

# ARK DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



## SAFEQUARDING POLICY

DECEMBER, 2018

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Violence against children, young people and adult men and women is prevalent in all societies, and in recent times is becoming an issue in workplaces which calls for serious interventions. Women and men, children Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and other socially excluded groups may be vulnerable and at risk due to their gender, ethnic origin, disability and age among others due to physical, emotional and mental considerations. Violence in such context includes physical, emotional or mental violence, injury and abuse, maltreatment, neglect and sexual abuse. Notwithstanding the quest to influence social change, breaches of safeguarding can happen since in the process of influencing social change there is the potential of its own activities to increase vulnerable people's exposure to violence and abuse, thereby doing harm.

ARK Development Organization as part of its efforts to ensure safety for all people within the organization and its working space puts in place procedures to prevent and respond to any potential or actual harm caused by the actions or behaviours of staff, associates and volunteers. Safeguarding requires protecting a person's right to live in safety, from abuse and from neglect.

The policy identifies gender mainstreaming as an essential component for making the experiences and concerns of women as well as of men, Persons with Disabilities and children an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in its organizational structure so that women, children and persons with disabilities are not unfairly neglected, marginalized or put at risk.

This Safeguarding Policy has been developed with comprehensive insights into the empowerment, rights and access to justice, leadership and accountable governance, gender roles and relations, and economic opportunities for women, children and Persons with Disabilities. The process was consultative, guided inputs from Board of Directors and other key stakeholders at the regional district and grass root levels with active involvement and participation of the beneficial target groups, development partners as well as traditional and religious authorities.

## ***DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGIES:***

### **Abuse:**

Abuse occurs when hurt is inflicted on women and men, children or young people under the age of 18 or adults at risk, physically or psychologically or in any other way. The hurt could be in the form of physical abuse, psychosocial abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exchanging of benefits, bullying, among others.

- **Physical abuse:** Includes abuse to a child /vulnerable adult, such as evidence of hitting, kicking or shaking, where there is definite knowledge or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.
- **Psychosocial abuse:** where harm is done by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection, such as degrading punishments, threats and not giving care and affection, resulting in adverse effects on behaviour and emotional developments of a child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- **Sexual abuse:** where exploitation of a child, young person or vulnerable adult occurs. This includes rape, incest and all forms of sexual activities including pornography.
- **Neglect:** where basic needs such as food, warmth and medical care are not met, or when there is a failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, resulting in serious impairment of a child, young person or vulnerable adult's health or development.
- **Exchanging of benefits:** for example goods, food and money in exchange for sexual favours.
- **Bullying:** This could include physical or verbal intimidation, including racist and sexist remarks; emotional intimidation, excluding or isolating someone.

### **Gender:**

Abuse is embedded in gender inequalities and power imbalances and can only be resolved through culture change. According to the United Nations, Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationship between women

and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or man in a given context,

Gender is also said to be the relationships between men and women; on similarities and differences in socialization, personality, and behavior; and on the changing aspirations, roles, and status of women in family settings, job opportunities and decision making process.

- **Gender Inequality:** Gender inequality refers to disparities and discrimination between individuals due to gender. Gender inequality is the social construct that results in women not having equal rights, opportunities or privileges as men.
- **Gender Equality:** Equality between men and women is an essential condition for development. The equality concept emphasizes that both men and women enjoy equal opportunities Equality is not possible unless there is an initial recognition that men and women have a different starting point or place. Gender equality is therefore the absence of discrimination. It refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.
- **Gender Equity:** Gender equity is a process or strategy for achieving gender equality. While the long-term goal is equality, gender equity recognizes the existing gender gap and seeks to compensate for this. Gender equity therefore refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and strengths and that these differences should be identified and addressed to rectify the imbalance between the sexes.
- **Gender Mainstreaming:** Gender Mainstreaming is a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation,

monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (United Nations ECOSOC, July 1997). Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts. These are necessary temporary measures designed to combat the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination.

