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# SAFE GUARDING POLICY

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September 2022

## Policy control sheet

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Department/ Office in charge	Management Team Lead
Policy owner	Amuno Rural Hub

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This safe guarding policy comes in place to take all reasonable steps for Amuno Rural Hub (amuno) to prevent harm, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, or any form of inappropriate conduct from occurring to any of amuno's staff, volunteers and benefactors; ***to protect people especially vulnerable children and young adults from harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.***

Over recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the way in which people treat one another at or in the workplace. As a consequence, there has been a significant increase in the efforts made by organisations to ensure that no harm results from the way employees, associates, volunteers and other representatives conduct themselves with their clients, most especially children, young people and vulnerable adults who can be at risk of discrimination, neglect, abuse and exploitation by those who are in positions of trust and power over them.

Given the nature of our work, our purpose, vision and goal, as Amuno Rural Hub (amuno). We work with and serve these categories of people either directly or indirectly children, young people who include young girls and boys aged between 3 years to 30 years; we recognize that serving this target population is at risk of violence, harm, injury, abuse and maltreatment and it is prevalent throughout the communities we serve and in all societies. Furthermore, children, young people and some adults may be vulnerable and at risk due to, for example, their age, gender, tribe, disability, illness or sexual orientation.

As such, amuno recognizes the importance of safeguarding and is committed to ensuring it manages a wide range of risks such that children, young people and vulnerable adults/communities, staff, other associates and the organisation as a whole are kept safe from harm, abuse, exploitation, or any other form of violence either direct or indirect, intentional or as a result of unintended consequences or as a result of their engagement with amuno, its programmes, projects, events, and processes. Furthermore, we need to ensure that our safeguarding approach and response to safeguarding concerns are gender responsive and the principle of 'best interests' will guide our actions in response to concerns and breaches of this policy.

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## 2. AIM

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- a) Amuno provides an environment where all its staff, volunteers, and community beneficiaries work safely; by taking every reasonable precaution to minimize risk while providing innovative, enjoyable, developmental, demanding and challenging activities at our premises, work stations and communities; while using our facilities and resources, through good practice and sound procedures.
- b) Amuno is committed to see to it that all and specifically those that are vulnerable are kept safe from harm while they are involved with the organisation; by ensuring that all who work for and engage with us are knowledgeable and understand, and are well supported in meeting their

responsibilities to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults/communities from harm and engage positively with them in ways that enhance the achievement of our purpose;

- c) Children and young people we work with are aware of our responsibilities to prevent and respond to any harm against them arising from actions and behaviours of our staff, associates and visitors, and the routes for reporting such incidents;
- d) We have in place procedures to prevent and deal with the actions/behaviours of our staff, associates, visitors or us as an organisation that result in harm against a child, young person or vulnerable adult/communities and/or places them at risk of the same.

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### 3. PRINCIPLES

The Safeguarding Policy is committed to and guided by the principles of:

1. Safeguarding, as the responsible, preventative, and responsive measures that we undertake to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults/communities, to ensure that no child or young person or vulnerable adults/communities is subjected to any form of harm in their association with amuno.
2. Amuno provides an environment where all can work safely and precaution to minimize risk while fulfilling their job tasks and activities in the premises, work stations and communities; while using our facilities and resources, through good practice and sound procedures.
3. Safeguarding also includes all staff/employees, volunteers, associates, visitors acting in a responsible way to avoid inappropriate behaviour that harms fellow staff/ employees, volunteers, associates, visitors; our facilities and resources, through good practice and sound procedures.
4. Harm, harassment and other terms have formal legal meanings within civil and criminal law.
5. This policy is based on the Ugandan law and statutory guidance and freedoms.
6. This policy is directly linked to the organisations HR policy and disciplinary procedures.
7. Personal responsibility. All representatives of amuno must demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour towards children both in their private and professional lives. They have a responsibility to understand and promote the policy. They must do all that they can to prevent, report and respond appropriately to any concerns or potential breaches of the policy.
8. Universality. The Policy includes mandatory requirements that apply to everyone in all aspects of amuno's work regardless of how and where they work including during the response to humanitarian emergencies.
9. Standards based approach. Amuno has adopted a standards-based approach to Child Safeguarding. Our safeguarding standards and standards of staff behaviour are often higher than those of the national laws and community custom or tradition. Nevertheless, it is our standards that representatives agree to when they join the amuno family and it is to these that they will be held account.
10. Openness. We aim to create an environment in relation to child safeguarding issues, where any issues or concerns can be raised and discussed

