

**ETHIOPIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FORUM /ECSF/**



**Safeguarding Policy**

September 2020  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

## **1. Background**

The Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Forum (ECSF) has been established as a non-partisan, independent, inclusive and voluntary national platform with a focus on the common concerns and challenges of the civil society organizations in Ethiopia. The Forum's operational scope is at federal and regional level with a focus on legal, institutional and operational issues and processes that commonly concern civil societies sector in Ethiopia.

The various Networks and Consortia of civil society organizations operating at Federal and Regional level thus came together and established the Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Forum (ECSF) in May 2013.

### **Vision:**

ECSF envisions seeing a strong and vibrant civil society sector for sustainable development.

### **Mission:**

ECSF aspires is to ensure the existence of enabling environment for civil society organizations sector through strong representation, constructive dialogue and partnership using consortiums and other legal establishments as platform for action.

### **Core Values:**

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Innovativeness
- Inclusiveness

## **2. Rationale to having Safeguarding Policy**

Though the ECSF has no direct relationship in implementing a programs towards specific beneficiaries like children, youth, adults at risk, etc... it is certain that ensuring their protection and realizing do-no-harm will affect them with the programs which are going to be implemented by the Forum. As ECSF, we are under duty to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights and interests of all human kind.

ECSF has zero tolerance for any form of violence against children, youth, adult at risk, staffs & representatives, contractors, volunteers, freelancers, interns, fellows and consultants in whatever type of physical, verbal, sexual, economical, and psychological violence made intentionally or

negligently. This position of ECSF is also clearly stated in its Human Resource Policies and Procedural Manual (Page 28, Section III) that states about the issues of anti-harassment at work.

In all engagements of the ECSF, we shall insure the rights of children, youth, adult at risk, any secretariat, Board Members, staffs and representatives, volunteers, freelancers, fellows, contractors, interns, consultants and guests are respected and any form of violent actions are not committed by anyone of these individuals or groups who are hired for any specific task or duty of the ECSF.

This document will be approved and endorsed by the ECSF Board of Management. Different references related to the area have complemented to this document. Therefore particular attention is given in implementing any program of the Forum, hiring a new staffs, volunteers, inclusion of social media, reporting, and communication made.

The issue of safeguarding will be reflected in the Forum's strategic plan, annual plans, proposals, newsletters, leaflets and other relevant publications and announcements prepared and distributed by the Forum. Most importantly the values of safeguarding will go everywhere with the staffs of ECSF.

### **3. Purpose of the Policy**

The purpose of the safeguarding policy (and its related procedures) is to regulate how we work as an organization with which we come into contact directly or indirectly of children, youth, adult at risk, staffs, representatives, volunteers, freelancers, interns, contractors and consultants hired for and specific task; and all these are safeguarded under the ECSF.

### **4. Definition of Terms**

**Safeguarding:** is a compiled set of policies, procedures, responsibilities and practices that the ECSF has to ensure that it is a safe organization, and all its staffs and representatives who are assigned or hired for specific tasks (including operations and programs) of the Forum with do-no-harm to children, youth, adult at risk.

**Abuse:** a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person, that can be psychological by mistreatment, cruelty, violence, neglect or negligent treatment, misuse of words that are immoral to the other person, physical, financial, or sexual abuse, commercial or other exploitation which results actual or potential harm to the dignity, health, survival, development

of a child, youth, adults at risk, staff and representatives, volunteers, freelancers, interns, contractors, and consultants hired for a specific temporary task or long-term assignment. Abuse can be occurred either once or repeatedly, either intentionally (deliberately) or unintentional. It usually involves criminal acts.

The following acts falls under ‘Abuse’:

***Discriminatory abuse:*** includes abuse due to a vulnerable person’s age, race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, disability or other personal characteristics.

***Financial or Material abuse:*** includes all forms of economic violence and exploitation,

***Neglect:*** includes abandoning or disregarding or unresponsiveness to the physical or psychological need of a vulnerable person, child, youth, peoples with disability, adults at risk, or staff and representatives...that is likely to result harm and/or danger.

***Physical abuse:*** includes hitting, shaking, throwing any case, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, restraining her/his freedom of movement, or causing harm in any other case is considered as a physical abuse.

