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**Conditions of Communication**

Biojemmss aims to be a model of good practice in Uganda. It is to be a safe place for those who live there, access our services and work for us. This policy specifically relates to communication between individual Biojemmss members, graduates and beneficiaries and international friends and sponsors. It is written to protect Biojemmss members, sponsors, short-term volunteers and the organisation, and will be complied with at all times.

Biojemmss is aware that some of the youngsters have friendships that were instigated prior to 2009. These relationships are also included under this policy.

**Gifts**

Individual gifts and money must not be given to an individual child, unless agreed by a representative of Management. If a visitor would like to give a gift, this will be shared, where applicable, amongst the Biojemmss Family or respective project. This contributes to a more positive living environment and avoids jealousy and feelings of rejection. All gifts must be approved by Management as certain gifts such as war-related paraphernalia are not appropriate. If you would like an idea on what to bring with you or purchase whilst here, please feel free to discuss this with a member of the team.

If sponsoring or supporting a child through one of our community-based initiatives, any approved gifts will be facilitated through the organisation and confirmation will be given that the gift has been received.

If you would like to give a gift or a form of financial support to one of our graduates (or an initiative they have started), this is also to be arranged through Biojemmss management.

**Visiting**

A face-to-face meeting is often exciting and encouraging for our young people, as well as for those visiting. At this time, Biojemmss is unable to facilitate specific visits to the country for this purpose, unless by special arrangement with Biojemmss management. However, it recognises that sponsors may be in the country for other purposes and wish to visit the children, graduates, one of our projects or partners for a short period of time.

Under these circumstances, an individual must:

* Seek permission to visit, providing the date and expected time of arrival. Permission must be sought directly from the Biojemmss director via info@biojemmss.com. Visitors will not, under any circumstance, be admitted without permission and will be asked to leave the premises until permission has been granted.
* Have any visit supervised by a member of the Biojemmss management team
* Not inform Biojemmss members or sponsored children of a visit until permission has been granted
* Provide a recent [less than 2 years old] DBS (previously CRB) check for every visitor
* Adhere to the Biojemmss **General Visitors Rules** and **Photography Policy (to be provided prior to visit)**

Please be aware that the organisation is under no obligation to provide permission for a visit even if an individual has previously visited or volunteered with the organisation.

**Social networking**

Technology has become more widespread and, as a result, Biojemmss members, graduates and beneficiaries may have access to the internet. Sponsors, visitors and recent volunteers may be contacted via Facebook, Skype, email or Twitter.

We want Biojemmss supporters and friends to communicate with Biojemmss members because this encourages them, and informs you about the difference your support is making. However, communicating through social networking sites such as Facebook can pose a number of problems.

Firstly, it may pose a risk to a child’s or vulnerable adult’s safety. In developing countries, just like in the UK, unmonitored contact between an adult and a child or vulnerable adult online can be a serious issue.

Secondly, it could put you and a Biojemmss member or beneficiary in a difficult position. Some people may put pressure on the child to ask for gifts, money or other favours from you. It is also possible that others may access the child’s account, or your details may be shared with others.

Thirdly, even with good intentions, language and cultural differences can lead to inappropriate communication, especially through such an immediate and informal form of communication. This point cannot be overstated and in serious cases this can damage or hinder the effectiveness of the work undertaken by the organisation with an individual, family or community.

For these reasons, if you are contacted through a social networking site such as Facebook by a Biojemmss member, graduate or beneficiary, do not respond. Instead, contact us and we can follow up with the individual and support them to communicate with you via one of our approved means.

**Approved communication**

Biojemmss recommends that you sign-up to our newsletters and official Biojemmss page to obtain the most accurate and up-to-date information about the difference your support is making.

We still encourage you to connect with the Biojemmss members and, where appropriate, other beneficiaries as they love to receive letters and cards and it can be a great source of encouragement for them to know that someone far away cares about them and their future.

**There are three approved methods of communication:**

**Send an email**

You can send an email via the Biojemmss Uganda email address: info@biojemmss.com. Once the email arrives, it will be printed and hand-delivered. We have recently been given additional guidance by one of our partner organisations and are now recommending that e-mails and letters are written to the whole family or group, rather than individual children.

**Write a letter or card and post it**

Many sponsors and friends send a letter, card or postcard directly to the Biojemmss headquarters. Our post box address is: Biojemmss, Rukungiri, P.O.Box 343, Uganda, East Africa.

**Call a Biojemmss member**

International friends and sponsors must not directly call, text or whatsapp a Biojemmss member, graduate or beneficiary even if that member has provided you with a phone number. If you would like to speak to an above individual, please contact management to arrange when and on what number you can call. Please be aware that Biojemmss management may supervise this call as part of our wider child protection procedures.

**General tips on writing a letter**

If you are a Biojemmss sponsor or friend, you are not obliged to communicate with Biojemmss members. However, Biojemmss is aware that individuals may wish to communicate with Biojemmss beneficiaries but struggle to know what to write in their letters.

Here are some general tips:

* Introduce yourself and discuss topics such as employment, family, what daily life looks like for you, and other interesting things about the culture in which you live (even small things, such as keeping a pet, will be a novelty to Ugandan children).
* Use simple language. English is not their first language.
* Avoid topics such as politics. Backgrounds and experiences will be varied.
* Consider the circumstances, country and culture in which the members live and avoid talking about material possessions.
* Never write your address on the card or letter. This avoids any risk that your details will make their way into the wrong hands!
* Do not promise to visit until your visit has been approved and arranged.

If you find yourself in the unfortunate position of already having contact with a listed individual outside of these regulations, please alert Biojemmss management and rectify this immediately. For those who have volunteered short-term with Biojemmss, this policy extends to all individuals and organisations you have met via the organisation during the course of your visit. As above, communication can be sent via our info@biojemmss.com account unless otherwise approved by Biojemmss management (please refer to General Visitors Rules for further clarity).

**Updated January 2018**