**Social Inclusion:**

Social inclusion is the outcome of multiple deprivations that prevent individuals or groups of people from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live. Social inclusion is achieved when all including excluded individuals or groups of people have the necessary opportunities and resources to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political activities which are considered the societal norm.

**Safeguarding:**

Safeguarding requires protecting a person's right to live in safety, from abuse and from neglect. Children and adults at risks attract the most attention for safeguarding.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE:**

### **Background:**

Ark Development Organization (formally AMPA Resource Organization) is a Non-Governmental Organization operating in the Eastern and Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. Organization which emerged through the efforts of four (4) young Ghanaians and one Canadian who saw the need to offer social service and health education to rural communities. This vision came about when they realized on their regular visit to rural communities that most rural folks needed information about health related and environment issues such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, malaria, good hygiene and sanitation practices.

Since its establishment in 2001, Ark Development Organization has undertaken several community based interventions and social development initiatives in its working communities. These covered communicable and non-communicable diseases, sanitation and environment campaigns, and civic engagements on education improvement, governance, capacity building and empowerment as well as awareness creation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **Vision and Mission Statement:**

The **vision** of ARK Development Organization is to create a society of equal opportunities for all.

Its **mission** is a health, education, governance, agriculture and environmentally focused organization committed to improving the lives of deprived women, children and the disabled through capacity building, evidence based advocacy and participatory innovative programs.

### **Operational Objectives:**

1. To create awareness on communicable and non-communicable diseases.
2. To promote the development initiatives of children, the youth, women and persons with disabilities.

3. To provide a platform for the voiceless and the marginalized in society on good governance and human rights.
4. To promote good practices on environment, climate change, water, sanitation and hygiene, and agriculture.
5. To develop organizational capacity for internal strengthening and external networking towards effective community service delivery.

### **Core Values:**

The following core operating values influence the culture and public image of ARK Development Organization as an effective community-based organization serving a wide variety of individuals and families.

The following core operating values influence the culture and public image of ARK Development Organization as an effective Community-Based Organization serving a wide variety of individuals and families.

1. **Diversity:** ARK understands that deprived and marginalized people are part of society and when given the necessary platform they can perform and sometimes even perform better; we seek to assist as many people as our financial resources support.
2. **Partnerships:** ARK works with partners and development actors who share common vision.
3. **Empowerment:** ARK believes in increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strengths of individuals and communities by helping deprived individuals to make choices and to transform them into desired actions. Again we believe that every individual has certain amount of capabilities and when exposed to them can make a change in his/her life.
4. **Accountability:** ARK believes in acknowledging and assuming responsibility for our finances, actions, decisions, and policies including the administration and implementation



within the scope of our work. We believe that accountability cannot exist without proper practices.

- 5. Transparency:** ARK believes in operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed in the organization. All draft documents, all arguments for and against a proposal, all final decisions, and the decision making process of the organization are made public and remain publicly archived where necessary.
- 6. Participation:** The activities of the organization involve all categories of persons such as children, youth, men and women, the marginalized, vulnerable and the socially excluded.
- 7. Mutual Respect:** Respecting the views of all stakeholders, staff, beneficiaries especially those of women, PWDs and vulnerable adults.

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

ARK Development Organization is committed to ensure that men, women, children, Persons with Disabilities and vulnerable adults working with the organization as staff, partners, beneficiaries, volunteers or stakeholders regardless of age, gender and ethnic origin are rightly protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. ARK Development Organization will not tolerate the abuse of the above groups at risk in any form. This commitment applies to all forms of abusive acts of commitment or neglect and it is the responsibility of all staff and Board Members to raise any concerns they have or those reported to them according to this policy for the necessary sanctions to be applied by the necessary authorities through the approved procedures outlined in this policy. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure the delivery of this policy and to promote it as relevant in all aspects of our work to hold themselves and others to account and to help create a safe environment for all.