***Psychological abuse:*** includes all emotional abuse, verbal harassments, humiliation, blaming, and threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, isolation, seriously bullying or withdrawal from any services or advantages.

***Sexual abuse:*** involves forcing, coercing someone to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the person in tact is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including rape or any kind of sexual activity, (more of assault by penetration) or non-penetrative acts such as involving masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching or forcefully unclothing someone without consensus Sending or abusing via the Internet or any similar and media, and the practices of grooming as well.

***Child:*** is a person under 21 and needs consent of an adult/guardian or parent for any decision involving her/his interest.

***Adult at Risk:*** a person 21 or above, who by reason of disability, age, gender, social and economic status, or health condition, etc...are in any context unable to protect themselves from imminent danger which are going to be caused by any form of physical or psychological abusing factors.

## 5. Scope of Application and Compliance

The Safeguarding policy is mandatory for/on all Board members, sub-committees, staffs/employees, volunteers, freelancers, fellows, interns, contractors, and consultants hired for any specific (temporary or long-term) task, and any professional working directly or indirectly for the Forum, as well as external partners and provisional guests/visitors.

The ECSF will also ensure its compliance with the general and/or specific laws and regulations of Ethiopia as well as international and regional instruments ratified by the Country, local welfare and protection legislation or standards that aim to greater protection in the implementation of this Safeguarding Policy. This compliance of the Forum is further applicable to the safeguarding policies and procedures of its local and international partners; and it is sensitive to the cultural contexts of the people where its programs are operated.

## 6. Policy Statement

ECSF has zero tolerance towards any acts of harassment, assaults or any physical and psychological abuses occurred directly or indirectly.

## 7. Responsibilities

### **I. All employees, members of the Board of Management and that of the various committees, volunteers, freelancers, fellows, interns, contractors and consultants hired for specific task or any professional assignments, and the partners of ECSF:**

- a. Are obliged to follow this Policy while implementing any program and conduct any single or multiple activities for the Forum.
- b. In one way or another, will be aware of the ECSF Safeguarding Policy.
- c. Are responsible for supporting and ensuring the Safeguarding Policy is being implemented.
- d. Are responsible to act immediately if any of the concerns under this Safeguarding Policy are complained to be breached by any one of the mentioned parties.

### **II. The Safeguarding Focal Person**

The ECSF Safeguarding Focal Person, being the first contact point regarding the Safeguarding Policy, is responsible for the following tasks under this Policy:

- Handling all records and reports or concerns associated to the breaches of this Policy.

- Recording and reporting complains to the ECSF authorities or management.
- Providing trainings and guidance on the safeguarding concerns for all staffs or assignees in the ECSF.
- Supporting assigned bodies during investigation processes.
- Ensuring the Safeguarding Policy is reviewed and updated regularly.
- Ensuring the right and appropriate implementation of the Policy accompanied by follow up activities.

### **III. ECSF Board Members**

The ECSF Board members are responsible for:

- Overseeing and ensuring the effective implementation of this Policy, and ensuring whether everyone linked with the Forum is aware of the responsibility under this Policy.
- Ensuring that all employees and management of the ECSF in their area of responsibility are informed of and have signed up to the Safeguarding Policy and related applicable procedures while working for the Forum.
- Sign up and endorse the Safeguarding Policy and its Code of Conduct and related guidelines that are appropriate to facilitate the legitimate engagement of the Forum with its internal and external clients and partners.

### **IV. Executive Director, Senior Management Teams, Senior Program and Support staffs**

The ECSF Executive Director, senior management team members such as the HR, finance and administration staffs, and all senior program staffs (in common) are responsible to:

- Support the successful implementation the Safeguarding Policy.
- Ensure the Policy is in place, is communicated to staff and volunteers or contractors, and reviewed and practiced appropriately.
- Ensure whether reported cases investigated on time following the right procedures.
- Arrange meetings to pass decisions when any formal action is needed in the process of implementing the Safeguarding Policy.
- Analyze records and reports of any abuse or violent actions against the Safeguarding Policy for possible managerial decision making.
- Carry out periodic risk assessment and review of the Safeguarding Policy.

