



ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT



**CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY
2015**

Mission

Action For Development is a learning organization which, in partnership with other development actors, complements the self development initiatives of pastoral and other rural communities in the dry lands of Ethiopia through mobilizing local and external resources and undertaking programs in rural/pastoral livelihoods diversification, water resource development, community managed disaster risk reduction and capacity building of communities and service providers, with the mainstreaming of such issues as gender, HIV/AIDS and disaster risk reduction.

Vision

AFD envisioned a society where poverty is eradicated, and people lead a dignified life in an enabling environment



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I. Introduction

Action For Development (AFD) is an Ethiopian Residents Charity that implements a program of dry-lands development in the peripheral areas of Ethiopia. The AFD program is aimed at the attainment of food security and sustainable livelihoods at the grass-roots level. Effort is made to realize this through the implementation of different interventions pertaining to building resilient livelihoods, water and natural resource development, and capacity development for inclusive social services, with the mainstreaming of such issues as gender, HIV/AIDS, community managed disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and the like.

In the process of implementing its programs, AFD has developed and used different policies and procedures for undertaking its day-to-day activities. These include the “*Human Resource Policy and Procedures Manual*”, in which the organization has clearly stipulated its work procedures related to the rights and obligations of staff, as well as the management of staff relations with local stakeholders such as vulnerable segments of the communities with which the organization works. One can also cite the “*Complaints and Response Handling Procedures*”, through which beneficiary communities and other stakeholders hold the organization accountable for its actions or lack of them.

However, as the existing policy documents do not go far enough in terms of specifically addressing issues of child safeguarding or protection, it has become necessary to develop a specific policy document on child safeguarding. This Child Safeguarding Policy is developed in order to strengthen the sense of responsibility and accountability of AFD staff found at different levels towards the safeguarding/protection of children they work with in the conventional development programs as well as intermittent emergency responses of the organization. Based on the fundamental rights of children enshrined in a multitude of national and international instruments, as well as the values and ideals cherished by the organization, this policy document is intended to make clear the position of AFD and the rights and obligations of its staff as to how to deal with issues of child safeguarding. In connection with this, it behooves to us to acknowledge our funding partners whose child protection experience we have drawn upon.



2. The AFD Programme and Children

AFD works with people of different ages to live up to its vision, mission and values, which entail, among others, being sensitive for people's dignity. The fundamental principle relating to child safeguarding in AFD is that each person has an inherent dignity. From this flows the principle of right relationships.

AFD is committed to relate to its staff, stakeholders, and the communities with whom it works, and especially to the children of those communities, in such a way as to build, earn and warrant their trust. Moreover, AFD is committed to creating a safe environment for children and young people, and to prevent their physical, sexual or emotional abuse, in accordance with their rights enshrined in the Constitution of the FDRE, as well as international conventions.

Since its inception in 1997, AFD has been implementing various programmes in which children involved, and from which they have benefited. These include such thematic components as the promotion of alternative basic education, girls' scholarship initiatives, promotion of girls clubs, support for OVCs, enhancement of access to water and sanitation facilities, promotion of environment clubs, as well as overall efforts of environmental rehabilitation, emergency response and recovery initiatives, and the like. Through these components, staff often come into contact with children, with expected operational attitudes and behaviours that are sensitive to the rights of children as well as issues of their safeguarding.



Corollarily, AFD works proactively with the community, partners, and contractors towards ensuring that reasonable measures are taken to minimize the risk of harm to children in its programs and activities that focus on children. It will also work reactively, responding promptly to concerns and allegations of abuse, and liaising closely with the community and statutory agencies to ensure that they are properly dealt with. Accordingly, this policy has been developed in order to meet the following objectives:

3. Objectives of the Child Safeguarding Policy

The Child Safeguarding Policy of AFD is aimed at informing the staff, the concerned stakeholders and the communities with which it works, about the organizational commitment and responsibility for keeping children safe from any forms of abuse.