11. Transparency and accountability. This is essential in order to ensure that poor practice can be addressed, potentially abusive behaviour can be challenged and best practice promoted.
12. Accountability to children and their communities. Through strengthening our internal systems, standards and practice we will be more accountable to the people we aim to serve.
13. Children participation and non- discrimination. Children should be empowered to understand their rights in this area, and made aware of what is acceptable and unacceptable, and what they can do if there is a problem or a concern.
14. The Best Interest of any children involved. When dealing with a Child Safeguarding concern, the best interest of the child will be our priority and we will strive to ensure their safety, health and well- being including meeting their emotional, psychological, and physical needs.
15. Confidentiality. All Child Safeguarding concerns/reports/ investigations will be dealt with on a need-to-know basis and all records will be held securely. Likewise, communication will be confidential and secure.
16. Timeliness. Given the potential for increased or repeated abuse, timely responses are essential, and the accompanying procedures establish mandatory time limits on reporting and responding to concerns.
17. Uniformity. This policy applies both during, after and in between work hours.
18. Ambition. Amuno aims to be able demonstrate that it is a leader in the field of safeguarding children.
19. Partnership. We will work together with other agencies to promote Child Safeguarding within organizations and Child Protection within the wider community.

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#### 4. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- A **Child** - in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and for the purposes of this policy, is defined as any person – is a person under the age of 18 years (UNCRC Article 1).
- A **Young adult** - in line with United Nations definitions, this refers to a person/ individual either a boy/ girl aged 15 - 24 years old. This group spans the categories of 'children', 'adolescents' and 'young adults' but regards young people as having particular safeguarding needs and requiring distinct consideration aside from younger children and older adults.
- A **Vulnerable or at risk adult** - refers to an individual who is most susceptible to negative effects in the communities in which we work who may be unable to take care of or to protect him or herself against abuse, harm or exploitation: because of either poverty, ill-health exposure to conflict or emergency, or because of their identity e.g. disability.
- **Abuse** - a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can take the form of physical, psychological, financial; sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the health, survival, development or dignity of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- **Harm** - is any detrimental effect on a child's or young person's or vulnerable adults' physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. Harm may be caused by abuse or exploitation whether intended or unintended.

- **Physical abuse** – is infliction of pain on a person through a range of malicious / inappropriate/ cruel actions such as punching, beating, kicking, hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical (bodily) harm.
- **Psychological abuse** – is the subjecting of a person to behaviors that affect his/her inner thoughts, feelings and sense of wellbeing. It may include a range of actions such as verbal abuse, insults, bullying, torture, abandonment, threats, violence, etc. causing emotional pain.
- **Sexual Abuse** – is the involving, enticing, coercing or forcing someone to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the vulnerable person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving a vulnerable person in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).
- **Commercial or other exploitation** - of a child refers to use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour and child prostitution. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, or spiritual, moral or social-emotional development.
- **Sexual Exploitation/ abuse** – refers to any actual or attempted unwanted/ unwelcome sexual behaviors of any nature towards a person through touch, verbally, or inappropriate images from a position of vulnerability, power differences, or trust, including, but not limited to, obtaining monetary profits, employment, favours, etc. from the other including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.
- **Financial or material abuse** - including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Neglect** - is the persistent failure to meet a vulnerable person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of his/her health or development. Examples include failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, failure to protect them from physical or psychological harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a vulnerable person's basic emotional needs.
- **Child protection** - is the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering or at risk of significant harm as a result of abuse. It also includes measures and structures designed to prevent and respond to abuse.
- **Child Safeguarding** - Within amuno, the term refers to the set of policies, procedures and practice that we employ to ensure that amuno itself is a child safe organization. We know that harm can befall children as a result of deliberate actions by a tiny minority of staff and representatives. We have a zero tolerance to such behaviour and pursue rigorous policies to prevent and respond to these issues. We aim to ensure that everyone associated with the organization is aware of and responds appropriately to issues of child abuse and the sexual exploitation of children. We aim to ensure that anyone who represents our organization behaves appropriately towards children

