MELCA-Ethiopia
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Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action

(MELCA-Ethiopia)



CHILD, YOUTH AND ADULTS SAFEGUARDING POLICY

November, 2025

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Movement for the Ecological Learning and Community Action (MELCA -Ethiopia), founded in 2004, is a nonprofit and non-governmental organization registered with a registration number 0348 with the Agency for Civil Society Organizations on 14 November 2019 as per the new Civil Society Organizations Proclamation No. 1113/2019.

The vision of MELCA-Ethiopia is to see healthy and prosperous people who preserve their bio-cultural diversity. Accordingly, its mission is to work toward the creation of healthy ecosystems, resilient communities, and a critical young generation by developing and institutionalizing innovative approaches and experiences. The four programmatic (thematic) areas to realize this mission are agro-ecology, environmental governance, eco-friendly livelihoods promotion, and women, youth, and child empowerment. MELCA-Ethiopia currently operates six project offices across four regional states: Oromia, SNNPR, Amhara, and Gambella.

Movement for Ecological Learning and Community Action (MELCA-Ethiopia) strives to make a positive contribution to a strong and safe environment and recognizes the right of every individual to feel safe. MELCA-Ethiopia comes into contact with vulnerable children, youth, and adults through the following activities:

- Provision of capacity building and awareness trainings
- Provision of supportive materials
- Organizing/facilitating different workshops
- Staff recruitment
- Environmental Clubs
- Organizing IGA, SHG groups, PFM (Participatory Forest Managements), SNS (Sacred Natural Site) etc…
- **SEGNI(Social Empowerment through Group Nature Interaction)**
- Student community action
- Provision health care or health services
- Teaching(tutorial class) or instructing students

The types of contact with vulnerable children, youth and adults will be facilitating and attending different trainings, workshops, meetings, community based events, peer education sessions, whether in person or virtual, and using different communication mediums.

This policy seeks to ensure that MELCA-Ethiopia undertakes its responsibilities with regard to protection of vulnerable adults and children will respond to concerns appropriately. The policy establishes a framework to support paid and unpaid staff in their practices and clarifies the organization's expectations.

MELCA-Ethiopia, therefore, as part of its **Women, Youth and Child Empowerments** program and for the provision of guidance in its overall operational undertakings, our organization has issued this Safeguarding Policy.

2. Policy statement

Convention on the rights of the child (CRC)**:** An international agreement to ensure that all children enjoy their rights and have the special care and protection they need as children. The United Nation adopted the CRC in 1989. Almost every country has agreed to these rights. (http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/484-540.htm).

Care Act 2014, Health and Safety at work Act 1974; Safeguarding Vulnerable groups Act 2006 are the principal piece of legislation governing this policy which set out a clear legal framework for how local authorities and other parts of the system should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

MELCA-Ethiopia believes that all children and vulnerable adults and youth, regardless of age, ability or disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sex or socio-economic background, have the right to be protected from abuse, neglect or exploitation. The policy recognizes that the welfare and interests of children and vulnerable adults and youth is paramount in all circumstances. MELCA-Ethiopia acknowledges that some children and vulnerable youth such as those with disabilities, unemployed, homeless youth, those who have been displaced and those who hold refugee status, poor, domestic migrants can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we share the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

MELCA-Ethiopia recognizes that as an organization we have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults and youth and to keep them safe. All individuals

who represent MELCA-Ethiopia include staff, volunteers, member organizations, community organizations, all beneficiaries and those working for affiliated civil society organizations, have a responsibility to raise any concerns they have or any concerns that are reported to them according to this policy. These concerns include those relating to the unsafe or abusive conduct of individuals who represent MELCA-Ethiopia towards children or vulnerable adults. It is the responsibility of MELCA-Ethiopia's safeguarding focal person, Executive and Board members to ensure that safeguarding concerns are managed sensitively, proportionately and in accordance to this policy and relevant legislative guidance.

The policy and procedures described in this document will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved with MELCA-Ethiopia. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed immediately and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organization.

The policy has vision, goal and objective.

i. Vision

Seeing children, youth, and adults develop strong moral values that respect their family, society, country, and environment.

ii. Goal

MELCA-Ethiopia ensures and encourages the participation of children, youth and adults in their aspects to create a suitable environment.

iii. Objective

The objective of this policy is to protect children, youth, adults disabilities and vulnerable from all forms of abuse in the course of our action.

3. Definition

Safeguarding is about embedding practices throughout the organization to ensure the protection of vulnerable people wherever possible and responding to circumstances that arise. Protect from harm or damage with an appropriate measure. Safeguarding is "A framework which safeguards employees from exploitation."

a. Forms of Abuse

Abuse can be caused by those inflicting harm or those who fail to act to prevent harm. Abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. It can take a number of forms, including the following:

- **Physical abuse**: includes hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.
- **Domestic violence and Domestic abuse:** also called "domestic violence" or "intimate partner violence", can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Domestic abuse is typically manifested as a pattern of abusive behavior toward an intimate partner in a dating or family relationship, where the abuser exerts power and control over the victim.

