



## **GENDER POLICY**

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Presented by :

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(Secretary to Board of Directors)

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on this 10th day of February 2020

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	BACKGROUND	1
3.0	POLICY STATEMENT	2
4.0	KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS	3
5.0	OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY	4
6.0	PRINCIPLES	4
7.0	SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND HARRASSMENT	4
8.0	MAKING THE POLICY WORK	6
9.0	OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES	7
10.0	RESPONSIBILITIES	7
11.0	REVIEW OF THE POLICY	8



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

UPDN is a local Non-Governmental Organization, and has been working in the field of social development work in Uganda since 2016. UPDN aims at supporting and working with local communities, Civil Society Organizations and government to foster the road safety, driver welfare, health promotion and knowledge management.

UPDN is a non-governmental organization registered under the Uganda NGO Registration Act and operating in Uganda. The organisation is also registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee and Not Having Share Capital under The Companies Act No. 1 of 2012, accompanied with Articles of Association (registered in 2016), which actually form the organisation's constitution.

- **Vision**

To be a center of excellence in development of professional driving industry in Uganda

- **Mission**

Professional driving industry for improved road safety

- **Core Values**

1. Professionalism
2. Accountability
3. Team work
4. Non - discrimination



## 2.0 BACKGROUND

The UPDN Gender policy also partly stems from the strong commitment of the Government of Uganda through Uganda's Constitution that prohibits discrimination of persons on the basis of gender, also recognises the role of women in society and accords both men and women equal treatment to rights, opportunities, and dignity. Alongside this, the National Gender Policy (2007) of Uganda strongly hinges on Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), the United Nations Declaration on Environment and Development (Rio De

Janeiro 1992), the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995), the UN Declaration on Violence Against Women (Vienna 1993) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing 1995) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Gender Policy (2002). Uganda has gained several milestones through its gender policy, outstanding of which is the fact that women are increasingly getting more involved in leadership at all levels, thus bridging the power gap that hitherto existed between men and women. Overall, the policy provides a framework for the achievement of gender balance and fair representation, recognizing the vital participation and role that women must play in society alongside men, freely exercising their rights as citizens in an atmosphere that secures their freedom from discrimination.

UPDN specifically recognizes gender and development advancements made globally and nationally, and commit to contributing towards this attainment. UPDN through its Gender Policy commits to focusing on men and women, girls and boys as vital members of the organisation and its wider programme. The policy, therefore, establishes the basis for UPDN to ensure that and gender disparities are taken into account and dealt with at the workplace, in the process of programme design and programme implementation, carefully integrating gender perspectives in all UPDN activities.

### **3.0 POLICY STATEMENT**



UPDN believes in gender equality and does not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment based on one's sex in the workplace, or while allocating resources and the benefits that the UPDN programme brings, or in providing access to services amongst staff as well as programme beneficiaries.

UPDN is committed to a work environment where all individuals are treated equally, with respect and dignity. Everyone has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful and discriminatory practices, including harassment based on one's gender. UPDN, therefore, sets high expectations for its staff to maintain relationships among themselves and partners at the workplace that are business-like and free of bias, prejudice, and harassment. In this regard, the organisation is committed to putting in place structures

that promote and enforce a code of ethics and acceptable behaviour that this policy represents. Within this frame of mind, UPDN is particularly committed to building the capabilities of girls and women that are in many cultures often discriminated against, as an essential element of its programme to make a strong impact.

This policy is designed for application in all UPDN offices and programme sites. The policy will particularly apply to the organisation's staff and the Board, and volunteers; and in all its collaborations with its partner organisations.

This policy, therefore, shall be part of UPDN's orientation package to staff and Board members, volunteers, interns and other people who regularly perform work for UPDN.

#### **4.0 KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS**

The following meanings are central and maybe alluded to in this policy in the context of UPDN:

##### **i. Gender**

Gender refers to the social and cultural construct of roles, responsibilities, attributes, opportunities, privileges, status, needs, interests, capacities access to and control over resources and the benefits these bring, between boys and girls, men and women. *Gender* is dynamic since all roles that are not biologically pre-determined can be played by either sex, hence making vitally important that gender perspectives and responsiveness are carefully considered at all levels of the workplace to ensure that the specific needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of both men and women, are recognized and addressed at the workplace and programme level.

