



# ABOYERD Code of Conduct and Key Policies

Revised in December 2020

In case you have any feedback or suggestions concerning these guidelines, please  
send them to [info@aboyerd.org](mailto:info@aboyerd.org)



# Introduction

Agriculture and Bio-conservation Organization for Youth Empowerment and Rural Development (ABOYERD) is a grassroots nonprofit, non-denominational, apolitical organization legally registered as a Common Initiative Group (CIG) with registration number NW/GP/001/17/16274 in conformity with law No 92/006 of 14th August 1992 of the Republic of Cameroon. ABOYERD, whose mission is to promote the protection of wildlife and their ecosystems, while assuring a future for human communities living within, through scientific research, environmental education and conservation awareness, and community outreach is committed to the best practice and quality of work of its staff, its partner organisations and other associates.

The set of *Key ABOYERD Policies* presents a detailed guide on the most important standing points, which are essential for our work and map our goals and vision.

The *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* represents the essence of the *Key ABOYERD Policies* and provides clear guidance on the standards of behaviour required by all ABOYERD staff.

*ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and all the *Key ABOYERD Policies* listed below are to be read together.

Unless stated otherwise in the individual policies, the following rules are applicable for the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and the *Key ABOYERD Policies*.

## Applicability

These **ABOYERD Code of Conduct** and **Key Policies** are applicable for all full time and part time ABOYERD staff, members of ABOYERD board of directors, volunteers, interns, consultants, visitors, people acting on behalf of ABOYERD (further referred to as “ABOYERD staff”) and – to the relevant extent as per the table below – to ABOYERD suppliers and partner organizations (further referred to as “ABOYERD associates”), **unless stated otherwise within the respective policies**. This Code of Conduct and Key ABOYERD Policies are applicable both inside and outside of office hours. The *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and *Key ABOYERD Policies* create an inseparable part of contracts with all ABOYERD staff and have to be reflected – to the relevant extent – in all contractual relationships with ABOYERD associates. Understanding and acceptance of these policies is done by signature of contract with ABOYERD and attendance sheets distributed during ABOYERD staff trainings.

APPLICABILITY TO			
	ABOYERD staff	ABOYERD partner organizations	ABOYERD suppliers
<b>ABOYERD CODE OF CONDUCT</b>	Yes	Yes (unless partner organization has its own Code of Conduct in place, containing all key principles)	Key principles are applicable for suppliers in direct contact with ABOYERD beneficiaries.
<b>ABOYERD SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICY</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>ABOYERD SAFEGUARDING POLICY</b>	Yes	Yes, to the relevant extent (adherence to the key principles required)	Yes, to the relevant extent (adherence to the key principles required)
<b>ABOYERD ANTICORRUPTION POLICY</b>	Yes	Yes (unless partner organization has its own policy in place, containing all the key principles)	Yes, to the relevant extent (key principles to be defined in the contract)

<b>ABOYERD CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY</b>	Yes	Yes (unless partner organization has its own policy in place, containing all the key principles)	Yes, to the relevant extent (key principles to be defined in the contract)
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<b>ABOYERD CHILD PROTECTION POLICY</b>	Yes	Yes (unless partner organization has its own policy in place, containing all the key principles)	Key principles applicable for suppliers in direct contact with ABOYERD beneficiaries.
<b>ABOYERD PREVENTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE POLICY</b>	Yes	Yes (unless partner organization has its own policy in place, containing all the key principles)	Key principles applicable for suppliers in direct contact with ABOYERD beneficiaries.
<b>ABOYERD WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY</b>	Yes	Yes, in situations that directly involve and/or affect ABOYERD	No

## Obligation to report and investigate all breaches

Any known or suspected cases of abuse, exploitation, harassment or other forms of unacceptable behaviour which are in direct breach of the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and the *Key ABOYERD Policies* must be brought to the attention. The Human Resources (HR) department shall always be informed. The following channels might be used proportionally to the potential severity of the complaint:

COMPLAINANT	TYPE OF COMPLAINT / REPORT	COMPLAINING TO	PROCEDURE <sup>1</sup>
<b>ABOYERD associate</b>	any concerns	ABOYERD Director	In person/via email
<b>ABOYERD staff</b>	any concerns	ABOYERD Director	In person/via email
<b>ABOYERD staff</b>	specific cases of personal/confidential character	ABOYERD HR department	In person/via email
<b>ABOYERD staff</b>	gross or systematic abuse, criminal activity, severe reputational risks, etc.	ABOYERD Director	ABOYERD Whistleblowing Policy
<b>ABOYERD staff</b>	Concerns related to directors of ABOYERD	ABOYERD Board of Directors	In person/via email

## Basic principles of investigation

The reaction to a complaint or report shall result in a confidential, sensitive, thorough and prompt investigation. Such an investigation may either result in the reduction of concern or in further action(s) outlined in this document as appropriate.

The subject of the complaint must have an opportunity to explain and/or reply to the allegations before any disciplinary action be taken.

The complainant and the subject of the complaint will be protected against any form of intimidation, threats, reprisal or retaliation resulting from the alleged incident. If any ABOYERD staff member is found intimidating or retaliating against a complainant or a person assisting in an investigation, a disciplinary action - up to and including dismissal - will be imposed.

All information related to the case will be held in strict confidence and might be disclosed only on a need-to know basis.

Any intentionally false or malicious statements or accusations against another staff member or third party will be considered as gross misconduct.

All concerns about breaches of these standards of conduct expressed either by ABOYERD staff, associates or beneficiaries must be recorded and securely filed.

In the event of an allegation of a criminal offence, the concerned individual should be informed that, in addition to disciplinary action, the case may be reported to appropriate legal authorities for further investigation.

## ABOYERD response to breaches

In cases of substantial breaches of the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and *Key ABOYERD Policies*, ABOYERD will take immediate and appropriate action and will support the needs of those affected. This might include:

ABOYERD full or part-time staff	disciplinary action up to dismissal
ABOYERD volunteers and interns	action up to termination of contract
ABOYERD consultants	termination of contract
Visitors to ABOYERD	action up to suspension of support for the visit
ABOYERD associates	termination of contract

Depending on the nature and the circumstances of the case, ABOYERD might involve appropriate authorities to ensure the protection of ABOYERD staff, associates and/or beneficiaries.

## Monitoring and review

ABOYERD reviews the implementation of this policy on annual basis to maintain its consistent reflection of good practice, and learning from changing and evolving environment.



# ABOYERD Code of Conduct

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# ABOYERD Code of Conduct

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## Applicability

ABOYERD Code of Conduct is fully applicable for all full time and part time ABOYERD staff, volunteers, interns, consultants and people working on behalf of ABOYERD – further referred to as “ABOYERD staff”.

ABOYERD Code of Conduct is as well applicable for ABOYERD partner organizations unless they have their own Code of conduct containing all the key principles of the ABOYERD Code of Conduct. Key principles are also applicable for the ABOYERD suppliers in direct contact with ABOYERD beneficiaries.

## Introduction

Agriculture and Bio-conservation Organization for Youth Empowerment and Rural Development (ABOYERD) is a grassroots nonprofit, non-denominational, apolitical organization legally registered as a Common Initiative Group (CIG) with registration number NW/GP/001/17/16274 in conformity with law No 92/006 of 14th August 1992 of the Republic of Cameroon. ABOYERD’S mission IS to promote the protection of wildlife and their ecosystems, while assuring a future for human communities living within, through scientific research, environmental education and conservation awareness, and community outreach.

ABOYERD is committed to the best practice and quality of work of its staff and of its partner organisations. In this context, all ABOYERD staff are obliged to maintain the highest standards in the day-to-day conduct of their work. Any form of exploitation or abuse of power is incompatible with ABOYERD’s fundamental belief in the human dignity of all people, and with ABOYERD’s core values.

The aim of the ABOYERD Code of Conduct is to provide clear guidance on the standards of behaviour required by all ABOYERD staff. Any unacceptable behaviour breaching this Code may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. Whilst recognising that laws and cultures differ considerably from one country to another, the Code is based on international legal standards, universal principles of codes of conduct and basic human rights<sup>2</sup>.

Complementary documents to be read together with the ABOYERD Code of Conduct are:

- ◆ ABOYERD Safety and Security Policy
- ◆ ABOYERD Safeguarding Policy
- ◆ ABOYERD Anticorruption Policy
- ◆ ABOYERD Conflict of Interest Policy
- ◆ ABOYERD Child Protection Policy
- ◆ ABOYERD Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy
- ◆ ABOYERD Whistleblowing Policy

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<sup>2</sup>Rights formulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

## Standards of conduct

ABOYERD staff are obliged to avoid any unacceptable behaviour and to comply with the following standards:

### ◆ **Highest standard of personal and professional conduct in line with ABOYERD beliefs, policies, values, mission and vision**

All ABOYERD staff must ensure that their behaviour during and outside of work supports ABOYERD's positive reputation. All people have to be treated with respect and dignity. Any forms of discriminative behaviour on the basis of race, gender, religion, social status, colour, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation and others are unacceptable.

The well-being of children has to be promoted across ABOYERD programmes and any behaviour likely to cause harm to children, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, is prohibited.

ABOYERD staff have to observe local laws and cultural norms and behave in culturally sensitive manner.

As ABOYERD is impartial, neutral and non-confessional, it is forbidden to take part in political activities or in the promotion of one's religious values in a way that could negatively impact the working goals of the organization or harm the perception of ABOYERD's neutrality.

ABOYERD staff should always use appropriate language, appear and dress in a way corresponding to their position and given situation, creating a respectable and positive perception of ABOYERD.

The possession, distribution or consumption of illegal substances at the work place (including ABOYERD cars) or when on duty is strictly forbidden. Any type of work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or any illegal substance is not acceptable.

### ◆ **No involvement in activities which are illegal or might compromise the work of ABOYERD**

Taking part or supporting any illegal or criminal activities is unacceptable.

Abuse or exploitation of children or adults in any way or any activities contravening basic human rights are forbidden.

Any other inappropriate behaviour or action that might jeopardise ABOYERD's reputation must be avoided.

### ◆ **No corruption and no conflicts of interest with ABOYERD work or reputation**

No corrupt or fraudulent behaviour is acceptable. Further details are explained in the *ABOYERD Anticorruption Policy*.

ABOYERD staff may not use his/her working position to achieve personal profit or benefit and have to avoid any situation where personal interests could be in conflict with the interests of ABOYERD. Basic principles and relevant procedures to prevent such situations are outlined in the separate *ABOYERD Conflict of Interest Policy*.