**POLICY RATIONALE:**

Safeguarding aims at preventing harm and reducing the risk of abuse, raise awareness so that staff, partners and communities play their part in preventing, detecting and responding to issues of abuse, promote rights of individuals in a way that supports them to make decisions and choices in their lives and define an approach of work that ensures that the best outcome is achieved for all participants as possible. These are critical in the development agenda of ARK Development Organization which is pre-requisite for sustainable development. ARK Development Organization's goals towards ensuring a safe environment are guided by its commitment to International Instruments which include: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC), African Charter on Human and People's Rights, Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, the National Gender Policy of the Republic of Ghana, the Children's Act among others.

In ARK Development Organization concerted efforts are made to target women, children and the socially excluded groups to promote and address equitable access to equal opportunities for all through access to basic social amenities and fundamental human rights for all. The development of this Safeguarding Policy is a useful step in addressing these barriers and a strong indicator of ARK's commitment to promoting safety in the workplace and beyond as well as gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in its work. This commitment is evident in ARK's areas of focus which is service delivery at the district/community level and advocating strongly for the voiceless and holding government accountable on its promise to deliver.

### **SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES:**

Safeguarding principle are sets of guidelines for the implementation of the policy. The principles reflect accompanying priorities that have to be attended to in ensuring that implementation of the policy is not compromised. ARK Development Organization follows these six principles to guide the implementation of the policy;

#### **1. Empowerment:**

ARK Development Organization shall provide all groups with the requisite knowledge on issues of safeguarding to enable them express their opinions and give informed consent during decision making. This principle also informs awareness of safeguarding issues and provides the opportunity for affected parties to abreast themselves with the appropriate channels for grievance redress.

#### **2. Prevention:**

ARK Development Organization shall put in place precautionary measures and mechanisms that ensure that all parties avoid, stop, prevent harm or all forms or possibilities of abuse from occurring. It also involves creating the appropriate environment for information sharing and where to seek help.

### **3. Proportionality:**

ARK Development Organization shall create awareness of the risk and the appropriate response required, and respect what is best for the person in situation of abuse. Proportionality also requires that sanctions and disciplinary measures meted out to offenders should be commensurate with degree of abuse or harm inflicted on affected party.

### **4. Protection:**

ARK Development Organization shall ensure that parties know what to do when abuse has happened and how to offer help in support of people who are at risk.

### **5. Partnership:**

ARK Development Organization shall work in collaboration with local communities, networks, various stakeholders and development partners and coalitions. They shall undertake their activities so that there is a joint role in preventing, detecting and reporting abuse.

### **6. Accountability:**

ARK Development Organization's staff and BOD appreciate that safeguarding is everybody's business, and different people know what to do to keep children and adults at risk safe.

## **SAFEQUARDING PROTOCOLS**

These protocols for safeguarding are steps or procedures that ARK Development Organization shall adopt in safeguarding. The protocol shall serve as practical approaches and strategies for the implementation of the policy, these are organized under four main areas; awareness, prevention, reporting and responding.

## **1. Awareness:**

- a.** During induction, adults at risk shall be briefed on who is responsible for their safety and how to raise concerns.
- b.** All staff, volunteers or any other person performing a duty on behalf of ARK Development Organization shall have access to all safeguarding policies such as the Gender and Social Inclusion Policy and the Child Protection Policy.
- c.** Management shall provide leadership and direction through all forms of capacity building such as workshops and trainings for its staff and partners on abuse and safeguarding.
- d.** The Human Resources policy will be aligned towards the promotion of safety in the organization's workplace and beyond. This policy shall be applied in practice in all aspects of working life from recruitment through cessation of employment including personal and career development and terms and conditions of services.
- e.** Gender and Social Inclusion Policy shall be enforced to support the safeguarding policy as a way of mainstreaming gender and ensuring equity for all persons within the organization and beyond. This shall serve as a reference to awareness on safeguarding.
- f.** A Child Protection Policy shall also be enforced to support the safeguarding policy as a way of ensuring that children are safe in the event of persons working with them on behalf of the organization and beyond. This shall serve as a reference to awareness on safeguarding.
- g.** During staff monthly meetings, staff orientation, community workshops annual retreat among others awareness will be created on safeguarding and abuse related issues.