##### **ii. Gender Equality**



This is the ability of men and women, boys and girls to enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities to realise their potential to contribute to leadership, socio-cultural, economic and political development.

##### **iii. Gender Equity**

This refers to the fairness and justice required in the employment process, in the distribution of resources, benefits, and responsibilities between men and women.

#### **iv. Harassment and Discrimination:**

In the UPDN context, harassment refers to the unwanted, unreasonable or offensive conduct affecting the dignity of women and men at the workplace. This definition also covers actions of discriminatory and harassment nature based on sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, disability or HIV/AIDS status. While the burden of proof lies with the accuser, the accused will be given the opportunity to defend themselves against any such allegations.

#### **v. Sexual exploitation**

Sexual exploitation shall include all acts of a sexual nature including physical, verbal and posturing that are construed to benefit sexually and/or sexually gratify one party normally in an authoritative position over the other. Sexual exploitation shall constitute gross misconduct and, therefore, be considered a ground for termination of employment.

### **5.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY**

The purpose of this policy is to provide conceptual and operational guidance for the realization of the organization's commitment to gender equality and equity among its staff and beneficiaries and to promote respect for all. The policy has the following objectives:

- i. To promote structures and practices that meet and promote the specific needs and opportunities of both women and men.
- ii. To rule out discrimination based on one's sex in all aspects of UPDN right from the recruitment of staff to exit management, and create a gender sensitive work and programme environment.
- iii. To enable UPDN staff to acquire and apply gender-sensitive skills and practices both at the workplace and at programme implementation level.

### **6.0 PRINCIPLES**



The policy is based on the following principles:

- i. Non-discrimination, equity, fairness and justice.
- ii. Both men and women participation are vital. Men and women roles are complementary.
- iii. Focus on roles, responsibilities, needs, interests and capacities of both men and women, and how these are influenced by social and cultural factors.
- iv. Gender mainstreaming, integration and responsiveness.

## **7.0 SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND HARASSMENT**

UPDN is committed to providing a work environment that is free of sexual harassment. It is the policy of the UPDN to provide an environment free from harassment of any nature, and for any reason, especially sex harassment. Sexual harassment violates an individual's fundamental rights and personal dignity, is unlawful, and will not be tolerated. UPDN therefore, considers sexual harassment in all its forms to be a serious offense. For the same reason, UPDN shall provide ongoing anti-sexual harassment training to ensure an environment free of sexual and other unlawful harassment.

Owing to the importance that UPDN attaches to the need for providing a work environment free of sexual harassment, this section devotes extra attention to this central aspect of the Gender policy. For this purpose, this section covers: what constitutes sexual harassment; reporting and investigating sexual harassment; taking action on sexual harassment; and a confidentiality clause.

### **7.1 What Constitutes Sexual Harassment**

UPDN strongly disapproves and shall take offence of any form of offensive or inappropriate sexual behavior at work, and all employees, Board members, partners, contractors, volunteers and all parties that work regularly work with UPDN, shall be expected to avoid any action or conduct which could be viewed as sexual harassment, including, but not limited to:

Unwelcome sexual advances and gesturing; inappropriate jokes; displays of posters; requests for sexual acts or favors; granting or denying employment or job benefits

based on receptivity to sexual advances; foul language; verbal or physical conduct of a sexual-harassing nature that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

In particular, the following conduct and practices are prohibited among staff members of UPDN and in relation to programme activities with partners:

- i. Sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and molestation.
- ii. Sexual activity with children i.e. persons under the age of 18.
- iii. Exchanges of project assets and resources as gifts, such as money, employment opportunities, relief items or services in exchange for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, and degrading or exploitative forms of behaviour.
- iv. Sexual relationships between UPDN and programme beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility of UPDN work.

## **7.2 Reporting Sexual Harassment**



Any employee who has a complaint of sexual harassment by anyone at work, including supervisors, coworkers, contractors, partners or other party, must bring his/ her complaint to the attention of their supervisor, or to the next person in line if the one harassing is the supervisor. In certain instances, if the employee is uncomfortable addressing the matter with his/ her supervisor, the Executive Director may be approached directly.

## **7.3 Investigation**

All complaints will be promptly and carefully investigated by the management, and staff, beneficiaries or other persons who shall be incidentally harassed, are assured they will be free of any and all reprisal or retaliation from filing such complaints.

