



THE ALLIANCE OF WOMEN ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

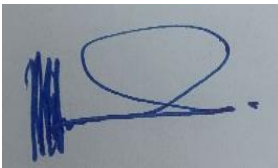
AWAC VULNERABLE ADULTS AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

OCT 2024

AWAC Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy

On behalf of The Alliance of Women advocating de Change (AWAC) Board Members (BM), we hereby certify that this **AWAC Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy** has been duly passed and adopted as part of the Corporate Governance Policies of AWAC.

Signed and sealed this 6th Day of Oct 2024



IMMACULATE B. OWOMUGISHA
BOARD CHAIRPERSON
AWAC BOARD OF DIRECTOR



KYOMYA MACKLEAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & SECRETARY TO THE BOARD

DATE: 6th Oct 2024

PLACE: At AWAC Office

AWAC Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy

1. Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a comprehensive framework for safeguarding vulnerable adults who engage with the Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC). This policy aims to prevent abuse and exploitation while promoting a safe and supportive environment for all individuals. It establishes AWAC's commitment to protecting vulnerable adults and outlines the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers in safeguarding efforts.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all AWAC staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone involved in the organization's programs and activities. It covers all interactions with vulnerable adults, including:

- Program participants
- Community members
- Beneficiaries
- Stakeholders

3. Definitions

- **Vulnerable Adults:** Individuals aged 18 years or older who may be unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation due to physical or mental disabilities, age, illness, or other factors that limit their ability to make informed decisions.
- **Safeguarding:** Measures taken to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of vulnerable adults, ensuring they live free from abuse, harm, and neglect.
- **Abuse:** Any action that causes harm or distress to a vulnerable adult, including physical, emotional, sexual, financial abuse, and neglect.

4. Legal Framework

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AWAC operates under the following legal frameworks and guidelines to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable adults:

- **The Uganda National Policy for Older Persons (2009):** This policy emphasizes the rights and protections of older persons in Uganda, establishing a framework for addressing their needs and

safeguarding them against abuse and neglect. It recognizes the vulnerabilities faced by older individuals and mandates the protection of their dignity and well-being.

- **The Uganda National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2006):** This policy outlines the rights of persons with disabilities, promoting their inclusion and protection in society. It serves as a legal basis for safeguarding individuals with disabilities from exploitation, abuse, and discrimination, ensuring they receive appropriate support and protection.
- **The Children Act (Cap 59):** While primarily focused on the rights of children, this act also provides guidelines relevant to safeguarding vulnerable adults who may have dependents or are part of family units. It reinforces the duty of care and protection required for all individuals within the family structure.
- **The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2019):** This legislation is crucial in the context of safeguarding, as it addresses the prevention of trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable populations, including adults. It establishes legal mechanisms to protect individuals from being trafficked for labor, sexual exploitation, or other forms of abuse.
- **International Human Rights Instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):** These instruments establish a global framework for the protection of individuals with disabilities, mandating states to promote and protect their rights. Compliance with these international standards reinforces AWAC's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable adults and ensuring their rights are respected and upheld.
- **Rights of Sex Workers:** Globally, the rights of sex workers are increasingly recognized as fundamental human rights, advocating for their safety, health, and dignity. International organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), emphasize the need for a rights-based approach to sex work, promoting access to healthcare, legal protection, and the elimination of violence against sex workers. This global perspective aligns with the principles outlined in various human rights treaties, which advocate for the decriminalization of sex work and the protection of sex workers from discrimination and violence.

Nationally, in Uganda, the rights of sex workers are supported by legal frameworks that aim to protect marginalized groups from violence and exploitation. However, challenges remain, as stigma and discrimination often impede the full realization of these rights. AWAC advocates for the recognition of sex work as a legitimate occupation, promoting policies that protect the rights of sex workers and enhance their access to health services, legal protection, and support systems.

5. Principles of Safeguarding

AWAC recognizes that the empowerment and safeguarding of sex workers are vital components of a broader movement-building strategy. By applying these principles, AWAC not only enhances the protection of sex workers but also actively engages them in advocacy for their rights. This approach aligns with global movements advocating for the decriminalization of sex work, improved health access, and the elimination of violence against sex workers.

Through movement building, AWAC seeks to create a supportive community where sex workers can unite, share their experiences, and advocate for systemic change. By fostering a collective identity and solidarity among sex workers, AWAC empowers them to challenge injustices and demand their rights. This grassroots mobilization is essential for dismantling oppressive structures and ensuring that the voices of sex workers are heard in policy discussions, ultimately leading to a more just and equitable society.