### ◆ **No sexual exploitation or abuse**

Sexual relationship between a ABOYERD staff and a beneficiary is likely to be based on inherently unequal power dynamics and may undermine the credibility of ABOYERD and its work. As such, ABOYERD considers it unacceptable. Sexual relationship with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of the majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defense. The exchange of money, goods, services or favours for sex is unacceptable.

### ◆ **No bullying, harassment, discrimination, intimidation or abuse**

Actions of ABOYERD staff should be fair and honest. All people have to be treated with dignity and respect and ABOYERD staff must never engage in any humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour.

Any form of physical violence - unless in self-defence – is unacceptable and will lead to immediate dismissal.



The use of inappropriate, violent or offensive language in oral or written form towards others is not acceptable.

### ◆ Responsibility towards ABOYERD asset, resources or information

ABOYERD staff are expected to use ABOYERD asset, financial and other resources in a responsible and accountable manner, following all relevant ABOYERD policies and procedures.

ABOYERD equipment must not be used for any illegal activity, including any form of harassment, intimidation or degrading activities or comments.

Any entrusted project goods and services must be used in an appropriate manner. Causing damage intentionally or through gross negligence to any property of ABOYERD or to any property directly connected with the work of ABOYERD is unacceptable.

Any private or confidential information related to ABOYERD's work must not be shared outside the organization verbally, in written form, through media, social networks or otherwise, unless legally required to do so.

### ◆ Responsibility towards one's health, safety and security and of those you manage

ABOYERD staff are required to comply with local security guidelines and act consistently within the *ABOYERD Safety and Security Policy*.

ABOYERD staff have to behave in ways that avoids unnecessary risks to the health, safety and security of themselves, of their team members, and of those whom they manage. The same attitude must be practiced towards partner organizations and ABOYERD beneficiaries.

### ◆ Obligation to report all breaches of ABOYERD Code of Conduct

Incidents, concerns or suspicions regarding any breaches of this Code must be brought to the attention of the relevant senior manager.

No false or malicious accusations in relation to the Code are acceptable.

All information about breaches of the Code of Conduct must be handled with the utmost discretion in line with *ABOYERD Whistleblowing Policy*.

## Annex I. – Forms of unacceptable behaviour, terminology

Clear definitions are essential for the consistent manner of understanding, categorizing, reporting and responding to individual breaches of ABOYERD Code of Conduct. All forms of behaviour listed below are used in the *ABOYERD Safeguarding Policy* and in the ABOYERD Code of Conduct as "unacceptable behaviour".

### Abuse

Abuse is a wrong, improper use or treatment of something or someone causing harm, damage, offence or distress. There are several forms of abuse (such as physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse), any or all of which may be perpetrated as a result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance.

### Bullying

Workplace bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour (verbal, physical or otherwise), conducted by one or more persons against another, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work.

An isolated incident of such behaviour may be an affront to dignity at work, but a once-off incident is not considered as bullying. The exercise of legitimate management/employee rights or responsibilities is not bullying.

A pattern of the following behaviours are examples of types of bullying:

- ◆ Verbal or written abuse or insults

- ◆ Being treated less favourably than colleagues
- ◆ Intrusion – pestering, spying or stalking
- ◆ Menacing behaviour
- ◆ Intimidation
- ◆ Excessive monitoring of work
- ◆ Humiliation
- ◆ Withholding work related information
- ◆ Unreasonably changing or manipulating a person’s job content and targets
- ◆ Blame for things beyond the person’s control
- ◆ Manipulation of the victim’s reputation by rumour, gossip or ridicule
- ◆ Preventing the victim from speaking by making loud voiced criticisms or obscenities
- ◆ Constant undermining, mockery or criticism that focuses on a personal characteristic
- ◆ Exclusion, or victimisation
- ◆ Aggressive behaviour towards others, including unreasonable anger or shouting
- ◆ Abuse or threats of abuse
- ◆ Persistently manipulating the nature of the work or the ability of the victim to perform the work e.g. by overloading, setting objectives with impossible deadlines, deliberately withholding work information, or setting meaningless or unachievable tasks
- ◆ Repeated criticism of work without balancing this with positive feedback where possible or by providing potential solutions
- ◆ Criticising an individual’s capabilities or her/his personality in front of others

### Child abuse

Child abuse and neglect, sometimes also referred to as child maltreatment, is defined as all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power.

Within the broad definition of child maltreatment, five subtypes are distinguished:

- ◆ **Physical abuse** is actual or likely physical injury to a child, such as hitting, kicking or shaking.
- ◆ **Emotional abuse** is harm done by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection, such as degrading punishments, threats, bullying or not giving care and affection, resulting in adverse effects on the behaviour and emotional development of a child or young person.
- ◆ **Neglect** occurs when basic needs such as food, warmth and medical care are not met, resulting in the serious impairment of a child’s or young person’s health or development.
- ◆ **Sexual abuse** occurs if a child or young person is pressurised or forced to take part in any kind of sexual activity with or without their consent. Sexual abuse includes incest, rape and fondling, showing pornography or viewing pornographic images of children. Sexual abuse may involve siblings or other family members, or persons outside the family.
- ◆ **Commercial or other exploitation** of a child refers to the use of the child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour (minimum acceptable age for employment or work is 15, while for work which might jeopardize the health, safety or moral (so called “worst forms of child labour”) is 18) and child prostitution. These activities are detrimental to the child’s physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development.

## Conflict of interest

Conflict of interest is a situation where ABOYERD staff would use their working position or ABOYERD name, logo or reputation to achieve personal profit or benefit. This may occur in the following situations:

- ◆ ABOYERD staff, their family members or friends would supply goods or services to ABOYERD, unless undergoing a fair and fully transparent selection process.
- ◆ ABOYERD staff would be directly hiring or supervising their family members, bypassing a regular and transparent process.
- ◆ ABOYERD beneficiaries would be family members or friends of ABOYERD staff, bypassing a regular process of beneficiaries selection.
- ◆ Taking loans from ABOYERD beneficiaries

Further details are explained in the *ABOYERD Conflict of Interest Policy*.

## Corruption

Corruption is an abuse of the entrusted power for the private advantage of any person. This includes offering, giving, demanding or receiving financial or material gifts, loans, rewards, provisions or any other advantages from/to a third person as incentive to achieve something which is dishonest, illegal or breaching confidence within the framework of contractual relations. This refers in particular to:

- ◆ Bribery and the acceptance of bribes, excessive gifts or favours in return for ABOYERD support, goods or services
- ◆ Granting and receiving advantages, including return parts of contractual payments (“kickbacks”) ◆  
Facilitation payments
- ◆ Fraud and embezzlement (utilization of the entrusted funds for personal use)
- ◆ Agreements reducing competition
- ◆ Extortion and money laundering

Further details are explained in the *ABOYERD Anticorruption Policy*.

## Discrimination

Discrimination is an unequal treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of personal characteristics such as disability, appearance and group characteristics, such as ethnicity, religion, etc. Common forms of discrimination may include, but are not limited to, making employment or programming decisions based on family status, race, minority group, gender, religion or lack of religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, language, marital status, birth, sexual orientation, age, disability, political conviction, socioeconomic background, caste, HIV and AIDS status or other illnesses and physical appearance or lifestyle. Examples of discrimination may include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Programmes not based on proper needs assessment or situational analysis resulting in interventions that benefit men more than women, or vice versa
- ◆ Hiring preferences based on one’s religion or ethnic group over members of other denominations or groups
- ◆ Stigmatization of or service denial to people on the basis of their HIV and AIDS status
- ◆ Service delivery only to particular ethnic, religious, or political groups

## Exploitation

Exploitation means using a position of authority, influence or control over resources, to pressure, force, coerce or manipulate someone to do something against his/her will or interest and wellbeing. This includes threatening to withhold project assistance, threatening to make false claims about a person in public, or any other negative repercussions in the work-place or community.

Examples of exploitation include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Offering special benefits to beneficiaries or other programme participants in exchange for expressed, implied or demanded favours (including sexual favours) or benefits, either to the staff member or to a third party
- ◆ Threats or implications that an individual's refusal or unwillingness to submit to demands will affect the person's entitlement to project assistance and support, or terms and conditions of employment
- ◆ Children's involvement in heavy, dangerous, extended long hours or forced labour
- ◆ Selling, buying, and transporting children, women or men by means of coercion or deception for economic or other gains

### Fraud

Fraud is a theft or misuse of ABOYERD's funds or other resources by a staff member or a third party, which may or may not also involve misstatement of financial documents or records to conceal the theft or misuse. Unacceptable fraudulent and corrupted practices are described in detail in the *ABOYERD Anticorruption Policy*. Examples of fraud include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Theft of funds or any other ABOYERD property
- ◆ Falsification of costs or expenses
- ◆ Forgery or alteration of documents
- ◆ Destruction or removal of records
- ◆ Inappropriate personal use of ABOYERD's assets or funds
- ◆ Seeking or accepting cash, gifts or other benefits from third parties in exchange for preferment of the third parties in their dealings with ABOYERD
- ◆ Blackmail or extortion
- ◆ Paying of excessive prices or fees to third parties with the aim of personal gain

### Harassment

Harassment is an unwanted behaviour relating to personal characteristics such as race, membership of a minority group, sex, gender, religion or lack of religion, colour, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, political conviction, socio-economic background, caste, HIV and AIDS status or other illnesses and, physical appearance or lifestyle which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. Such unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of texts, pictures or other material.

Harassment also includes the less favourable treatment of a person because he or she has rejected or submitted to the type of conduct described above.

Anyone can be a victim of harassment. Harassment may be an isolated incident or repeated actions. It can take many forms and may involve written documents, the use of IT including email, text messaging, photographs or pictures.

Many forms of behaviour may constitute harassment, including:

- ◆ Verbal harassment - jokes, comments, ridicule or songs
- ◆ Written harassment - including text messages, emails or notices
- ◆ Physical harassment – jostling, shoving or any form of assault
- ◆ Intimidating harassment – gestures, posturing or threatening poses
- ◆ Visual displays such as posters, emblems or badges
- ◆ Isolation or exclusion from social activities
- ◆ Pressure to behave in a manner that the individual thinks is inappropriate – for example, being required to dress in a manner unsuited to a person's ethnic or religious background

### Trafficking in persons

Trafficking in persons means the recruitment, transportation (including failure to provide return transportation), transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other

forms of coercion, if abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

### **Intimidation**

Intimidation is the act of willingly making someone timid, filled with fear or frightened into submission. Intimidation implies inducing fear or a sense of inferiority in another person by threats or inducing fear of the consequences against him/her or their family or friends. Acts of intimidation can be verbal, non-verbal or physical.