## **2. Prevention:**

- a.** Human Resource Policy, Gender and Social Inclusion Policy, Child Protection Policy and the Safeguarding Policy shall be enforced to ensure that harm and abuse are totally avoided or prevented.

- b.** Awareness creation channels such as information dissemination, capacity building and regular staff reorientation shall be done to ensure prevention or avoidance of harm and abuse.
- c.** Safe recruitment measures shall be enforced to ensure that ARK Development Organization does not recruit individuals convicted of sexual offences or any other form of physical or criminal offence into the organization or allowed to work with women, children and adults at risk or to serve as a volunteer for the organization. This will be done by ensuring that all applicants disclose all criminal convictions in keeping with the parameters of local employment law.
- d.** All employees shall work towards eliminating discrimination and harassment from workplace and shall have the right to a workplace free of unlawful controlled substances in order to ensure the safety of all employees, our members and the general public.
- e.** An employee, volunteer, or any other persons performing a duty for or on behalf of ARK Development Organization shall not meet and work with children, women, PWDs and vulnerable adults in areas where there are no other people, or sitting in a closed room with a single child, women or vulnerable men in an indecent or suggestive manner.
- f.** An employee, volunteer, or any other persons performing a duty for or on behalf of ARK Development Organization shall not engage in sexual relationships with children or youth who are direct beneficiaries of the Organizations projects.
- g.** An employee, volunteer, or any other persons performing a duty for or on behalf of ARK Development Organization shall not use language or behave towards a child or young person in a way that is inappropriate, offensive, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- h.** An employee, volunteer, or any other persons performing a duty for or on behalf of ARK Development Organization shall not fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch children or young people in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.

### **3. Reporting:**

- a.** All employees, volunteers or any other persons performing a function for or on behalf of ARK Development Organization shall appreciate that they have obligation to report any concerns of abuse.
- b.** All complains of potential or actual abuse or harm shall be reported through verbal or written form to the Organization through the Executive Director.
- c.** If the victim is an employee, report shall be done through his/her immediate superior officer who shall in turn follow the necessary procedures towards redress.
- d.** All complaints and concerns should be written up and information kept in accordance with privacy and confidentiality standards.
- e.** Process of redress shall be discussed at management meeting and the necessary sanctions applied to the offender.

### **4. Responding:**

- a.** When complaint or concerns on abuse is reported, management shall within 48 hours convene a meeting to discuss the issues.
- b.** Notice shall be served to accused party within 48 hours after management meeting on the reported case to give a response to the alleged act of abuse.
- c.** Reports of all complaints, meetings and all other procedures of redress shall be in writing and properly documented in confidential files of both the complainant and the accused and kept by the Executive Director of the organization.
- d.** Due process of investigation shall be commissioned within 24 hours after accused had made a response to the alleged act of abuse or harm.
- e.** All complaints of abuse or harm shall be handled internally by the conflict redress committee.
- f.** An appropriate and proportionate sanction shall be meted on an accused found guilty of a reported act of abuse or harm by the Executive Director in consultation with the Board of Directors upon recommendation by the conflict redress committee.

- g.** Any party found guilty of an act of abuse or harm shall in addition to the sanctions make a written or verbal undertaking in the presence of a witness to ensure that victim is not retaliated against.
- h.** Parties guilty of false allegations, malicious or intentional attempts to lie against another party of abuse and any form of misleading reports shall be given a query in writing to deter others from doing same.
- i.** Upon recommendations from the conflict redress committee, any party found guilty of the offence shall be given a verbal reprimand, a written query or shall be relieved of duty or dismissed from the organization as might be found proportionate by the Executive Director in consultation with the Board of Directors.

#### **APPENDICES:**

- 1. ARK Development Organization: Human Resource Policy, 2015**
- 2. ARK Development Organization: Gender and Social Inclusion Policy, 2015**
- 3. ARK Development Organization: Child Protection Policy, 2015**