both in work and outside work and never abuses the position of trust that comes with being a part of the amuno family.

However, we also know that inadvertent actions, the lack of preventative actions and other failings on our part can and do sometimes have the unintended consequence of causing harm. Plus, preventable accidents can happen. We have seen examples of this across our developmental, humanitarian; fundraising, campaigning, and advocacy work in every region where we work. Applying a safeguarding approach to the planning of programmes or in a myriad of other forms of engagement we have with children can be effective in mitigating and removing those risks.

In other words, Safeguarding is our attempt to ensure that everything which lies within our control is done to ensure the safety and welfare of children that we work with.

It helps in ensuring the rights of children within their communities are based on sound foundations. Some agencies continue to use the term Child Protection for this aspect of work, however, we have found it advantageous to differentiate between this and the broad scope of Child Protection work.

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## 5. SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This Policy applies to: Amuno staff, whether national, international, full time, part time or engaged on short-term contracts, e.g. consultants,

- staff
- members of amuno and other representatives (other representatives)
- Volunteers, trustees and board members, staff and representatives of partner agencies (including consortium partners) and any other individuals, groups or organizations who have a formal/contractual relationship with amuno that involves any contact with children (unless it is formally agreed that a partner organization may enforce its own safeguarding or protection policy), referred to as “partners or staff of partner agencies”
- Donors, journalists, celebrities, politicians, and other people who visit amuno offices in order to contact children must be made aware that this Policy applies to them while visiting our programmes or offices. (During this time, they are referred to as “representatives”)
- All the above must act in accordance with this Protocol in both their professional and their personal lives.

Breaches in the policy can lead to disciplinary action including possible dismissal. For partner’s/contractors’ breaches can lead up to and including termination of relation including contractual & partnership agreement. Where relevant, the appropriate legal or other frameworks as per the national laws will be referred to.

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## 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. All amuno staff/ employees, its associates and visitors shall:

- i. commit to conduct themselves and contribute to an environment that safeguards their and organisation's wellbeing and that of children, young people and vulnerable adults to feel respected, supported, safe and protected.
- ii. have a responsibility of taking precautions to never act or behave in a manner that provokes or results in harm and or abuse of a child or young person or vulnerable adult or places a child or young person or vulnerable adult at risk of abuse/ harm;
- iii. act or behave in a manner that protects and safeguards amuno's resources and properties or that puts amuno's resources and properties at risk;
- iv. in a one-to-one situation with a child or young person, where privacy and confidentiality are important, try to ensure that another adult knows about this situation and aware it is taking place and why; or ensure that another adult is in sight and that the child or young person knows another adult is around;
- v. be aware of, agree by signing and comply with the provisions of this safeguarding policy.
- vi. report and respond to safeguarding concerns and breaches of the policy in line with the applicable procedures of amuno.

### 2. All amuno managers, supervisors, coordinators shall ensure that:

- i. children, adolescents, young people and vulnerable adults/ communities with which we engage, work or are in contact with are made aware of the provisions of this safeguarding policy to ensure they have the confidence and ability to report any incidents occurring against children, young people and young adults;
- ii. staff, associates, and visitors are aware of this safeguarding policy, its implementation that are applicable to their role or engagement with amuno;
- iii. they support and develop systems which maintains an environment which is safe for and prevents harm and abuse against children, young people and vulnerable adults/ communities.
- iv. they are responsive, acting immediately if they become aware of any safeguarding concerns, and supportive towards staff/ employees or volunteers who complain about breaches of this policy.