### **Modern Slavery**

Modern slavery refers to situations where one person has taken away another person's freedom – their freedom to control their body, their freedom to choose to refuse certain work or to stop working – so that they can be exploited. Freedom is taken away by threats, violence, coercion, abuse of power and deception.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse is a threat of or actual physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force, coercion or under unequal conditions. It includes sexual assault or sexual acts to which a person has not consented, could not consent, or was compelled to consent.

### **Sexual exploitation**

Sexual exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, to pressure or demand others to provide sexual favours, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of someone else.

### **Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. A single incident may constitute sexual harassment. Many forms of behaviour can constitute sexual harassment, including:

- ◆ Physical conduct of a sexual nature, including unwanted contact such as unnecessary touching, patting or pinching or brushing against another person's body, assault and coercive sexual intercourse.
- ◆ Verbal conduct of a sexual nature. This may include unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity, continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome, unwanted or offensive flirtations, suggestive remarks, innuendos or lewd comments.
- ◆ Non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature. This may include the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects, written materials, posts on social media, emails or text messages. It may also include leering, whistling or making sexually suggestive gestures.
- ◆ Sex-based conduct. This may include conduct that denigrates or ridicules or is intimidating or physically abusive of an employee because of his or her sex, such as derogatory or degrading abuse or insults that are gender-related.

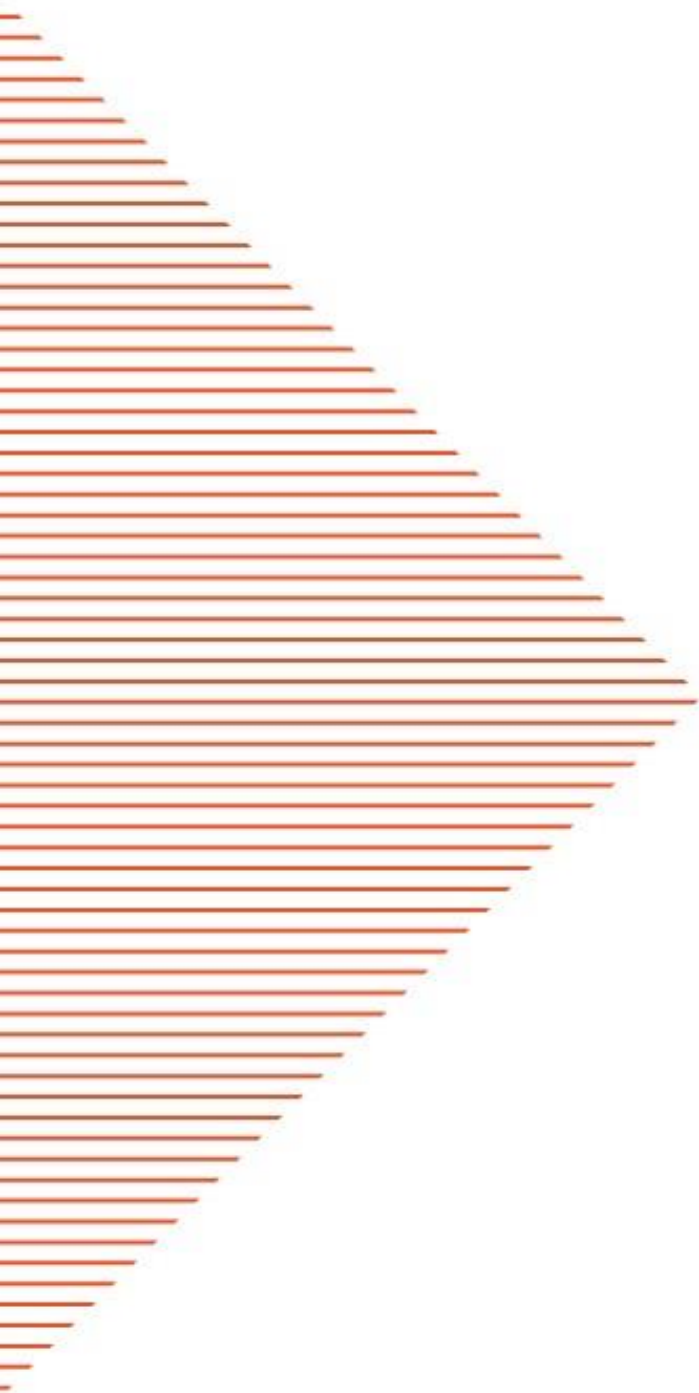
I have read carefully and understood the ABOYERD Code of Conduct and Key Policies and agree to abide by their requirements, and commit to upholding the standards of conduct required.

I understand that failure to comply with any principles of the ABOYERD Code of Conduct and Key Policies may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal and, where applicable, may result in civil or criminal proceedings against me.

Name:..... Signature:.....

Date:..... Organization:.....

Location:.....



# Key ABOYERD Policies





# ABOYERD Safeguarding Policy

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# ABOYERD Safeguarding Policy

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## Introduction

Agriculture and Bio-conservation Organization for Youth Empowerment and Rural Development (ABOYERD) recognises that especially in indigenous settings and situations of poverty, **safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and adults who come into contact with ABOYERD is of our utmost importance**. We therefore acknowledge as our fundamental duty to protect all vulnerable people engaged within our programmes and activities from any forms of abuse and exploitation.

**By determining ABOYERD's commitment to protect children and vulnerable people, this Policy has the following objectives:**

- ◆ **To protect beneficiaries (both children and adults)** engaged in ABOYERD's programmes from all forms of abuse and exploitation.
- ◆ **To protect ABOYERD staff** from all forms of abuse and exploitation and any potential false or malicious allegations of misconduct.
- ◆ **To protect ABOYERD's organizational integrity and reputation**, as well as that of its partners, by introducing sound Safeguarding Policy that helps to understand rights and responsibilities of concerned parties

The policy lays out the commitments made by ABOYERD, and informs staff and associated personnel<sup>3</sup> of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

Expected standards of conduct of ABOYERD staff are elaborated in the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct*, which is an inseparable part of this Policy. The *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* is a key tool for the prevention of all forms of unacceptable behaviour by ABOYERD staff. ABOYERD should also assist partner organisations to reinforce their own existing policies, codes or other instruments or if necessary to develop new ones.

## Terminology

**Safeguarding** means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect<sup>4</sup>. In our sector, we understand it to mean protecting people, including children and at risk adults, from harm that arises from coming into contact with our staff or programmes.

This policy is an integral part of ABOYERD Policy package '*Code of Conduct and other Key Policies*', therefore please refer to ABOYERD Code of Conduct for all the relevant terminology.

## Applicability

The *ABOYERD Safeguarding Policy* is applicable for all full time and part time ABOYERD staff, members of ABOYERD Board of Directors, volunteers, interns, consultants, visitors, people acting on behalf of ABOYERD

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<sup>3</sup> See 'Applicability' for definition of associated personnel

<sup>4</sup> NHS 'What is safeguarding? Easy Read' 2011

(further referred to as “ABOYERD staff”) and – to the relevant extent – to ABOYERD suppliers and partner organizations<sup>5</sup> (further referred to as “ABOYERD associates”), see **ABOYERD Code of Conduct for details**.

## Policy statement

All people have the same right to freedom from abuse and exploitation. ABOYERD believes that everyone who comes into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Therefore, ABOYERD staff and associates must never engage in any forms of humiliating, degrading, abusive, exploitative or other forms of unacceptable behaviour under any circumstances.

## ABOYERD commitments

### Commitment towards ABOYERD beneficiaries

- ◆ In our programmes, ABOYERD is committed to the protection of our beneficiaries. ABOYERD will take all reasonable steps to protect them from any harassment, abuse and exploitation potentially perpetrated by ABOYERD staff or associates. **All ABOYERD staff and associates are thus required to respect the rights and dignity** of individuals, families and communities with whom we work.
- ◆ We reject any form of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, which we consider as one of the worst manifestations of misconduct and abuse of power. We acknowledge that **certain vulnerable groups** such as children, women, the elderly, disabled people and others might be particularly at risk and **must receive our greatest attention**.
- ◆ In order to be able to address the issues of beneficiaries’ protection properly, it is essential that ABOYERD staff and associates be **fully aware of and respectful toward local cultural and religious practices**. However, these specifics can never be used as an excuse or a motive for inappropriate behaviour. ABOYERD will not accept using respect for local culture as a justification for ignoring or supporting harmful practices.
- ◆ ABOYERD **beneficiaries must be aware of their basic rights and the standards of conduct expected from ABOYERD staff and associates**. A Community Feedback and Response Mechanism (hereinafter CFRM) has to be established in order to enable our beneficiaries to raise any potential concerns.

### Commitment towards ABOYERD staff

- ◆ **ABOYERD is committed to protecting the rights of the ABOYERD staff** and to maintain its dignified working environment free of any potential harassment, abuse and exploitation. Every ABOYERD staff member must be aware of the internal procedures to raise concerns about any unethical or unacceptable behaviour of her/his colleagues.
- ◆ Basic principles and standards of conduct of ABOYERD staff and associates are outlined in the **ABOYERD Code of Conduct**. ABOYERD is aware that substantial breaches of these principles can significantly undermine ABOYERD’s core values and vision, and that these would negatively impact on the reputation and ability of ABOYERD to reach its goals

**This policy will further address the following areas of safeguarding: child safeguarding, adult safeguarding, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.** It is to be noted that these key areas of safeguarding are only addressed in this policy and their **more specific aspects are described in different ABOYERD policies**

**and procedures associated with them**, in particular in the Child Protection Policy and Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy.

ABOYERD commits to addressing safeguarding throughout its work, through the three pillars of (1) **prevention**, (2) **reporting** and (3) **response**.