AWAC is dedicated to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, including sex workers, through a framework that is grounded in the following principles:

- **Respect for Dignity:** AWAC recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals, including sex workers, who often face marginalization and stigma. This principle involves treating sex workers with respect, affirming their rights as individuals deserving of humane treatment, and acknowledging their autonomy. By fostering an environment where sex workers are seen as valued community members, AWAC promotes their self-worth and combats the negative stereotypes that contribute to their vulnerability.
- **Empowerment:** Empowerment is a cornerstone of AWAC's approach to safeguarding. This principle emphasizes the importance of enabling sex workers to make informed choices and assert their rights. AWAC advocates for providing sex workers with the necessary information, resources, and support to actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Empowerment also includes capacity-building initiatives that equip sex workers with skills to engage in advocacy, helping to create a strong movement that champions their rights and addresses systemic injustices.
- **Prevention:** AWAC is committed to implementing proactive measures to prevent abuse and harm against sex workers. This involves creating safe spaces where sex workers can express their concerns and receive support without fear of judgment or retribution. Prevention strategies include education and awareness campaigns aimed at the broader community to combat stigma and discrimination, as well as training staff and volunteers in recognizing and responding to potential safeguarding issues specific to the sex work context.
- **Partnership:** Collaboration is essential for effective safeguarding. AWAC actively seeks to build partnerships with local authorities, health services, community organizations, and other stakeholders to enhance safeguarding efforts for sex workers. By working together, these partnerships can facilitate access to essential services, create supportive networks, and amplify the voices of sex

workers in advocacy initiatives. This collaborative approach strengthens the overall movement for sex workers' rights and fosters a community-wide commitment to their safety and well-being.

- **Accountability:** AWAC is dedicated to ensuring accountability at all levels of its organization. All staff and volunteers are expected to adhere to strict codes of conduct that promote ethical behavior towards vulnerable adults, including sex workers. This principle includes mechanisms for reporting and addressing misconduct or safeguarding breaches, ensuring that individuals are held accountable for their actions. By fostering a culture of accountability, AWAC aims to build trust with sex workers and the communities they serve, reinforcing the organization's commitment to safeguarding their rights.

6. Safeguarding Responsibilities

6.1. Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- Approving the Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy.
- Ensuring adequate resources are allocated for safeguarding efforts.
- Reviewing and monitoring safeguarding practices and incidents.

6.2. Management Team

The Management Team is responsible for:

- Implementing the AWAC Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy across the organization.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers receive training on safeguarding practices.
- Appointing a designated safeguarding officer (DSO) to oversee safeguarding matters.

6.3. Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

The designated safeguarding officer (DSO) will:

- Serve as the primary point of contact for safeguarding concerns.
- Lead investigations into safeguarding incidents.
- Provide guidance and support to staff and volunteers on safeguarding issues.
- Maintain records of safeguarding incidents and actions taken.

6.4. All Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Familiarizing themselves with the AWAC Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy and procedures.
- Reporting any safeguarding concerns or incidents immediately.
- Participating in safeguarding training and awareness programs.
- Acting in the best interests of vulnerable adults at all times.

7. Safeguarding Procedures

7.1. Reporting Concerns

- Any staff member or volunteer who becomes aware of suspected abuse or safeguarding concerns must report the issue to the designated safeguarding officer (DSO) immediately.
- Reports can be made verbally or in writing, and staff should document the details of the concern as soon as possible.

7.2. Investigation of Concerns

- The designated safeguarding officer (DSO) will initiate an investigation into reported concerns, ensuring confidentiality and sensitivity throughout the process.
- Investigations will involve gathering relevant information, interviewing witnesses, and, if necessary, collaborating with external authorities.

7.3. Support for Victims

- AWAC will provide support to vulnerable adults who are victims of abuse, including access to counseling services and legal assistance.
- Victims will be treated with dignity and respect, and their privacy will be upheld.

7.4. Referral to Authorities

- If a safeguarding concern involves criminal activity, the designated safeguarding officer (DSO) will report the matter to local law enforcement or relevant authorities.
- AWAC will cooperate fully with any investigations conducted by external authorities.

8. Prevention Measures

8.1. Training and Awareness

- AWAC will conduct regular training for all staff and volunteers on safeguarding practices, including recognizing signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and support mechanisms for vulnerable adults.
- Awareness campaigns will be organized to educate the community about safeguarding issues and promote a culture of protection.

8.2. Recruitment Practices

- AWAC will implement safe recruitment practices, including background checks and reference verification, to ensure that staff and volunteers are suitable for working with vulnerable adults.
- All new staff and volunteers must undergo safeguarding training before engaging with vulnerable adults.

8.3. Code of Conduct

- AWAC will establish a Code of Conduct outlining acceptable behavior towards vulnerable adults. All staff and volunteers must sign the Code of Conduct as a condition of their engagement with AWAC.
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment or volunteer service.

9. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually or as needed to reflect changes in legislation, best practices, or organizational needs.
- Feedback from staff, volunteers, and stakeholders will be solicited to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding measures and identify areas for improvement.
- An annual safeguarding report will be prepared, summarizing incidents, responses, and lessons learned.

10. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All safeguarding concerns will be handled confidentially, and information will only be shared with those who need to know, including authorities if necessary.
- AWAC will comply with data protection regulations, ensuring that personal information is stored securely and used appropriately.

11. Partnership and Collaboration

AWAC recognizes that safeguarding vulnerable adults, including sex workers, requires a collaborative approach that leverages the strengths and resources of various stakeholders. To this end, AWAC is committed to building and nurturing partnerships with local authorities, community organizations, healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant stakeholders. These collaborations aim to create a robust safeguarding framework that effectively addresses the unique challenges faced by vulnerable adults.