### 3. All amuno directors shall ensure that:

- i. Amuno has in place a safeguarding policy and procedures which outlines the code of conduct, reporting requirements;
- ii. there is implementation of amuno's safeguarding policy and procedures as they apply to our context, the people (staff, associates, and visitors), amuno's resources, children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom they engage, as well as the processes, programmes, projects, events and activities they undertake.
- iii. they are responsive, acting immediately if they become aware of any safeguarding concerns, and supportive towards staff/ employees or volunteers who complain about breaches of this policy.



**4. Amuno Board** holds ultimate accountability for this safeguarding policy.

**5. All partner organisations that work with amuno must:**

- i. be aware of, and agree by signing to comply with the provisions of this safeguarding policy.
- ii. never act or behave in a manner that results in harm and or abuse of a child or young person or vulnerable adult or places a child or young person or vulnerable adult or amuno at risk during implementation of their work with amuno;
- iii. not condone or participate in behaviour which is abusive, discriminatory, illegal, or unsafe or places a child or young person or vulnerable adult or amuno at risk during implementation of their work with amuno;

NOTE:

**A “staff/ employee”** - refers to individuals who are employed and or contracted (temporarily/ part-time/ full-time) by amuno and receive regular pay for their work.

**A “manager”** - refers to a staff member who is in charge of leading, controlling, guiding and supervising work of staff or associates.

**A “director”** - refers to a staff member in a senior position with responsibility of overseeing and managing the daily affairs of amuno.

**A “visitor”** - refers to a range of persons who come temporarily to or at amuno for business, for an event or for other formal engagements.

**A “Volunteer”** - refers to an individual who voluntarily makes him/ herself available for amuno’s activities. Volunteers also constitute amuno’s face to the world and their efforts are vital for amuno’s continued existence and their contribution is indispensable.

**A “partner organization or company”** - refers to a legal entity that has signed an agreement or commitment with amuno to work with or support amuno in implementation of its work.

**An “Associate”** - refers to a range of contracted paid and non-paid individuals who have committed to work with or support amuno in implementation of its work. It includes, among others, board members, volunteers (including community volunteers), interns, sponsors, researchers, donors, consultants and contractors, staff and/or representatives of partner organisations and local governments (when operating in partnership agreement with amuno).

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## **7. SANCTIONS IN BREACH OF SAFEGAURDING POLICY**

This safeguarding policy lays down the requirements and responsibilities for ensuring safeguarding measures are embedded in all parts of our operations and interventions.

### **Sanctions**

Breaches of this policy will be investigated in accordance with amuno’s disciplinary procedures and contractual agreements, or a referral may be made to statutory authorities for criminal investigation under the laws of Uganda or country in which they work.

Breaches may incur sanctions including disciplinary action leading to possible dismissal, termination of all relations including contractual and partnership agreements with amuno, and where relevant, appropriate legal or other such actions.

If a legitimate concern about the suspected abuse of a child or young person or vulnerable adult is raised but proves to be unfounded on investigation, no action will be taken against the suspected/ accused. However, appropriate actions and or sanctions will be applied in cases of false and malicious accusations.

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## 8. REPORTING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS THROUGH THE COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Any individual, who has observed or was told about behaviour that could be considered abuse, must immediately report the information as outlined below to the Immediate supervisor or the Human Resource Manager for urgent response.

Any individual who has concerns about the appropriateness of actions involving vulnerable people, communities or children by those representing amuno or amuno's partners must immediately report their concerns. Concerns include suspected actual or potentially abusive or harmful behaviour towards a child, behaviour or situations that might place a child at risk of harm, or suspected or actual sexual exploitation or abuse of vulnerable people.

No adverse action will be taken against individuals who report violations of this policy in good faith, as described in amuno's Whistleblowing Policy. Any employee who intentionally makes false and malicious allegations will face disciplinary action.