## Safeguarding pillars ○ I. Pillar: Prevention

### ABOYERD responsibilities

ABOYERD will:

- ◆ Ensure **all staff** have access to, are familiar with, and know their responsibilities within this policy
- ◆ Implement stringent safeguarding procedures **when recruiting, managing and deploying staff** and associated personnel
- ◆ Ensure sufficient **gender-balance** in its office and field teams.
- ◆ Ensure staff receive **training on safeguarding** at a level commensurate with their role in the organization
- ◆ **Ensure that beneficiaries are selected and benefits are allocated in a transparent way**; and no individual ABOYERD staff member can decide (or is perceived to be deciding) on the benefit allocation as a sole authority.
- ◆ **Design and undertake all its programmes and activities in a way that protects** people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with ABOYERD. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated. ABOYERD will therefore make sure that **all beneficiaries are**, in an understandable manner and to the relevant extent, **made aware**:
  - ▶ Of the scope of the assistance they are entitled to, the beneficiary selection criteria, and other necessary details of the assistance
  - ▶ That ABOYERD's and/or its partner organisations' staff deliver assistance without discrimination
  - ▶ That allocated goods and services cannot be withheld or withdrawn on the arbitrary decision of one individual ABOYERD or ABOYERD partner organization staff member
  - ▶ That the assistance is free of charge (unless beneficiaries are formally required to contribute financially) and that it is unacceptable for ABOYERD or its partner organization staff members to accept bribes, rewards, gifts, or any favours (including sexual) from a beneficiary
  - ▶ Of the standards of conduct expected from ABOYERD and its partner organization staff members
  - ▶ Of the existence, purpose and accessibility of the CFRM
- ◆ **Follow up on reports of safeguarding concerns promptly and according to due process**

### Staff responsibilities

#### Child safeguarding

ABOYERD staff and associated personnel must not:

- ◆ Engage in sexual activity with anyone under the age of 18
- ◆ Sexually abuse or exploit children
- ◆ Subject a child to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect
- ◆ Engage in any commercially exploitative activities with children including child labour or trafficking *For more details please refer to ABOYERD Child Protection Policy.*

#### Adult safeguarding

ABOYERD staff and associated personnel must not:

- ◆ Sexually abuse or exploit at risk adults
- ◆ Subject an at risk adult to physical, emotional or psychological abuse, or neglect

### **Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

ABOYERD staff and associated personnel must not:

- ◆ Exchange money, employment, goods or services for sexual activity. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance
- ◆ Engage in any sexual relationships with beneficiaries of assistance or their immediate relatives, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics

*For more details please refer to ABOYERD Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy*

Additionally, ABOYERD staff and associated personnel are obliged to:

- ◆ Contribute to **creating and maintaining an environment that prevents safeguarding violations** and promotes the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy
- ◆ **Report any concerns or suspicions** regarding safeguarding violations by an ABOYERD staff member or associated personnel to the appropriate staff member

### **Specifics of ABOYERD partner organizations**

Adherence to and compliance – to the relevant extent – with this Policy and the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* must be a **condition for every partnership agreement or contract**. In case that a ABOYERD partner organisation does not comply with the principles of this Policy, ABOYERD reserves the right to withdraw funding and/or terminate any existing partnership agreements.

As ABOYERD recognizes that partner organizations might have their own existing policies, codes or other instruments, this Policy and the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* does not seek to replace or nullify them. Representatives of partner organisations must ensure that:

- ◆ Partner organization staff and associates adhere to the key principles of ethical behaviour and standards of conduct
- ◆ All necessary and relevant procedures within their organization are set up and monitored
- ◆ CFRM for beneficiaries is established
- ◆ Appropriate actions be taken when the standards of this Policy are not adhered to

## **○ II. Pillar: Enabling reports**

ABOYERD will ensure that safe, appropriate and accessible means of reporting safeguarding concerns are made available to staff and the communities we work with. And that senior staff members are trained on how to investigate complaints.

Any staff reporting concerns or complaints through formal whistleblowing channels (or if they request it) will be protected as described in ABOYERD's Whistleblowing Policy.

ABOYERD will also accept complaints from external sources such as members of the public, partners and official bodies.

### **How to report safeguarding concern**

ABOYERD strives to create an environment in which victims and persons concerned about the safety feel free to report on it. ABOYERD therefore requests all beneficiaries, ABOYERD staff and associates to report to ABOYERD about any suspicion or disclosure of safeguarding concerns.

- ◆ For feedback and complaints that can come from beneficiary communities, ABOYERD has in place a functional **Community Feedback and Response Mechanism** (CFRM).

- ◆ For cases of reporting from ABOYERD staff or associates, utilize the whistleblowing mechanism as described in the *ABOYERD Whistleblowing Policy*.

Staff members who have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding **can also report it immediately to their Safeguarding Focal Point or line manager**. If the staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to their Safeguarding Focal Point or line manager (for example if they feel that the report will not be taken seriously, or if that person is implicated in the concern) they may use the reporting channels described above (i.e. CFRM and whistleblowing).<sup>6</sup>

**All incidents must be recorded and managed in accordance with the relevant investigation procedures and standards as described in [ABOYERD Investigation guidelines](#).**

### ○ III. Pillar: Response

ABOYERD will follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to principles and obligations described in the Code of Conduct (*see part Basic principles of investigation*) and other associated policies, in particular ABOYERD Whistleblowing policy, Community Feedback and Response Mechanism (CFRM) and Investigation Policy.

The reaction to a complaint or report shall result in a confidential, sensitive, thorough and prompt investigation. Such an investigation either may result in the reduction of concern or in further action(s) outlined in the [ABOYERD Investigation guidelines](#), which includes disciplinary action up to dismissal and/or reporting to relevant authorities.

ABOYERD will apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of policy in line with ABOYERD Code of Conduct and its chapter **ABOYERD response to breaches**.

ABOYERD will offer support to survivors of harm caused by staff or associated personnel, regardless of whether a formal internal response is carried out (such as an internal investigation). Decisions regarding support will be led by the survivor.<sup>7</sup>

## Safeguarding principles

ABOYERD observes following safeguarding principles:

- ◆ **Empowerment** - people should be supported to make their own decisions based on the best possible information.
- ◆ **Prevention** - it is better to take action before harm occurs
- ◆ **Protection** - those in greatest need require our support and protection.
- ◆ **Partnership** - safeguarding is about different people, professions, groups and communities working together to cover all the angles in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

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<sup>6</sup> For more details about channels that might be used for reporting, please refer to ABOYERD Code of Conduct, chapter *Obligation to report and investigate all breaches*.

<sup>7</sup> For more more details about *ABOYERD response to breaches*, please refer to ABOYERD Code of Conduct, chapter *ABOYERD response to breaches*

- ◆ **Proportionality** - what we do should be proportionate to the risk: we don't want to be over-protective if the risk is low, as this in itself can disadvantage people and deprive of them of the opportunity to make their own decisions.
- ◆ **Accountability** - as in all our activities, we need to be accountable for what we do in safeguarding.
- ◆ **Confidentiality** - It is essential that confidentiality is maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management should be shared on a need to know basis only, and should be kept secure at all times.



# ABOYERD Anticorruption Policy

In case you have any feedback or suggestions concerning these guidelines,  
please send them to [info@aboyerd.org](mailto:info@aboyerd.org)





# ABOYERD Anticorruption Policy

## Introduction

Agriculture and Bio-conservation Organization for Youth Empowerment and Rural Development (ABOYERD) recognizes that corruption represents one of the major threats for the credibility of non-governmental non-profit organizations in the eyes of beneficiaries, donors and general public, and importantly that corruption might negatively influence the quality of our services. Corruption violates basic rules of healthy competition and brings results that are neither oriented towards public welfare nor functional. In most countries, corruption is legally punishable.

Corruption is in direct contradiction with the principles of transparency, reliability, solidarity, justice and democracy, which are firmly embedded in all ABOYERD activities. Through this Policy ABOYERD reconfirms its commitment to the zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and presents the binding guidelines to fight corrupt behaviour, minimize the risk of fraud and other related malpractices.

## Terminology

Corruption is defined as the abuse of the entrusted power for private advantage of any person. This includes offering, giving, demanding or receiving financial or material gifts, loans, rewards, provisions or any other advantages from/to a third person as incentive to achieve something, which is dishonest, illegal or breaching confidence within the framework of contractual relations.

Among others, the following illegal acts count as corruption: bribery and reception of bribes; granting and receiving advantages; extortion; fraud and embezzlement; agreements reducing competition; money laundering; return of a part of a contractual payment (“kickback”); receiving or providing excessive gifts or hospitality; payment of excessive prices or fees to the third parties with the aim of a personal and/or organizational gain; or any other substitutive services by contractors, suppliers, partners, their employees or through public officials.

Bribery – one of the most common forms of corruption constituting an act of giving money, goods or other forms of recompense to a recipient (usually an official or a person with public/legal duty) in exchange for an alteration of their behaviour.

**Facilitation payment – a frequent form of bribe, usually small unofficial payments made to secure or expedite the performance of a routine or necessary action to which the payer of the facilitation payment has legal or other entitlement.**

**Extortion - an unlawful use of one’s position or office to obtain money through coercion or threats.**

**Excessive gifts and hospitality – gifts and hospitality can range from small gifts (such as diaries) to expensive hospitality (tickets for major events, holidays etc.). Extravagant gifts and hospitality may disguise bribes that are intended to induce corrupt behaviour<sup>8</sup>.**

Solicitation - the act of a person asking, ordering or enticing someone else to commit bribery or another crime.

Unless it should influence the conclusion of a contract or directly ensure another advantage, the reasonable and justifiable giving or receiving the gifts, hospitality or reimbursement of the expenditures do not constitute corruption.

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<sup>8</sup> As stated in the *ABOYERD Conflict of Interest Policy*, ABOYERD defines excessive gifts and hospitality “accepting donations or other forms of benefits in value exceeding 1000 CZK (50 USD or 40 EUR)”.

## Standards of conduct in relation to corruption

As stated in the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct*, **no corrupt or fraudulent behaviour is acceptable**. ABOYERD staff and associates are therefore obliged to uphold the following rules:

- ◆ Corruption in any form, whether direct or indirect, as defined above, is forbidden. If encountering bribery, the response to all cases should be to reject the demands. Corrupt behaviour through or for the profit of a third party (friends and relatives, partner organization, etc.) is also forbidden.
- ◆ Solicitation for a bribe or any other form of corruption is not acceptable.
- ◆ Providing contributions to and/or receiving direct or indirect grants or donations from political parties, politically-active organizations or individual persons is prohibited as corrupt behaviour when any advantage is pursued in favour of the donor or third parties. Accepted donations from political parties, politically active organizations or individual persons are to be publicly disclosed in accordance with general rules on disclosure of donations in the Annual Report of the organization.
- ◆ Providing information which might create an advantage for a tender participant(s) is forbidden.
- ◆ Resources, especially individual financial donations, funds from institutional donors or any other sponsoring services must not be used for corrupt purposes.
- ◆ Provision of facilitation payments or giving of any other non-financial incentives with the objective to assure or expedite an official procedure to which the organization has a legitimate right is not acceptable.