## **8. Procedure Overview**

### **I. Recruitment and Selection**

The ECSF, under this Safeguarding Policy, will ensure safe and sound recruitment processes during the recruitment and assignment of any individual or group, including paid staffs, contractors, volunteers, or consultants. In this regard,

- a. The Forum shall outline its commitment to safeguarding children, adults-at-risk and other vulnerable groups at the earliest opportunity in all relevant recruitment adverts, announcements, calls, and interviews, and also as part of contractual agreements with employees, volunteers or contractors. Hence, all vacancy announcements and advertisements made to pursue an employee for temporary or long-term contractual assignments shall indicate the issues of safeguarding.
- b. Applicants for both paid and voluntary positions as well as temporary contractors are requested to incorporate safeguarding issues in their application by disclosing information about their past career, including any criminal record or other matters that has a bearing on their suitability to work with and for the ECSF. Failure or unwillingness to disclose these information will result in cancelation of contracts or possible dismissal.
- c. To a further extent, the ECSF will ask the applicant for any kind of clearance or confirmation from the appropriate body, usually law enforcement organs, to verify his/her previous story in relation to criminal convictions, abusive threats or violent actions and behaviors. However, the ECSF also recognizes that the absence of any relevant disclosure does not guarantee that the individual is safe to work with the Forum.
- d. The contract or assignment of a prospective employee or contractor who has a certain criminal or violent record in a single or multiple cases in his/her previous history that does not prevent him/her from working with the Forum shall be decided by the ECSF internal Management or the Board of Management before signing the agreements.
- e. The ECSF will ensure confidential recruitment process or protect the confidentiality of applicants during and after the recruitment process unless and otherwise suspicious cases are appeared to the employee or the contractor during and after the contract period. The suspicious information or actions will then be subjected to official reporting.
- f. The ECSF will contact at least two references in relation to the applicants, whether it is a paid staff, volunteer or contractor.

- g. All employees of ECSF are obliged to sign and abide this Safeguarding Policy and the Code of Conduct accompanied this Policy. The Code of Conduct demonstrates all sets of good conducts and practices that are expected from employees, volunteers, consultants or any other contracts hired for a specific task in supporting the vision and mission of the ECSF.
- h. After appointment, the ECSF Safeguarding Focal Person will arrange an induction event for the recruited staff/s, volunteer/s or contractor/s to aware them on the safeguarding procedures, there expected responsibilities and their performance; and their training and development needs will also be reviewed regularly by the Safeguarding Focal Person.

## **II. Reporting**

A report of potential or actual abuse or breach of this Policy has to be reported to the ECSF Safeguarding Focal Person (assigned by ECSF Executive Director) to/via the following contact:

W/ro. Tigist Alehublegn

Tel.: +251-118699908

E-mail: [sg.focalperson@fcsf.net](mailto:sg.focalperson@fcsf.net)

- All reports of suspected or known abuses or violations to this Policy must be submitted within 12-hours of occurrence or upon learning of the violation.
- The report always should include:
  - Date, time and location of the case or the incident occurred.
  - Nature of the case, i.e. what was happened.
  - Relevant actions that are happening at the time of the report to keep the victim/s safe or protected.
  - Any immediate help or actions required.
- The report can be sent to the ECSF Safeguarding Focal Person or to the local authorities in Amharic, English or any other local language of the community where the case is occurred.
- Failure to report a violent concern, abuses, reasonable suspicion or knowledge of misconduct in accordance with this Policy will be treated as a serious breach and may result in disciplinary or any other lawful action.
- The reporting agent shall consider evidences to verify the report as much as possible.



### **III. Induction and Support**

Advice, support and training on the Safeguarding Policy shall be provided to all employees, volunteers and contractors by the Safeguarding Focal Person on the following areas:

- What to do in event of a disclosure.
- What to do if they have concern on the welfare of a child, youth, and adult at risk or concern of volunteers, employees or partners of ECSF.
- How to recognize signs of abuse.
- Where to go in case of advice and support within the organization. Etc...

The ECSF Safeguarding Focal Person shall arrange a face-to-face induction event (training, orientation or clarification presentations) for newly recruited or assigned staffs, volunteers or contractors in 15 (fifteen) calendar days after the days of signing contractual agreements with the Forum.