An investigation will include interviews with all relevant persons, including the complainant, the accused and other potential witnesses. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment, the record as a whole and the totality



of the circumstances, such as the nature of sexual advances and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred will be examined.

#### **7.4 Course of Action**

The management shall review the findings at the conclusion of the investigation, and if the investigation reveals that the allegations are valid, appropriate disciplinary action shall immediately be taken in accordance with the UPDN HR policy.

If the validity of the complaint cannot be determined, immediate and appropriate action will be taken to assure all parties are reacquainted with the sexual harassment policy with the objective to preventing future occurrence.

Any findings can be appealed to the management and/ or to the Board of Directors.

#### **7.5 Confidentiality**



All inquiries, complaints and investigations shall be treated confidentially, and information shall be only revealed strictly on a need-to-know basis. The identity of the complainant usually is revealed to the accused and witnesses, and all individuals contacted in connection with the investigation will be counseled about the need to keep any information pertaining to the investigation to be held in confidence.

#### **8.0 MAKING THE POLICY WORK**

To ensure gender equality and equity, UPDN shall promote the following organizational policies and practices that meet the specific needs of both women and men:

- i. Deliberately make UPDN policies gender-sensitive, ensuring that gender perspectives are including in policy principles and practices.
- ii. Conduct strong orientation to all new and continuing staff, Board members, volunteers, and interns, as well as partners and community leaders on the role that gender perspectives must play at the UPDN workplace and programme activities.
- iii. Promote a culture within the organisation that promotes discussion on gender matters, as well as good gender practices including reporting all cases of harassment, unfair treatment or discrimination on grounds of sex; and the

commitment by UPDN to deal with them through its grievance and disciplinary procedures.

- iv. Availing equal opportunities for employment and making it a practice to discuss and promote gender sensitivity at recruitment panels, also making a deliberate effort to maintain a well-balanced men-women ratio on the staff.
- v. Deliberately promote gender equality at the staff level, management team level and at the Board.
- vi. Implement policies that are family-friendly being sensitive to staff family needs, and avoiding separating families while promoting or transferring staff.
- vii. Flexible work hours and other workplace conditions for female staff with babies, including longer maternity leave and paternity leave, and whenever possible, provide medical facilitation to support staff families.

## **9.0 OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**



The following guidelines shall be followed:

- i. All members of UPDN staff have the responsibility to report concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a worker; he/she must report such concerns via UPDN reporting mechanisms.
- ii. Staff shall have a right to by-pass the normal line-management channel if the line manager is involved in the case, in which case the staff may refer the matter to the line manager's supervisor.
- iii. UPDN shall treat all acts of sexual harassment and exploitation as a breach of the organisation's code of conduct and ethical behaviour in the workplace.
- iv. In exceptional circumstances, a complainant may refer such complaints to the Programme Manager and/or Executive Director, when s/he deems this expressly necessary.
- v. Investigations shall be conducted, and disciplinary procedures shall be strongly applied when cases of sexual harassment are proven, including the possibility of

dismissal without notice. UPDN has the right to take legal action depending on the gravity of allegations.

- vi. Allegations made in bad faith and if proven malicious, shall lead to disciplinary action being taken against the complainant.
- vii. Sexual activity with minors (persons under the age of 18) shall be reported to the police.

## **10.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

Everyone in the organisation is responsible for assuring that the workplace is sufficiently gender-sensitive and free from sexual harassment. More specifically, the following responsibilities shall be exercised:

- i. The Board of Directors shall ultimately be responsible for the compliance of the policy.
- ii. The Executive Director has the responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
- iii. The FAO shall take responsibility for supervising the practical application of the policy in conjunction with the Programme Manager, and project officers.
- iv. The Programme Manager and project officers shall be responsible for ensuring that gender perspectives are embedded in the UPDN programs at conceptualization, development and implementation right at the community level, also ensuring that implementation procedures strongly take into account gender practices. They will also provide needed awareness and orientation on the UPDN gender policy to partner organisations, programme beneficiaries, and community leaders.

## **11.0 REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

The Gender Policy shall be reviewed at least once every three (3) years in order to upgrade it, and bring in new and more contemporary practices relating to the current needs of the of UPDN.