The only circumstance where a bribe might not be avoided is a situation where somebody's health or security is seriously at risk. Nevertheless, all ABOYERD operations have to be planned to minimize the risk of payments being requested under duress. At the same time, ABOYERD's no-ransom policy will be respected in a situation of kidnap.

## ABOYERD commitments

ABOYERD commits itself to apply the following with the aim to minimize the chances of the corrupt behaviour:

- ◆ ABOYERD management actively promotes the message of "zero tolerance towards corruption" and maintains relevant internal procedures and controlling mechanisms to ensure that ABOYERD staff and associates adhere the principles of this Policy.
- ◆ This Policy is disseminated through effective internal and external communication channels and relevant practical training provided to all ABOYERD staff and associates.
- ◆ This Policy creates an inseparable part of all relevant contractual relationships. Disciplinary or contractual sanctions are applied for the violation of this Policy up to the possible termination of the contract.
- ◆ It is clearly communicated that no ABOYERD staff or associate will be disadvantaged when he/she refuses to pay bribes or engage in any other form of corrupt behaviour.
- ◆ All ABOYERD staff and associates are obliged to report any form of corrupt behaviour (including attempted bribes) and any violation or concerns related to this Policy as early as possible. For this purpose, secure, accessible and trustworthy channels of information must be maintained, particularly through the *ABOYERD Whistleblowing Policy*.
- ◆ All acts of corrupt behaviour (including attempted bribes) are duly recorded and properly and promptly investigated.

- ◆ Partner organizations are appropriately evaluated regarding the adherence to the anticorruption principles prior the commencement of the first joint activities.
- ◆ Toward its beneficiaries, ABOYERD communicates to the maximum extent possible that corruption is forbidden within ABOYERD ranks. All promotional materials related to free ABOYERD support and services should contain the following sentences:

*“All goods and services provided by ABOYERD within this project are free of charge. Should a payment or any other compensation be requested in exchange of these goods or services, a senior ABOYERD representative must be informed immediately.”*

- ◆ Final beneficiaries’ selection is based on the transparent set of criteria and ABOYERD staff must ensure that these criteria are observed and that the selection process is free of corruptive practices.
- ◆ ABOYERD maintains coherent Procurement guidelines for the fair and transparent use of public and private funds. ABOYERD management at all levels is responsible for adhering to this Policy.
- ◆ ABOYERD makes sure that its contractual partners bindingly confirm that they reject corrupt behaviour and have never been legally convicted of fraud or corruption. This applies especially to:
  - ▶ Implementation Agreements and other agreements relating to implementation of projects financed by ABOYERD or through ABOYERD by ABOYERD partners
  - ▶ Contracts for Work relating to construction and reconstruction where ABOYERD is the order party ▶  
Contracts of ABOYERD with consultants and freelance persons

Further this applies to other agreements if such confirmation should be required considering the circumstances.

The following sentence is added to all above specified contracts:

*“The Contractor hereby declares and warrants that the Contractor rejects corrupt, fraudulent, collusive and/or coercive practices and that neither the Contractor nor its management have been convicted of an offence or a crime concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata.”*

- ◆ In relation to the Human Resources (HR), ABOYERD management at all levels is responsible for setting up regulations minimizing the risks of corruption, internal nepotism and other forms of possible misuse. This refers mainly to the hiring procedures which should be transparent and based upon the CV, interview, at least two references and relevant testing. Different procedures must be clearly justified.
- ◆ ABOYERD management ensures that the control mechanisms regularly monitoring the adherence to the above stated principles are in place and that they are periodically updated and reviewed in line with the existing and applicable legislation<sup>9</sup>.

## Annex I.

### List of potential indicators of bribery and corruption

Sample list of potential indicators of bribery and corruption, which may be of assistance in identifying acts of bribery:

- ◆ Abnormal cash payments

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<sup>9</sup> See the recommended guiding principles for the NGO policies at RESIST (Resisting Extortion and Solicitation in International Transaction), Transparency International, March 21, 2011.

- ◆ Pressure exerted for payments to be made urgently or ahead of schedule
- ◆ Payments being made through 3rd party country (e.g. goods or services supplied to country 'A' but payment is being made, usually to shell company in country 'B')
- ◆ Abnormally high commission percentage being paid to a particular agency. This may be split into two accounts for the same agent, often in different jurisdictions
- ◆ Private meetings with public contractors or companies hoABOYERDg to tender for contracts
- ◆ Lavish gifts being received
- ◆ Individual never takes time off even if ill, or holidays, or insists on dealing with specific contractors him/herself
- ◆ Making unexpected or illogical decisions accepting projects or contracts
- ◆ Unusually smooth process of cases where the individual does not have the expected level of knowledge or expertise
- ◆ Abusing decision process or delegated powers in specific cases
- ◆ Agreeing contracts not favourable to the organization either with terms or time period
- ◆ Unexplained preference for certain contractors during tendering period
- ◆ Avoidance of independent checks on tendering or contracting processes
- ◆ Raising barriers around specific roles or departments which are key in the tendering/contracting process
- ◆ Bypassing normal tendering/contractors procedures
- ◆ Invoices being agreed in excess of contract without reasonable cause
- ◆ Missing documents or records regarding meetings or decisions
- ◆ Company procedures or guidelines not being followed
- ◆ The payment of, or making funds available for, high value expenses or school fees etc. on behalf of others.
- ◆ Unusual and/or disproportionate delays from government authorities for otherwise clearly defined procedures – expectation of bribe is likely

Source: Serious Fraud Office



# ABOYERD Conflict of Interest Policy

In case you have any feedback or suggestions concerning these guidelines,  
please send them to [info@aboyerd.org](mailto:info@aboyerd.org)



# ABOYERD Conflict Of Interest Policy

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## Introduction

Agriculture and Bio-conservation Organization for Youth Empowerment and Rural Development (ABOYERD) recognizes that conflict of interest between ABOYERD staff and associates on one side and ABOYERD as organization on the other might negatively influence the organization's performance and reputation and might also lead to various forms of corruptive behaviour. The aim of this Policy is to minimize such risks through clear definitions and examples of conflicts of interest, description of the standards of conduct and related responsibilities.

## Terminology

Conflict of interests is a situation in which an impartial and objective performance of working duties or decision making of a ABOYERD staff or associate is jeopardized or challenged by conflict with his/her personal, family, political, economic or other interests.

In other words, conflict of interests is also a situation in which a ABOYERD staff or associate may use her/his working position to achieve personal profit or benefit, in which his/her activities (both at and outside of work) may be in conflict with the interests of the organisation or may place him/her at a disproportional advantage which would be in contradiction to principles of free economic competition.

## Standards of conduct in relation to conflict of interest

As stated in the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct*, **ABOYERD staff may not use his/her working position to achieve personal profit or benefit and have to avoid any situation where personal interests could be in conflict with the interests of ABOYERD.** Same principle applies to ABOYERD associates.

### Conduct forbidden to ABOYERD staff and associates

- ◆ Public political or religious activity in which ABOYERD is used as a means of political/religious propaganda
- ◆ Participation in activities or membership in organizations, alliances and associations whose focus is in major conflict with the activities, values or good reputation of ABOYERD
- ◆ External employment or other forms of activity outside ABOYERD which is in contradiction to the activities, values or good reputation of ABOYERD
- ◆ Accepting donations or other forms of benefits in value exceeding 1000 CZK (50 USD or 40 EUR) from partner organizations or business partners of ABOYERD and keep these for personal use
- ◆ Use of confidential information obtained under the working relation with ABOYERD for personal benefit or for the benefit of third persons
- ◆ Use of function within ABOYERD or referencing to the function for the purpose of personal benefit
- ◆ Preferring members of her/his own family if these are employees of ABOYERD ◆

Entering sexual relationship with ABOYERD beneficiaries

## Forms of conduct or situations which need to be consulted

- ◆ Carrying out business activities in areas of ABOYERD operation
- ◆ Intimate personal relationships with beneficiaries of ABOYERD assistance or representatives of organizations which are in business relation with ABOYERD
- ◆ Membership with organizations, management boards or evaluation committees of donor institutions from who ABOYERD is attempting to apply for funding
- ◆ Participation in managing or control bodies of partner organizations
- ◆ Employing own family members
- ◆ Ownership, shareholding or membership in a company or business which has a business relationship with ABOYERD (this point applies to family members or close relatives of ABOYERD employees)
- ◆ Paid activity (lecturing, training, public speaking) during working hours of the ABOYERD staff member resulting in income exceeding 100,000 XAF (185 USD) / month

## Procedures for resolving conflict of interests

All ABOYERD staff and associates have a duty to primarily avoid entering into any conflict of interest. In case such a situation is or might be likely to happen, every ABOYERD staff or associate has to acknowledge this fact as soon as possible to his/her line manager (or focal person for ABOYERD associates) for further consultation. Failing to do so may result in disciplinary or contractual measures.

Several options are available for mitigation of conflict of interests or mitigation of consequential risks. It is up to the decision of relevant line manager, Executive Committee or Board of Trustees to choose the adequate means of resolving the given situation.

- ◆ **Full removal of conflict of interests** – for example resigning from the managing board of a donor organization, giving up other public activities, not employing family members, etc. In this case, it is not necessary to resolve the situation in the framework of the *ABOYERD Conflict of Interests Policy*.
- ◆ **Refrain from decision-making function** in situations of existing conflict of interests – for example abstaining from voting in a management board of a donor institution during vote related to ABOYERD.
- ◆ **Consultation** – in case it is not possible to resolve the situation or condition by removing the conflict or by refraining from decision-making, every ABOYERD staff or associate is obliged to announce such a situation to his/her line manager, who will jointly decide how to proceed in the case. If the conflict of interests is evaluated as serious, it must be reported to the director of the relevant department at ABOYERD headquarters (HQ) who will consult with the Board of Trustees.
  - ▶ Conflict of interest involving national employees must be consulted with the Director.
  - ▶ Conflict of interest involving members of ABOYERD departments at headquarters must be consulted with the department's director.
  - ▶ Conflict of interest involving members and deputy members of the ABOYERD Executive Committee must be consulted with the ABOYERD Director.
  - ▶ Conflict of interest involving the ABOYERD Director must be consulted with the ABOYERD Executive Committee and results reported to the ABOYERD Board of Trustees.
  - ▶ If conflict of interests is discussed in the Executive Committee, minutes of the discussion must be recorded and archived as a classified attachment to the Executive Committee meeting minutes.

- ▶ Members of the Executive Committee, directors of ABOYERD branch offices have to sign an annual declaration of the conflict of interest.
  