Shared Resources and Knowledge Exchange: AWAC will focus on sharing resources, knowledge, and best practices among its partners to enhance overall safeguarding strategies. This may include joint training sessions for staff and volunteers, workshops on safeguarding protocols, and the development of shared guidelines tailored to the needs of vulnerable adults. By pooling resources and expertise, AWAC and its partners can implement more comprehensive safeguarding measures, ensuring that vulnerable adults receive the protection and support they need.

Community Engagement and Outreach: AWAC will actively engage community organizations that work directly with vulnerable populations, including sex workers. By collaborating with these organizations, AWAC can better understand the specific needs and concerns of sex workers, ensuring that safeguarding efforts are contextually relevant and culturally sensitive. Community outreach initiatives may include awareness campaigns that educate the public on the rights of sex workers and promote the importance of safeguarding vulnerable adults. Engaging community members fosters trust and encourages reporting of safeguarding concerns, creating a safer environment for everyone.

Intersectoral Collaboration: AWAC acknowledges that safeguarding vulnerable adults is not solely the responsibility of one sector but requires a multi-faceted approach. Collaborating with local authorities, such as social services and law enforcement, is crucial for addressing systemic issues that contribute to the marginalization and exploitation of sex workers. AWAC will work to establish formal partnerships that facilitate information sharing and coordinated responses to safeguarding concerns. This includes advocating for policy changes that enhance the rights and protections of sex workers and other vulnerable adults.

Monitoring and Evaluation: To ensure the effectiveness of partnerships, AWAC will implement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of collaborative efforts on safeguarding outcomes. Regular feedback sessions with partners will provide opportunities to review progress, identify challenges, and adapt strategies as needed. By maintaining transparency and accountability in these partnerships, AWAC can strengthen its safeguarding initiatives and enhance the overall well-being of vulnerable adults.

Advocacy and Awareness: In addition to operational partnerships, AWAC will engage in advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness about the importance of safeguarding vulnerable adults, particularly in the context of sex work. By joining forces with other organizations and coalitions, AWAC can amplify its voice in advocating for systemic changes that promote the rights and safety of sex workers. Collaborative advocacy

campaigns can challenge stigmatizing narratives, highlight the contributions of sex workers to society, and demand more inclusive policies that protect their rights.

12. Implementation and Accountability

AWAC is committed to effectively implementing its Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy through a structured and transparent approach that ensures accountability at all levels of the organization. The successful execution of this policy is fundamental to creating a safe and supportive environment for vulnerable adults, particularly those in the sex worker community.

Leadership and Oversight: The Executive Director will bear ultimate responsibility for the oversight of this policy's implementation. This includes ensuring that safeguarding principles are embedded within AWAC's organizational culture and operations. The Executive Director will work closely with senior management to integrate safeguarding considerations into strategic planning, program design, and service delivery. Regular reports on safeguarding initiatives and compliance will be presented to the Board of Directors to facilitate informed decision-making and governance.

Operational Guidelines and Training: To ensure that all staff and volunteers are equipped to uphold the principles outlined in this policy, AWAC will develop comprehensive operational guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) that detail specific safeguarding practices. Mandatory training sessions will be provided for all employees and volunteers, focusing on identifying, reporting, and responding to safeguarding concerns. These training sessions will emphasize the importance of creating a culture of safety and respect, enabling staff to recognize their role in protecting vulnerable adults.

Accountability Mechanisms: AWAC will establish clear accountability mechanisms to monitor adherence to the AWAC Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy. This will include a designated Safeguarding Officer responsible for overseeing implementation efforts, coordinating training, and serving as a point of contact for reporting concerns. The Safeguarding Officer will maintain a confidential reporting system that allows individuals to raise concerns without fear of retaliation. This system will be regularly reviewed to ensure its effectiveness and accessibility.

Incident Reporting and Response: In the event of a safeguarding concern or incident, AWAC will have a clear, transparent process for reporting and responding to allegations of abuse or misconduct. This process will be communicated to all stakeholders, ensuring that everyone understands how to report concerns and the steps that will be taken to investigate and address them. The organization will prioritize the safety and well-being of vulnerable adults throughout this process, ensuring that any investigations are conducted with sensitivity and confidentiality.

Cultural Competency and Contextual Understanding: AWAC recognizes that safeguarding practices must be culturally sensitive and contextually relevant, particularly when working with diverse populations,

including sex workers. The organization will engage in ongoing training and capacity building to enhance the cultural competency of its staff and volunteers. This includes understanding the unique challenges and vulnerabilities faced by different groups and tailoring safeguarding strategies accordingly.

Policy Review and Updates: The Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding Policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. AWAC will solicit input from stakeholders, including vulnerable adults, community organizations, and legal experts, to inform policy updates. Any changes will be communicated transparently to all staff and volunteers, ensuring that everyone remains informed and engaged in safeguarding efforts.