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## 9. CODE OF CONDUCT

### Human Resource Department

In addition to amuno's standard recruitment processes, the human resource team is required to:

- follow safe recruitment and vetting processes of all employees, volunteers, consultants and partners/ associates,
- undertake a criminal background check as part of the recruitment process before their appointment into positions, or engagement in amuno activities or assignments,
- orient all staff/ employees, volunteers, partners, associates, visitor's partners on all relevant policies especially the safeguarding policy and code of conduct and child protection policy.
- ensure all staff/ employees, volunteers and associates must sign and abide by this safeguarding policy and the code of conduct. The code sets out the standards of practice we expect of staff/ employees and volunteers - in terms professional competence, integrity, acting as a representative and in safeguarding - which support amuno's vision, mission and values.
- respond conclusively with any safeguarding concerns, reports and incidents brought to their attention professionally in a matter that doesn't cause damage, public relation risks, legal or other liabilities to amuno.

### All staff/ employees and volunteers

All staff/employees and volunteers will, prior to taking up their position, be required to:

- Complete a written application form,
- Provide the name and contact information of two referees,
- Provide photographic evidence of their identity,
- Undergo a criminal records check, where possible, in their country of origin,
- Accept, sign and commit to abide by our safeguarding policy and our code of conduct,
- Comply as appropriate with any applicable laws and regulations regarding working with children.

No person who is prohibited by their local laws from working with vulnerable people, communities or children may take up any role working with amuno.

### All Partners, Partner organizations and associates

All partner organisations, grantees, contractors and associates what their status or role that work with amuno and are working with children, young people and communities, are required to;

- have in place and adhere to minimum standards for safeguarding, which are set out in the procedures linked to this policy.
- be provided with, and briefed on amuno's safeguarding policy and code of conduct and will at all times be accompanied and supervised by amuno staff when associating with children, young people and communities.
- indicate their (written) compliance with amuno's minimum safeguarding standards and/or describe plans to ensure any areas of non-compliance will be met before and during execution of their legitimate work with amuno.

### Information Communications and Technology (ICT)

Amuno prohibits any use of its computer and communication systems, networks and gadgets in violation of any of the amuno's policies that safeguard children, young, vulnerable and key populations; including this safeguarding policy, child protection policy, equal opportunities, discrimination, sexual harassment, confidentiality, copyright and proprietary rights, publications, bullying, data protection and privacy; and/or any use that may potentially cause any damage, public relation risks, legal or other liabilities to amuno or its staff/ employees or people.

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## 10. SUMMARIZED LIST OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Staff, partners and other representatives must never:

- Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children.
- Engage in sexual activity or have a sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 years regardless of the age of majority/consent or custom locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
- Act in ways that may be abusive in any way or may place a child at risk of abuse.
- 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 unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from their line manager
- Sleep in the same bed as a child with whom they are working
- Sleep in the same room as a child with whom they are working unless exceptional circumstances apply and previous permission has been obtained from their line manager
- Do things for children of a personal nature that they can do themselves
- Condone, or participate in, behaviour 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 unfair differential treatment or favour to particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Spend excessive time alone with children away from others in a manner which could be interpreted as inappropriate
- Expose a child to inappropriate images, films and websites including pornography and extreme violence
- Place themselves in a position where they are made vulnerable to allegations of misconduct

(This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. Staff, partners and other representatives should at all times avoid actions or behaviour which may allow behaviour to be misrepresented, constitute poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour.)

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## 11. POLICY MONITORING AND REVIEW

Amuno will ensure that implementation of this safeguarding policy is subject to regular monitoring and will review the policy every two years (although changes may be made prior to formal review should legal, policy or practice changes suggest this is necessary).

The international and national standards for Uganda in safeguarding, as set out in the procedures associated with this policy, should be used as a guide when monitoring implementation of the safeguarding policy – the aim is to ensure all offices at amuno, staff and associates meet these standards.

The Senior Management Team will be responsible for supporting and maintaining an overview of implementation and compliance issues across the organisation.

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