- ◆ In case an ABOYERD staff member identifies a conflict of interest concerning another person from ABOYERD staff or associates, it is his/her obligation to report this fact to the relevant department director or in urgent cases to apply the *ABOYERD Whistleblowing Policy*.
- ◆ In case a ABOYERD staff member is subject to **criminal prosecution**, he/she is obliged to inform her/his line manager immediately.





# ABOYERD Child Protection Policy

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# ABOYERD Child Protection Policy

Agriculture and Bio-conservation Organization for Youth Empowerment and Rural Development (ABOYERD) recognises that especially in situations of poverty, humanitarian crisis and/or conflict, Children can be extremely vulnerable. Therefore, ABOYERD acknowledges as its fundamental duty to protect children engaged within its programmes and activities from any forms of abuse and exploitation.

By determining ABOYERD's commitment to protect children and setting the key thresholds of behaviour desired or unacceptable, this Policy has the following objectives:

- ◆ **To protect children** engaged in ABOYERD's programmes from all forms of abuse and exploitation
- ◆ **To protect ABOYERD staff** from false or malicious allegations of misconduct
- ◆ **To protect ABOYERD's organisational integrity and reputation**, as well as that of its partners, by introducing sound Child Protection Policy that helps to deter from unacceptable behaviour

## Terminology

**Child** means person under the age of eighteen (18) years as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. **Child protection** is an activity or initiative designed to protect children from any form of harm, particularly arising from child abuse or neglect.

**Child abuse** is the physical, sexual, emotional mistreatment or neglect of a child resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

This policy is an integral part of ABOYERD Policy package '*Code of Conduct and other Key Policies*', therefore please refer to ABOYERD Code of Conduct for all the relevant definitions.

## Applicability

The *ABOYERD Child Protection Policy* is applicable for all full time and part time ABOYERD staff, members of ABOYERD Board of Directors, volunteers, interns, consultants, visitors, people acting on behalf of ABOYERD (further referred to as "ABOYERD staff") and – to the relevant extent – to ABOYERD suppliers and partner organizations<sup>10</sup> (further referred to as "ABOYERD associates"), see **ABOYERD Code of Conduct for details**.

## Policy statement and ABOYERD commitments

ABOYERD upholds the rights and obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>11</sup> and so is dedicated to protect children engaged in its programmes from harm, exploitation and abuse. Accordingly, ABOYERD is committed to implementing and maintaining child protection measures. These include:

- ◆ This Policy is introduced and further accessible to all new ABOYERD staff and associates; regular refresher training is organized for ABOYERD staff directly working with children.

<sup>10</sup> In this context, "partner organization" is an entity for which ABOYERD provides financial or other resources, i.e. usually a national or international NGO.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

- ◆ Analysis of child protection risks is included in ABOYERD projects that involve direct engagement with children.
- ◆ Comprehensive child-safe recruitment is in place for personnel directly working with children (see details below).
- ◆ Reporting and responding procedures are in place for potential violation of this Policy.

Monitoring and application of this Policy is the responsibility of all ABOYERD staff, particularly the Directors, the senior managers, staff working with children and the Advisor for Child Protection. The management is responsible for the regular policy review and promotion among the target audience.

## Standards of conduct and forms of unacceptable behaviour

Guidance for behaviour that should be observed by ABOYERD staff and associates is described in the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and other *Key ABOYERD Policies*. By keeping ABOYERDg in mind that behaviour and actions taken towards children need additional sensitivity, this Policy aims to complement the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and highlight behaviour that should be observed and/or avoided **when in direct contact with children**.

### Standards of conduct

- ◆ Treat children with dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, age, language, religion, political or other ABOYERDion, disability, or other status.
- ◆ Behave appropriately; make sure that language is moderated in their presence and refrain from adult jokes or comments that may cause discomfort or offence.
- ◆ When working in the proximity of children be visible and, wherever possible, ensure presence of another adult.
- ◆ **In relation to child labour**, ABOYERD observes the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates that children's work should not jeopardize any of their other rights, including the right to education, or the right to relaxation and play. At the same time, „*state parties shall provide a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment*“. ABOYERD Country Programs should therefore act in compliance with the Convention and relevant legislation in the given country.
- ◆ While implementing ABOYERD programmes that may affect children, allow them to be engaged in designing the action, listen to them.
- ◆ Raise voice (report) when having concerns about child's protection and safety.
- ◆ When collecting data from children (during assessments, monitoring and evaluation, etc.) reduce the risk of potential harm by using culturally appropriate ways of communication, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and not asking about painful experiences. If distressing data has to be obtained, try to use indirect data collection methods and be prepared to refer the distressed child to professional care.
- ◆ When getting and/or using **children's images** for visibility purposes (i.e. photographing or filming a child/children):
  - ▶ Comply with the standard approach as explained in the ABOYERD Media Policy

- ▶ Ensure that the products (e.g. photographs, films, videos) present children in a dignified and respectful manner, with children being adequately clothed and not in poses that could be misleading or seen as sexually suggestive
- ▶ When taking an image of a particular child for a specific purpose (medialization, advocacy, fundraising, etc.), explain how the product will be used and for that obtain legitimate consent from the child, whenever possible also from a parent or guardian of the child
- ▶ Ensure that images of children available for public use do not reveal any identifying information

### Forms of unacceptable behaviour

- ◆ Touch a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive manner (personnel in direct medical care positions are to follow International and/or local country industry best practice guidelines)
- ◆ Use language or demonstrate behaviour that is harassing, abusive, demeaning, sexually provocative, or culturally insensitive towards children
- ◆ Engage children in any form of activity that is demeaning, offensive, sexually provocative, abusive or culturally inappropriate or insensitive
- ◆ 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 favour particular children to the exclusion of others.
- ◆ Physically assault or punish children
- ◆ Engage children in any form of sexual activity or acts, including paying for sexual services or acts or child marriage
- ◆ Do things for a child of a personal nature that they can do for themselves E.g. if ABOYERD staff happens to be involved in any dressing, or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact of lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. In situations with no other option, e.g. when helping a child with disability, these tasks should only be carried out with a full understanding of parents/guardian and of the children involved. There is a need to be responsive to a child's reactions and if a child is fully dependent, talk with them about what is going to be done and give them choices where possible.
- ◆ Access child pornography or any inappropriate pictures of children through any medium
- ◆ Invite unaccompanied children without their and parent's or guardian's approval into solitary; places, unless they are at immediate risk of injury or in physical danger
- ◆ Sleep in close proximity to unsupervised unrelated children
- ◆ Hire children for domestic or other labour which is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage and which interferes with their time available for education and recreational activities, or which puts them at risk of injury

### Reporting on child abuse

Reporting of and responding to concerns and/or suspicions regarding child abuse within ABOYERD programs is in line with ABOYERD safeguarding policy.

All incidents must be recorded and managed in accordance with the relevant investigation procedures and standards.<sup>12</sup>

## Responding to child abuse allegations

ABOYERD is committed to responding effectively, sensitively and swiftly to all allegations and suspicions of abuse. While ABOYERD takes all allegations of child abuse extremely seriously, at the same time will employ the presumption of innocence while pending an official investigation of the incident. All allegations will be thoroughly investigated. Specific steps that should be reminded and taken into account while investigating child abuse allegations are:

### During the investigation process:

- ◆ All efforts will be taken to ensure the confidentiality and rights of the victim and accused person and information related to the incident will only be shared on a “need to know basis”, but where allegations will amount to a violation of laws of a respective country, privacy will no longer be applicable unless deemed necessary to uphold the rights of the victim.
- ◆ The views of the alleged child victim will be considered in light of the documented evidence and that children rarely lie about abuse.
- ◆ The accused person will be always given an opportunity to express their views/opinions/version of the facts.
- ◆ Where appropriate in investigations, ABOYERD will obtain the legal advice and/or advice from any responsible authorities.
- ◆ If appropriate (e.g. the incident involves a breach of this Policy), the accused person may be suspended pending an investigation.

All incidents must be recorded and managed in accordance with the relevant investigation procedures and standards.<sup>13</sup>

### Where the incident is proven to have occurred:

- ◆ Appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken, including, but not limited to: (a) warning; and/or, (b) suspension; and/or (c) dismissal. The disciplinary measure will depend on the nature and severity of the offence.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Where the allegation involves a violation of either the laws of the country in which the incident occurs, or the laws of the Czech Republic or the country where the accused person is a citizen, the incident will be immediately reported to the appropriate authorities and the person will be suspended from employment pending an investigation.

**Where an allegation is found to be false or unfounded**, all efforts will be taken to ensure the rights of the accused person is upheld.

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<sup>12</sup> Please refer to [ABOYERD Investigation guidelines](#)

<sup>13</sup> Please refer to [ABOYERD Investigation guidelines](#)

<sup>14</sup> For more details about *ABOYERD response to breaches*, please refer to ABOYERD Code of Conduct, chapter *ABOYERD response to breaches*

## Safe recruitment of personnel working with children

ABOYERD will not knowingly employ or engage in its programmes, and especially in those including regular and direct engagement with children, persons that could pose a risk to children. In order to fulfil this, **ABOYERD observes following safe recruitment measures:**

- ◆ ABOYERD will assess the role subjected to recruitment for the type and frequency of potential contact with children or access to child sensitive data.
- ◆ Applicants will be advised of their responsibilities towards children. And for roles that are likely to have contact with children, applicants will be assessed on their awareness of child safeguarding and safe practices.

Candidates applying for **positions that will include regular direct and/or unsupervised work with children** will be – before being appointed by ABOYERD – checked as follows:

- ◆ Two verbal reference checks with former employers / professional referees. Applicant's referees shall be specifically asked to provide a view on the candidate's suitability to be working/in contact with children
- ◆ ABOYERD will strive to secure criminal record check from prospective candidates. However, it is acknowledged that this is not always possible. In such cases, selected applicants will provide written disclosure regarding whether they haven't been charged with child exploitation offences in the past (see Annex II)
- ◆ **In projects addressing the child protection and child rights issues**, the candidate should preferably have a specific qualification in a childcare, psychological or social field

For staff and contractors that will not generally have any contact with children (such as HQ based management and support staff), these measures need not be carried out. Should these individuals need to have contact with children as part of their work, they will be subject to the above checks before they can do so. Alternatively, they shall be accompanied at all times during any such infrequent contact by personnel who have been appropriately cleared to work with children and adults at risk

## Analysing risks to children in ABOYERD programmes

Prior to commencement of activities involving children, ABOYERD will analyse potential risks to children that can arise as part of the implementation of ABOYERD programmes. These activities can include training attended by children, working in hospitals or schools, data collections including discussions with children etc.

