of Public prosecutor.
- Have community outreaches for raising awareness and make clear the reporting channels and mechanisms that are appropriate.

**(f) Prosecution in the courts of law.**

It may be necessary to report cases of child abuse in the courts of law.

- The court registration receives a complaint and files the case and prepares it for hearing.
- Court prosecutor may bring in files and exhibits from police which are meant to incriminate the culprit.
- Court officials need to keep in touch with the caregivers or charity staff for any other information required.
- Justice then gets handed- in when the matter is proved beyond reasonable doubt.
- Court also offers legal guidance on the implementation of the promulgated child protections policies and their implications.

**(g) The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC).**

- It provides legal assistance and representation for child victims seeking justice and redress.
- In such a scenario, it receives details from the victim, the one reporting or police to be in a better perception to take on the case.
- Monitors and investigates human rights violations affecting children, including cases of abuse, neglect and discrimination.
- It then raises public awareness about children's rights and protection through outreach programs and campaign.

**(h) Ministry of Gender, Labour and social development.**

This ministry is paramount in sorting out any form of violation of children's rights.

- Through its line department of Community office and probation, it ensures that any matter put before it and that submitted to the courts of law are handled expeditiously and to its logical conclusion.
- This ministry develops and enforces policies and legislations aimed at protecting children from abuse, exploitation and neglect.

- Provides funding and support for child protection programs and services at both national and local levels. This then trickles down to the provision of the children reported to them for any form of abuse.
- It coordinates with other government agencies, NGOs and stakeholders to implement comprehensive child protection strategies.

**(i) The National child help line (116)**

- The Ministry of gender and community development established this semi autonomous arm of connectivity for quick and immediate response and contact. It has a toll-free line of 116 meant to encourage any responsible citizen reports any witnessed or reported case of child abuse.
- When contacted on its toll-free line, it quickly liaises with the police of that locality for quick and immediate intervention.
- It also provides counseling, referrals and follow-up services for children in crisis or in need of protection.
- It raises awareness about child help-line and child rights through outreach activities.

**Expected Code of conduct (Behaviors of FOHU staff and Service Providers.**

- To demonstrate proper respect and dignity for all children and even colleague staff members.
- Never to use vulgar language, demean children or any colleague, or demonstrate any behaviour that undermined the status of any child or colleague.
- Never to solicit or engage in sexual relations or any sexual suggestive behaviors, make romantic touches or any other related in appropriate behavior.
- Ensure that children under the care of FOHU are protected and helped in fighting for their rights and use the existing laws and legal procedures while defending them over their rights and plight.
- To serve as hope for children, protect them, guide , educate and build an environment that befits them.
- Ensure that secrets of children are never disclosed to those they are not legally meant for. These may include their health status, history about their lives and families and abuses encountered.
- FOHU will never tolerate the misappropriation of funds, corruption and all other services meant for beneficiaries (Children) and or colleague staff members or for the charity itself.

**Affirmation by FOHU Staff or Service Provider.**

I have received, read and fully understood the Friends Of Humanity Uganda children's Protection Policies and thus make this statement of commitment that I will fully abide by all elements of this Code of Conduct.

**Affirmed by (Name).....**

**Signature.....date.....**

**Email Address.....**

**Tel. Contacts. ....**

**Affirmed before .....(Name).**

**Program Coordinator-FOHU**

**Date .....Sign.....Tel. Contacts.....**

**Confirmed By**

**..... (Name)**

**Chairperson Board of Directors**