The specific objectives of the Policy are:

1. To create a sense of collective and individual responsibility for child protection during the implementation of children-related activities such as supply of basic social services like health, education and water as well as other humanitarian support in case of emergency situations;
2. To enhance staff awareness on sensitive information concerning children;
3. To strengthen an organizational culture in which all concerned staff members are conscious, responsible, and demonstrate appropriate attitudes and standards of conduct pertaining to the protection of children;
4. To ensure that safety risks and cases of misconduct are identified, reported and addressed in an appropriate and timely manner.



4. Scope of the policy

AFD's Child Safeguarding Policy pertains to:

- AFD staff
- Members of AFD's organs of governance
- Visitors
- Stakeholders such as partners, consortium members, Line Department staff, contractors, suppliers, etc, who have direct contact with children through projects implemented or supported by AFD.

5. Definition of terms

For the purpose of awareness on different forms of child abuse, and for taking into consideration same during the implementation of the Policy, the following key terms are provided:

- Child:** In accordance with Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, anyone under the age of 18.
- Child beneficiary:** All children who benefit from, or come into contact with projects or initiatives implemented or supported by AFD.
- Child abuse and exploitation:** Any and all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.
- Sexual abuse:** Forcing or enticing a child or young person into sexual activity. In the context of emergency responses, it refers to the misconduct of humanitarian worker(s) against children, for example, staff asking beneficiaries for sexual favour in return for relief entitlements and other humanitarian assistance. These could be in such forms as overt sexual remarks/gestures, or intimidation of beneficiaries.
- Physical abuse:** A direct act of physical injury upon a child which is not the result of an accident.
- Emotional abuse:** Failure to provide supportive environment; denial of respect; absence of any positive interest or concern.
- Neglect:** Failure to provide basic physical and/or psychological support; persistent failure to prevent the exposure of a child to danger.
- Staff and workers:** Employees of AFD, fellows and interns, incentive workers, volunteers, and contractual workers.
- Partners:** Organizations with which AFD works for the realization of shared objectives.
- Suppliers/contractors:** Individuals, companies, or organizations with whom AFD has contractual relationship for the provision of goods and/or services.
- Visitors:** Individuals hosted by AFD for visiting AFD implemented or supported projects. It includes such people as journalists, photographers, donors, and other visitors.

6. Codes of behavior related to our conduct towards children

AFD has a zero tolerance policy regarding the abuse and exploitation of children. Taking into consideration the code of conduct pertinent to child safeguarding, the following ones, albeit non exhaustive, are expected to be observed: Thus, we must:

- Treat all children as equal irrespective of their age, sex, ethnic background, language, religion, social status or disability. Ensure that we don't show favor to particular children to the exclusion of others.
- Consider the child's interests as paramount in all decisions regarding their safeguarding.
- Ensure that we don't hire children below the age of 18 for domestic or other labour which violates national labour laws, is inappropriate given their age or developmental stage, interferes with their education or recreational activities, or places them at significant risk or injury.
- Avoid relationships with children that could in any way be deemed inappropriate, exploitative, or abusive.
- Avoid child pornography through any medium.
- Take measures to protect children, including refraining from physically abusing them – including refraining from corporal punishment. We commit to using non-violent methods to manage children's behavior both in and out of the workplace.
- Ensure that our contact with children (whether by phone, email or direct contact) will be supervised, accompanied, or at least in sight of other adults. In situations where this cannot be the case, and where, for urgent or for practical reasons we end up as a lone adult with one or more children, we will inform our line managers upfront or as soon as possible.
- Get informed consent for all interviews, pictures and film we use and take care to protect children's identity.
- Always ask permission from a child and the child's parents/guardian if we wish to take a photograph and don't take photos if we have doubts as to whether the picture will preserve the child's dignity. Pictures of children should be decent and respectful.
- Restrict use of images of child beneficiaries to professional, respectful, awareness raising, fund raising, publicity and programmatic purposes; ensure that any image or recorded case history of a child does not place him/her at risk or render him/her vulnerable to any form of abuse.
- Avoid touching sexual areas of the body and don't help children do intimate things such as going to the toilet or bathing when they can do these for themselves.
- Refrain from using language or act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, harass, or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- Stop any interaction with a child if a child says "stop", or if the child appears uncomfortable with the interaction.
- Assess the safeguarding risks for all events in which we are involved, and plan for how to mitigate these.