**In case risks to children were identified**, the project team shall prepare an action plan that will address those risks with the aim to reduce them as much as possible. **In case risks cannot be reduced** to the required level and the project activities would cause harm to children, then the project team shall bring this issue to the country programme management that should decide whether further measures can be taken in order to address the risk(s). **Activities that would harm children must not be carried out.**

## Annex I.

### Disclosure on child exploitation offences

I, signed below, hereby declare that I have never been charged with child exploitation offences.

Name:

Date:

Place:

Signature:



# ABOYERD Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy

In case you have any feedback or suggestions concerning these guidelines, please send them to [info@aboyerd.org](mailto:info@aboyerd.org)





# ABOYERD Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuses Policy



## Introduction

Agriculture and Bio-conservation Organization for Youth Empowerment and Rural Development (ABOYERD) acknowledges as its fundamental duty to protect vulnerable people engaged within its programmes and activities from sexual exploitation and abuse.

## Terminology

This policy is an integral part of ABOYERD Policy package ‘*Code of Conduct and other Key Policies*’, therefore please refer to ABOYERD Code of Conduct for all the relevant definitions.

## Applicability

People in Need (hereinafter ABOYERD) Policy on Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (**hereinafter PSEA Policy**) is fully applicable for all full time and part time ABOYERD staff, volunteers, interns, consultants and people working on behalf of ABOYERD – further referred to as „ABOYERD staff”.

ABOYERD PSEA Policy is as well applicable for ABOYERD partner organizations unless they have their own PSEA Policy containing all the key principles of the ABOYERD PSEA Policy. Key principles are also applicable for the ABOYERD suppliers in direct contact with ABOYERD beneficiaries.

This ABOYERD PSEA Policy is linked to and must be read together with ABOYERD CoC and [ABOYERD Key Policies](#), especially with ABOYERD Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

## Policy Statement

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (hereinafter SEA) are a violation of ABOYERD’s Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy. ABOYERD does not tolerate any form of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as bullying and a range of non-sexual abuse of power perpetrated by ABOYERD staff and partners against any individual regardless of age, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or ethnic origin.

ABOYERD commits to do all the needful for preventing its programs having any negative effects such as SEA by ABOYERD staff and partners against beneficiaries and members of the community. ABOYERD 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, ABOYERD Code of Conduct and other key policies, ABOYERD Safeguarding Policy in particular.

## Core Principles

In order to protect the most vulnerable adults and children, and to ensure the integrity of ABOYERD international activities, the following six Core Principles must be adhered to:

1. Sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse by ABOYERD Staff constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
2. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of the majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of the child is not a defense.
3. Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior by ABOYERD staff is prohibited. This includes the exchange of assistance that is due to program participants.
4. Sexual relationships between ABOYERD Staff and beneficiary is likely to be based on inherently unequal power dynamics and may undermine the credibility of ABOYERD and its work. As such, ABOYERD considers it unacceptable.
5. Where a ABOYERD staff develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation and child abuse by a fellow worker, whether in ABOYERD or not, he or she must immediately report such concerns via the established agency reporting mechanisms.
6. ABOYERD staff are obliged to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse and promotes the implementation of ABOYERD Code of Conduct and related policies. ABOYERD Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems, which maintain this environment.

## ABOYERD Commitments

ABOYERD is dedicated to fulfilling the above stated core principles through the implementation of the following commitments:

### ○ To prevent and mitigate the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse by ABOYERD staff:

- 🔒 Managers and Human Resource team must ensure robust **recruitment screening process** for all the personnel, particularly for person who will have any direct or indirect contact with children<sup>15</sup>
- 🔒 ABOYERD **Code of Conduct** and ABOYERD **Safeguarding Policy** (together with ABOYERD Child Projection and Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy) is **published, distributed** and **duly known** those who cooperate with ABOYERD.
- 🔒 **ABOYERD staff receives training** in relation to Code of Conduct, Safeguarding and PSEA and Child Protection in particular. In addition, staff with specific responsibilities (e.g. managers) will receive additional training commensurate with their role.
- 🔒 **ABOYERD** ensures to have in place **accessible mechanisms for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse** and that ABOYERD focal points for receiving complaints understand how to discharge their duties. This reporting mechanism should not be a separate, parallel system to other complaints and feedback structures in a given area, but rather link to and build on existing structures to create one system for responding to feedback and complaint;
- 🔒 ABOYERD **engages local communities and governments in prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse**. In particular, local communities shall be consulted during development of the Community Feedback and Response Mechanism (CFRM) so that the structure is both culturally and gender-sensitive;

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<sup>15</sup> see also ABOYERD Child Protection Policy for more details about the recruitment process

- 🔒 ABOYERD ensures that **when engaging in partnerships, sub-grant or sub-recipient agreements**, these agreements:
  - a) incorporate digest of ABOYERD Key policies (incl. this policy) as an attachment;
  - b) include the appropriate language requiring such contracting entities and individuals, and their employees and volunteers to abide with a Code of Conduct that is pursuant to the standards of this Policy; and
  - c) expressly state that the failure of those entities or individuals, as appropriate, to take preventive measures against sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse, to investigate and report allegations thereof, or to take corrective actions when sexual exploitation or abuse or child abuse has occurred, shall constitute grounds for ABOYERD to terminate such agreements.
  
- 🔒 All managers are responsible for **promoting awareness of this policy** within their divisions, individual departments or teams.

○ **To identify and act upon potential or actual sexual exploitation and abuse by staff in a timely and systematic manner. In order to do so:**

- 🔒 ABOYERD will **process complaints** of sexual exploitation and abuse in a timely manner, and to **take appropriate disciplinary actions**, including the immediate suspension of the alleged perpetrator from all the activities with a direct impact on beneficiaries and communities until the investigation is ended;
  
- 🔒 Upon the agreement with survivor, ABOYERD will **inform the appropriate authority** which is responsible for conducting investigations for sexual exploitation and abuse allegations in in respect of national and foreign legislation;
  
- 🔒 ABOYERD ensures that **beneficiaries and members of the community know to whom they should report and what sort of assistance they can expect to receive**. All potential and actual survivors of SEA must be fully informed about how the Community Feedback and Response Mechanism (CFRM) works, including the reporting process;
  
- 🔒 ABOYERD understands that complainants and survivors have the **right to receive feedback** on the development and outcome of their case and will act accordingly.
  
- 🔒 ABOYERD provides **assistance**, psychosocial counselling, medical treatment, legal assistance **to any victims of sexual exploitation and abuse**, perpetrated by one of its staff.
  
- 🔒 ABOYERD is responsible to ensure that all the third parties, included partners and suppliers are committed to respect the principles included in the PSEA Policy, in addition to those explained in ABOYERD Code of Conduct and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Their acceptance by signature of a declaration form is a condition for undertaking any relation with ABOYERD. For Partners, in case of missing of its own PSEA Policy, ABOYERD PSEA Policy must be incorporated into the contract and accepted by the Partner.
  
- 🔒 ABOYERD ensures oversight and information systems on sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse reports received and actions taken, in order to monitor effectiveness, report progress and improve efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and child abuse.

## Roles and Responsibilities

*Creating a safe working environment at ABOYERD is everyone's responsibility and failure to act on concerns or disclosures relating to sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation is not an option.*

- 🔒 **ABOYERD Directors**, hold overall accountability for this Policy and its implementation.
- 🔒 **ABOYERD Safeguarding Task Force** is responsible for reviewing and updating this Policy annually, and in line with legislative and organizational developments and hold overall accountability for ABOYERD PSEA work.
- 🔒 **All staff, volunteers, partners and other representatives of ABOYERD** are required to adhere to this ABOYERD Code of Conduct and other key policies, including SG and PSEA at all times (i.e. including out of office hours).
- 🔒 **All ABOYERD employees** are obliged to report any suspicions of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment of others. This can be done without sharing details of cases where information has been shared in confidence. Failure to report suspicion of abuse relating to someone else is a breach of ABOYERD policy, and could lead to disciplinary action being taken. For the avoidance of doubt, there is no obligation placed on any individual to report any incident that has happened to them.
- 🔒 **ABOYERD Safeguarding Task Forces and senior management** teams can offer further support to help staff, volunteers and other representatives on implementing this Policy.

## Reporting and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse

Reporting of and responding to concerns and/or suspicions regarding SEA within ABOYERD programs is in line with ABOYERD safeguarding policy.

In addition to that special direct line for reporting concerns or suspicions regarding SEA within ABOYERD programs can be used: [XXXXXXXXXX](#)

**All incidents must be recorded and managed in accordance with the relevant investigation procedures and standards.<sup>16</sup>**

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<sup>16</sup> Please refer to [ABOYERD Investigation guidelines](#)



# ABOYERD Whistleblowing Policy

In case you have any feedback or suggestions concerning these guidelines,  
please send them to [info@aboyerd.org](mailto:info@aboyerd.org)



# ABOYERD Whistleblowing Policy

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## Introduction

All ABOYERD staff have the **Duty to Report** any known or suspected cases of abuse, exploitation, harassment or other forms of unacceptable behaviour, which are in direct breach of the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and the *Key ABOYERD Policies*. The failure to report any breach of the above-mentioned policies causes the proliferation of dangerous behaviour contrary to ABOYERD principles and values and the victimization of innocent people. All complaints or concerns must be brought to the attention of the relevant persons using the tools and channels described below, such as the email addresses [bindavalery@aboyerd.org](mailto:bindavalery@aboyerd.org) (the tool for **reporting fraud**) and [xxxxxxxxxx](#) (the tool for **reporting any serious complaints when other standard channels were exhausted**). In order to protect the rights of ABOYERD staff and to maintain a dignified working environment free of any potential harassment, abuse and exploitation, ABOYERD management has the **Duty to Investigate** any complaint or concern raised by ABOYERD employees through the channels described below.

**Who can raise concern under this policy:** full time and part time ABOYERD staff, volunteers, interns, consultants and people working on behalf of ABOYERD – future referred to as “ABOYERD staff”.

**What should be reported:** any serious concerns or suspected cases of abuse, exploitation, harassment or other forms of unacceptable behaviour, which are in direct breach of the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and the *Key ABOYERD Policies* or that:

- make you feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards;
- are not in keeping with ABOYERD policies; ○ fall below established standards of practice; or ○ are improper behaviour.