The ECSF Safeguarding Focal Person shall ensure that clear process for reporting and dealing with safeguarding concerns and incidents are widely communicated, regularly reviewed and consistently applied. Anyone who comes across child, gender, adult at risk abuse should report to the Focal Person via email or phone which is prepared for this purpose. Where allegations are made about an employee, careful consideration shall be taken place about the appropriateness of the person continuing to work with ECSF.

### **9. Data Protection and Documentation**

ECSF shall introduce/develop mechanisms to ensure that personal information is kept confidential unless there are agreements between the Forum and the individual. Thus, the Forum will prepare and install a standard Form to collect their consensus and ensure their consent and put in to effect after endorsed by the ECSF Board of Management. Besides, in all engagements with employees, volunteers, contractors or external partners, the ECSF Safeguarding Policy will be briefed and request how they can work together with the Forum under the policy as much as possible.

Similarly, all individuals with documents pertaining to an investigation will ensure that such documents are preserved and the information are protected till they reached the ECSF Focal Person via the aforementioned contact. Hence, no one is allowed to share or forward any sensitive information, safeguarding violations, abuses, or harassment to personal or

organizational (ECSF) email accounts or social media platforms. Equally significant, any data or documents shared with external parties or stakeholders must be made by the Safeguarding focal Person, and also should be approved by the Board of Management or the ECSF Executive Director. All communications made pertaining to the safeguarding issues will be properly documented and archived by the ECSF Safeguarding focal Person both in electronic and hard copies.

ECSF will not use any kind of photograph or names which are not respectful and will expose any further vulnerability, causing degrading to human dignity, or showing sexual images of fully or partially naked of a child, youth or adult at risk. If in any case if using a picture of these groups is mandatory for any reason, their consent has to be recorded in written. For those victimized or vulnerable individuals who couldn't provide their consent consciously due to any reason, therefore, their written consent or permission shall be obtained from their guardians, parents, representatives or lawful delegates.

In all these processes, using technology for the purpose of accessing, producing or distributing any information or violent or sexual images that are harmful to vulnerable people shall be oversee by the ECSF management team, the Executive Director and the Board of Management as appropriate. Besides, these parties will make sure that ECSF has a standardized formant for carrying out implementing risk assessment at all levels of ensuring the safeguarding activities.

## **10. Raising, Responding and Follow up**

- a. All employees, volunteers, or consultants hired for any specific task by the ECSF should report concerns, suspicions, allegations and incidents which indicated actual or potential abuse or any act that breach this Policy not later than 12 hours of the incident.
- b. Investigating and follow-up of safeguarding allegations or a violation of the Safeguarding Policy shall be taken seriously. The Safeguarding focal Person is responsible to ensure all credible allegations are investigated, logged and tracked in the reporting and recording database. This accountability includes facilitating conditions to conduct investigations and making recommendations that will support the necessary actions, decision or remedial measures.
- c. The ECSF will ensure all cases are handled appropriately and effectively. Plus, the information related to the reported cases will remain confidential to the extent possible.

- d. Report shall be made via email or phone number which is prepared for this purpose to the ECSF Safeguarding Focal Person. In addition, the relevant authorities in that location must be informed so that the appropriate response can be launched in accordance with local procedures. The subsequent corrective measures taken and decision made should be clearly communicated to the reporter. ECSF has no investigative authority it is essential that referrals are made to the relevant law enforcement authorities. Depending on the case ECSF Discipline Committee will investigate issues in its authority. But when the investigation is to be made onto the employee, volunteer or contractor of ECSF, the Safeguarding Focal Person will lead the case.

### **11. Revision of the Policy**

The ECSF Safeguarding Policy is subjected to revisions, updates and amendments conditionally based on the recommendations raised from any concerned body. However, a detail and comprehensive analysis should be made by the Safeguarding Focal Person and reported to the ECSF Board of Management as a justification for the revision and amendment process. The Board shall see the report and give response to manage the revision process within two weeks after the report has officially sent from the Safeguarding Focal Person.

**Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Forum /ECSF/  
Safeguarding Policy  
September 2020  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**