



**SAFE  
COMMUNICATIONS  
WITH ABUSE  
SURVIVORS.**

All our communications activity should do no harm to the people we support. We are all responsible for ensuring this.

Everyone has the right to share their story but we must balance this right with being responsible for no harm coming to people as a consequence of doing so.

The best interests of each individual are to be protected over any other consideration.

We must be confident that there will be no negative implications for people from their exposure through ADD International.

Please use the following as a guide for how to work with abuse survivors. This relates to projects that deal specifically with abuse survivors such as our gender-based violence work, where individuals are currently undergoing support for abuse and are at particular risk.

## SAFEGUARDING RULES FOR WORKING WITH ABUSE SURVIVORS.

These principles apply to all our participants, but in these cases additional care needs to be taken.

- All interviews and images of abuse survivors are undertaken with sensitivity in order to safeguard the individual's rights to dignity, identity, confidentiality and privacy.
- Pictures of abuse survivors should be decent and respectful and should not stigmatize community, family or an individual.
- Abuse survivors are properly dressed in decent clothing appropriate to the local custom and are not depicted in sexually charged poses or in ways which characterise them as vulnerable.
- Ensure the use of the 'Two Adult Rule'. This means, that another adult should be present or within reach - more on this later!

You must get informed consent to interview, film or take photos of anyone who is a survivor of abuse. Any images or footage **must not** reveal the individual's identity.

Instead you can take the following sorts of photos:

- 1. Photos that do not reveal identity.** For example, photos of the back of an individual's head, photos of their hands or feet.
- 2. Photos of the domestic setting.** For example objects that might reveal some of the content of the story, or give some sense of the context / environment i.e. a washing line, kitchen utensils, shoes.
- 3. Photos of project materials.** This can include posters, booklets, leaflets, banners etc. about the project.
- 4. Photos of project staff.** For example photos of staff delivering a training, taking a phone call, visiting the field, driving in the car.

With all images please make sure there is no identifiable information in the picture such as a distinguishable landmark, anything with the school or village name on it, or any paper that has the participant's name on it

**1. IMAGES  
THAT PROTECT  
IDENTITIES.**















**2. IMAGES OF  
THE DOMESTIC  
ENVIRONMENT.**









3. IMAGES  
OF PROJECT  
MATERIALS.

**GIRLS AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITY HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AND LEGAL PROTECTION AS ALL OTHER PEOPLE**



Ddembe, did you know that sexual abuse of any kind to any person is a crime? We are going to charge you with rape.

Not with such a disabled woman! I only helped her as no one else would want her!

That is a wrong attitude Ddembe. Girls and women with disability have a right to SAY NO to sex when they don't want it.

I begged him several times not to, but he would not listen!

Suubi, if anything similar to this ever happens again to you or your friend, do not hesitate to report to us. We are here to help you.



National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU)  
Plot 62, Ntinda Rd, P.O. Box 24891, Kampala - Uganda. Tel: 0414 285 240. Email: nuwodu@gmail.com





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4. IMAGES OF PROJECT STAFF.



You could take images of ADD International or partner staff though everyone must sign a consent form.





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**១. សំណើការងារ**  
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## SAFE INTERVIEWS.

When interviewing survivors of abuse, consider the power dynamics that may be at play and your own role in this.

- For example the participant may feel obliged to agree to an interview and disclose very personal information simply because we are funding the project that they are benefiting from.
- Participants may be scared about talking about certain issues for fear of repercussions.

It is very important to balance people's right to share their story - which can often involve disclosing very painful experiences - with not re-traumatizing the individual. Often, you will need to rely on your own judgement about how to achieve this.

Try to think about ways you can put the participant at ease: How are you making sure survivors of abuse don't feel threatened by your presence?

- Throughout the interview check-in with the participant. Make sure that they are comfortable and remind them that they don't have to answer questions they don't want to, and that they can pause or withdraw from the interview at any time.
- Be clear that anything they disclose to us will be shared anonymously, we will never reveal their identity in any of our communication products.

- Review at the end of the interview whether there is anything that they want you to leave out.

If you are recording the interview, make clear that the only person that will have access to the recording is you, and that you will delete and destroy the audio file once it has been transcribed.

If you are not recording the interview you should explain clearly that everything said will not be transcribed in its entirety but that you will choose some quotes to illustrate certain points. This gives you the power to select /edit the quotes of the interviewee who might then feel misrepresented. Hence again the need to be clear on why you are conducting the interview and how it will be used before starting the interview. Even if he/she has signed a consent form, this needs to be reiterated in simple terms.

Earlier we mentioned that when working with abuse survivors you need to use the 'Two Adult Rule'. This means, when interacting with abuse survivors you will ensure that another adult is present or within reach. When choosing the second adult to be present, consult the survivor - is there someone that they know and trust who they would like to be present? Is there anyone that they don't want to be present? Let them have control over who else is in the room with you.

# DOS AND DON'TS IN RECEIVING DISCLOSURES.

If a child or adult speaks to you directly about an abuse, please use the following tips as guidance for how to support them effectively.

## Listen.

- Listen carefully and patiently
- Allow the participant to talk to you in their own words and at their own pace
- Do not dismiss what is being said
- Do not question or investigate – if you need to ask a question to clarify what you are being told, always use open questions.

## Believe.

Reassure the individual that:

- You trust what is being said is correct and true
- You know it is not their fault and that you are sorry this has happened
- You will help them get the support they need
- They were right to tell you.

## Affirm.

People who are harmed, exploited or abused may experience a range of feelings, from sadness, anger and fear to anxiety.

- Affirm whatever feelings they have and avoid telling them how they should feel.

- Avoid being judgemental about the information supplied.
- Stay calm; avoid projecting your own reactions, like anxiety, dismay or shock.

## Refer.

- Tell them that you cannot keep it a secret and explain that you must pass the information on to keep them, or other people, safe.
- Repeat back a summary of the disclosure. Do not ask for any further details as this may cause distress and could jeopardise any formal investigation.
- Let them know, as far as possible, what you are going to do.
- Let them know that the purpose of reporting is to make sure they get the help and support they need.

## Support.

You should provide on-going support in the following ways:

- Offer immediate reassurance that you will help get them the appropriate support.
- Make sure they have someone to accompany them and somewhere safe to go.
- Finish interactions on a positive note, explaining they can talk to you again if they want to.

Where a disclosure does not constitute harm to the person, alternative solutions should be considered with the person disclosing. If it was important enough to the person to talk about, it is important they get help to deal with these issues and not to dismiss them as trivial or unimportant.

Remember the Lead Safeguarding Focal Person and your country team are there to offer help and advice if needed.

### **Take action.**

It is important, whatever the concern, that you act and inform your Safeguarding Focal Person (SFP) as soon as possible. You can do this by contacting them directly, or by filling in the Safeguarding Incident Form and emailing it to them. (Put in the subject line: Confidential and Urgent: Safeguarding Concern). They will want to discuss the concern and the context with which it has come to our attention. If the SFP cannot be contacted, the Safeguarding Manager must be informed instead.

Remember, it's not your role to make a judgement about where a person has been harmed or abused, your role is to pass the information on, so those who have had more training can decide what to do next.

### **What happens next?**

What happens next will depend on the nature of the concern. The SFP will inform the Safeguarding Manager of any concerns they receive and together they will decide what the next steps should be, depending on the nature of the concern.



**SAFE STORIES.**

For all our case studies about abuse survivors you must use an alternative name and only reference the country that they are from, never disclose any further detail about their location.