7. Operational/implementation provisions

AFD will ensure that its employees are informed of their obligations to abide by the codes of behavior outlined above, and strives to operationalize the policy through, among others, the following:

- AFD shall progressively implement its Child Safeguarding Policy and monitor its application overtime.
- AFD is committed to ensuring that its workers are suitable to work with children and are informed of their responsibility to uphold and abide by this policy. In line with this:
 - Reference checks, criminal background checks or other available means are conducted prior to an employment offer being extended to those who will be in direct contact with children;
 - For positions involving direct contact with children candidates will be required to provide a minimum of three references from supervisors or persons who are knowledgeable about the candidate's work with children;
 - Candidates for posts involving direct contact with children must be vetted through targeted questioning;
 - Employment documentation such as contracts, job descriptions, induction materials and the like shall include responsibility to abide by the Child Safeguarding Policy;
 - Contract agreements and MOUs shall include the requirement that suppliers/contractors, and partners do not engage in any form of abuse or exploitation of children.
- AFD is committed to ensuring through training and orientation that its staff have the knowledge they need to uphold and abide by this Child Safeguarding Policy, with a view to ensuring that no harm, whether intentional or unintentional, come to children as a result of its operations.
- Project proposals prepared by AFD will demonstrate that the risks children may face as a result of a project have been identified and addressed, and will be monitored.

8. Complaints handling and response procedures

It is expected that the codes of conduct listed above have been and will be observed by AFD staff members at workplaces like offices, field operational areas, working sites, ABE centres, service and distribution centres, and the like. However, in case of any form of abuse inflicted on children of the communities with whom we work, the allegations will be scrutinized by the procedures indicated in **Article 10** of “Complaints Handling and Response Mechanisms” policy document of the organization which was endorsed in January 2013. In line with this, AFD is committed to ensuring that allegations of violations of this Child Safeguarding Policy are reported, investigated, and responded to in a timely, fair, transparent and consistent manner.

9. Implications of Non-Compliance

Failure of AFD staff to uphold or comply with the Child Safeguarding Policy will be ground for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or contract. The following points, particularly, will be ground for summary dismissal:

- Inducing or coercing a child to engage in any sexual activity.
- Any commercially exploitative activities with children including child labor or trafficking.
- Use of children’s photographs for pornographic or other inappropriate use.
- Subjecting any child to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.



10. Management Structure

AFD will put in place a clearly defined and accessible management structure to ensure the coordinated and consistent implementation and monitoring of this policy throughout the organization:

a. Complaints Handling Committees at field office and HQ levels

- Will receive complaints from victims or others;
- Investigate allegations; Recommend
- measures as appropriate.

b. HR and Administration Department

- Coordinates the implementation of the policy;
- Responds to findings of child abuse or non-compliance with this policy;
- Oversees the orientation and training of staff on matters of child safe guarding;
- Backstops other work units with regard to the implementation of the policy;
- Review the policy and recommend revisions as appropriate.

c. Planning, Monitoring, Review and Compliance Service

- Monitors the implementation of the policy.

d. Heads of work units and supervisors

- Ensure that staff under their supervision comply with this policy;
- Report and respond to reports of policy violations.

e. Board of Directors

- Approval of the policy
- Approval of policy amendment



11. Policy Review

This Child Safeguarding Policy shall be subject to periodic review. All recommended revisions to the policy shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Directors of AFD.

For any child safeguarding concerns at our working sites, you may contact us through the following addresses:

- **AFD Head Office, Addis Ababa**
Tel. 011-662-59-76;
Post Office Box 19859 AA;
email afd@ethionet.et/ afdethiopia@gmail.com
- **AFD Borana Field Coordination Office, Yabello**
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