The above mentioned might relate to:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law or ABOYERD policies;
- racial, sexual, disability or other discrimination; ○ possible fraud or corruption or misuse of finances;
- damage to the security, safety, health or environment; ○ grievance, bullying, harassment;
- other unethical behaviour; ○ attempts to conceal with any of these.

This list is not exhaustive.

## Basic principles

### Confidentiality

ABOYERD treats all complaints or disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the complainant is kept confidential as long as it does not hinder the investigation process. Consequently, **this Policy encourages individuals to put their name under any complaint or disclosure**. As the anonymous complaints or disclosures are less credible, the standard procedure cannot be fully followed.

## Protection

If the complainant makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by the subsequent investigation, no action will be taken. However, if he/she makes an intentionally malicious or false accusation or otherwise misuses the channels described below, he/she will face disciplinary action.

The complainant, the subject of the complaint and any other person assisting the investigation will be protected against any form of intimidation, threats, reprisal or retaliation resulting from the alleged incident. If any ABOYERD staff member is found intimidating them, a disciplinary action - up to and including dismissal - will be imposed.

## Due process

The rights of all parties involved in an internal administrative investigation will be respected and they will be at all times treated with **respect and dignity**. All employees who are the subject of an investigation will be given:

- full notice of any formal allegation made against them
- the explanation of the investigation process
- the opportunity to explain and/or reply to any formal allegation made against them before any disciplinary action will be taken
- the presumption of innocence throughout the investigation
- the right to a full, fair, impartial, thorough and objective investigation of the allegation(s) without undue delay
- confidentiality in the conduct of the investigation

Any intentionally false or malicious statements or accusations against another staff member or third party, a lack of cooperation (including breach of confidentiality) or an undue interference with the investigation will be considered as gross misconduct and will result in disciplinary or other appropriate action.

## Duty to report

As enshrined in the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct*, ABOYERD staff has the obligation to report all breaches of *ABOYERD Code of Conduct and Key policies*. Complaints should be reported through the channels described below. ABOYERD welcomes feedback and will treat all complaints and disclosures confidentially, seriously and promptly.

### Disclosure channels for ABOYERD employees

#### 1. Standard disclosure channel

All complaints and disclosures should be addressed to the line manager of the person submitting the complaint.

In case the complaint or disclosure of a malpractice does not originate from ABOYERD staff (i.e. coming from ABOYERD associate, ABOYERD partner etc.), **the ABOYERD staff member receiving the complaint is obliged to act as the complainant and the information must be passed as soon as possible to his/her line manager<sup>17</sup>** (one of the line managers he/she trusts). Such information must not be intentionally concealed.

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<sup>17</sup> Line manager = the person with direct managerial responsibility for a particular employee according to Organigram

If the Complainant is unable to read or write, the line manager receiving the complaint will take notes during the verbal complaint and read the notes back to the Complainant. The Complainant will then be asked to put a finger print to indicate their signature. The line manager will also ask an independent observer<sup>18</sup> to witness and sign the complaint to indicate that it is an accurate record of the complaint.

## 2. Whistleblowing principle and disclosure channel

**The complaints concerning the line manager of the complainant should be directed to the higher-rank manager, according to the schema below.**

In line with ABOYERD's open-door approach and the effort to solve – rather than to conceal – different forms of unacceptable behaviour, **whistleblowing is seen as an act of personal courage** based on loyalty to the organization and its ethical principles. It is expected that ABOYERD staff will use the whistleblowing principle prior to the possible airing of their complaints outside ABOYERD.

## 3. 'Sexual exploitation and abuse disclosure channel

If the complaint concerns Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), a female/male manager should be consulted, as it would be appropriate considering the complainant sex, even if it is not her/his line manager or, if present, to the SEA focal point.

## 4. 'Fraud' disclosure channel

Any complaint and disclosure regarding fraud should be sent to [bindavalery@aboyerd.org](mailto:bindavalery@aboyerd.org). This channel, **linking employees directly to the Senior management team** at the HQ facilitates the detection of financial mal practice, which, if occurred, might prejudice ABOYERD or any of its stakeholders. **The preferred language of communication is English, but it is possible to submit complaints in any language.**

The Senior management team in consultation with the Internal Auditor will decide on the merits of the complaint/disclosure.

## 5. Exceptional disclosure channel

If other standard routes are inconvenient, non-applicable or were exhausted, concerns regarding **serious internal cases of unethical, dangerous or illegal practices** should be sent to [XXXXXXXXXXXX](#). This channel, **linking employees directly to the HR department** at the HQ facilitates and accelerates the detection of the types of behaviour, which, if occurred, might prejudice ABOYERD or any of its stakeholders. **The preferred language of communication is English, but it is possible to submit complaints in any language.**

The HR department in consultation with the Senior management team will decide on the merits of the complaint/disclosure. When dealing with a complex complaint, they **may decide to transfer the complaint management to an external independent organization.**

## 6. Suggestions / complaints box

If the person who wants to make a suggestion or a complaint considers the above-mentioned channels inadequate, he/she can use the **locked box** from **HQ level**, which will be placed in an area where those who wish to access it can do so as **confidentially** or **privately** as possible. The HQ staff will be announced via email about the location of the box.

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<sup>18</sup> The observer will be any ABOYERD employee not involved in the investigation process, randomly chosen.



The suggestions / complaints box will be opened monthly by 2 employees of HR Department. Each month, after the box has been opened, one of the employees will complete the Logbook (see Annex 1). The Head of HR department will keep evidence of the Logbook.

If any suggestions / complaints complete the **Suggestions box form – Annex 3**. This form will also be available next to the box.

All HR department employees who will open the box will sign a Confidentiality Pledge (Annex 2).

When you are not sure about the nature of the problem or it is a combination of the above, seek advice from your LM, another senior manager or report it by sending an e-mail to [XXXXXXXXXX](mailto:XXXXXXXXXX)

### Disclosure channel for ABOYERD beneficiaries

ABOYERD acknowledges that enabling beneficiaries and project stakeholders to seek and receive response for grievances and alleged harm is a critical aspect of accountability. Thus, ABOYERD beneficiaries are encouraged to share their complaints, comments and feedback through the Community Feedback and Response Mechanism (CFRM). This formal mechanism, described in the CFRM policy, provides a safe, accessible and effective channel for ABOYERD's beneficiaries and project stakeholders to raise complaints and feedback and for a response or redress to be given and enables ABOYERD to understand the project from the beneficiaries' perspective.

## Duty to investigate

ABOYERD country management and the Senior management team in Prague are responsible for responding to any complaint addressed to them through the above-mentioned channels. Their reaction to a complaint shall result in a confidential, sensitive, thorough and prompt internal administrative investigation, respecting the principles described in this policy. **All ABOYERD employees must cooperate fully and in good faith with an internal administrative investigation.**

### The scope of the internal administrative investigation

The internal administrative investigation will be conducted in cases of allegations including, but not limited to:

- Financial malpractice, corruption or fraud
- Failure to comply with legal obligations or statutes
- Dangers to the health, safety, security or the environment
- Grievance, Bullying, Harassment
- Sexual exploitation and abuse
- Criminal activity
- Improper, unethical or unacceptable behaviour in conflict with the ABOYERD Code of Conduct and other policies on the organizational or department level
- Attempts to conceal any of these

This list is not exhaustive.

Once a complaint is received through any of the above-mentioned channels, the provisions of the **Investigation Guidelines** should be followed.

It should be noted that the internal administrative investigation **does not substitute a criminal investigation**. In any case in which a crime appears to have been committed, consideration will be given to informing national authorities.

### Investigation guidelines

The *Investigation Guidelines* are to be used as a practical guide for **all managers/heads of units who received a complaint and for Lead Investigation Officers (LIO) in order to conduct internal administrative investigation** of allegations against employees of ABOYERD or against anyone working for or on behalf of ABOYERD. They include detailed information about ABOYERD investigative methods and procedures.

For further information about the investigation guidelines, kindly refer to the *Investigation Guidelines*.

## ABOYERD response to breaches

In cases of substantial breaches of the *ABOYERD Code of Conduct* and *Key ABOYERD Policies*, ABOYERD will take immediate and appropriate action and will support the needs of those affected. This might include:

ABOYERD full or part-time staff	disciplinary action up to dismissal
ABOYERD volunteers and interns	action up to termination of contract
ABOYERD consultants	termination of contract
Visitors to ABOYERD	action up to suspension of support for the visit
ABOYERD associates	termination of contract

Depending on the nature and the circumstances of the case, ABOYERD might involve appropriate authorities to ensure the protection of ABOYERD staff, associates and/or beneficiaries.

## Support from the ABOYERD HQ

Investigations by their nature can be complex, tense and stressful for all parties involved. Therefore, ABOYERD is committed to provide a continuous support to all parties involved in an investigation.

Staff who require any assistance or guidance during the investigation process are encouraged to contact:

- The **Compliance department** ([xxxxxxxxxx](#)) for any procedural matters regarding an investigation
- The **Legal department** ([xxxxxxx](#)) for any legal matters regarding an investigation
- The **HR department** ([xxxxxxxxxx](#)) for any personal and human-resources-related matters regarding an investigation. The HR department should also be contacted in order to request a professional psychological support during the investigation process, if needed.
- The **Senior management team** ([xxxxxxxxxx](#)) for any other serious matter.

**The requests can be written in any language – the translation will always be provided.**

## Annexes

### Annex 1: Suggestions / complaints box Logbook

No.	Opening date	Names of HR staff who opened the box	Content / details

### Annex 2: Pledge of Confidentiality template

*I agree to exercise the utmost discretion with regard to my involvement in Suggestions / Complaints box from HQ level. I shall hold secret all information known to me because of my involvement in opening and managing the content of the Suggestions / Complaints box and I will not discuss any information gained in this process with anyone other than the persons who are authorized to receive it.*

*I understand that this declaration will remain in force after my involvement in the process is complete. I also understand that divulging confidential information to persons who are not authorized to receive it may amount to misconduct and that the signed original of this declaration will be held in the relevant file.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and place: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annex 3: Suggestions box form

Date	
Full name (optional)	
<b>Person</b> or <b>program</b> which the suggestion, feedback or complaint is related to	

<p>Your complaint (include as much detail as you can. Please write on the back of this paper if you would like to include more detail)</p>	
<p>Do you have any evidence to sustain this? (if yes, please mention it here)</p>	
<p>Would you like a response? (if <b>yes</b>, please provide your contact details. You can choose to remain anonymous, but it might limit our ability to investigate)</p>	<p>Full name:</p> <p>Contact details:</p>