  Domestic abuse can be mental, physical, economic or sexual in nature. Incidents are rarely isolated, and usually escalate in frequency and severity. Domestic abuse may culminate in serious physical injury or death.
- **Sexual abuse** - involves forcing, enticing or coercing someone to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the vulnerable person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing, early and forced marriage, involvement in pornography. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving a vulnerable person in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse can be carried out by adults or other children.
- **Psychological abuse:** - includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Examples include not giving a vulnerable person opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on a vulnerable person, which may include interactions that are beyond a vulnerable person's developmental

capability. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), or the exploitation or corruption of a vulnerable person

- **Financial or material abuse**: including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills property, inheritance, financial transactions, the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Modern slavery:** Encompassing slavery, human trafficking, forced labor and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- **Discriminatory abuse:** Including racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's impairment, disability, age or illness, gender reassignment, sex and sexual preferences, religious beliefs/domination, race, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatments.
- **Organizational abuse:** Involves the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behavior that amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping. It includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other care providers.
- **Neglect and acts of omission:** Including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, food, drink and heating.
- **Self-neglect**: Covers a wide range of behavior including neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and behavior.
- **Female genital mutilation** (FMG): Involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. The age at which girls undergo FGM varies enormously according to the community. The procedure may be carried out when the girl is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before

marriage or during the first pregnancy. FGM constitutes a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls and has severe physical and psychological consequences.

4. Responsibilities

All staff (paid or unpaid) have responsibility to follow the guidance lay out in this policy and related policies, and to pass on any welfare concerns using the required procedures.

We expect all staff (paid or unpaid) to promote good practice by being an excellent role model, contribute to discussions about safeguarding and to positively involve people in developing safe practices.

a. MELCA-Ethiopia Executive Director

MELCA-Ethiopia Executive's director is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy and associated procedures and ensuring that everyone linked with MELCA-Ethiopia is equipped and supported to meet their responsibilities. Set the organizational culture of safeguarding. He is the strategic lead for safeguarding across the organization.

b. Manager/program team

Managers at all levels are responsible for Team Members, Partners, visitors and beneficiaries are aware of the policy and are supported to implement and work in accordance with it, as well as creating a management culture that encourages a focus on protection. They must ensure that they are responsive, acting immediately if they become aware of any safeguarding concerns, and supportive towards employees or volunteers who complain about breaches in this policy.

c. The designated focal person: is responsible for coordinating safeguarding activities to achieve the network objectives and expected outcomes with regard to safeguarding.

- Monitoring and recording protection concerns
- Ensuring referrals to the relevant authorities happen without delay
- Updating protection training for all staff
- Ensuring this policy is reviewed every five years or earlier if necessary
- Ensuring it is implemented throughout the organization and safeguarding training given

- Ensuring monitoring and recording procedures are implemented
- Strengthen the capacity of HR in delivering Safeguarding Inductions
- Ensure that all programming is designed, implemented and monitored through a Safeguarding lens
- Support staff to take proactive steps to ensure that all programming activity identifies the potential risks and works to eliminate and mitigate those risks.

d. Admin and HR staff are responsible for:

- Implementing the necessary protective procedures when recruiting new staff.
- Documenting who has signed the policy.
- Ensuring that briefing on this policy is built into Induction processes

e. MELCA-Ethiopia Board Members

MELCA-Ethiopia board members report the overall achievements and challenges of implementation of the child, youth and adults safeguarding policy to the general assembly.

f. MELCA-Ethiopia General Assembly

MELCA-Ethiopia general assembly holds ultimate accountability for this policy.

g. Local Area Child Safeguarding Committee (LACSC)

The local committees are responsible to protect vulnerable in their community and to report any harm to the concerned body.

5. Scope of the policy

The scope of this Safeguarding Policy is broad ranging and in practice, it will be implemented via a range of policies and procedures within the organization. These **Policies** include:

a. Prohibition of the use of Child Labor

- MELCA-Ethiopia will not use child labor in all its operation and make the necessary measures to prevent this from happening.

b. Avoidance and prevention of child abuse

- Treatment to lessen harms of abuse and neglect exposure

c. Inclusions

- Children of all abilities have equal access to and participate meaningfully in child care programs.

d. Child care, safeguards and service

- MELCA-Ethiopia take action to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm and ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care.

e. Contribution to the overall all rounded children development

- MELCA-Ethiopia contributes to children's development by providing food, social support, and scholastic materials without gender discrimination

f. Mainstreaming Child and vulnerable issues and concerns

- MELCA–Ethiopia will mainstream child and vulnerable issues and concerns in all programmatic operations and interventions.

g. Recruitment and background check on employee and service providers

- Managers are responsible for ensuring all job descriptions, volunteer assignments, and terms of reference include a statement about MELCA-Ethiopia's commitment to child protection and its expectations for all employees and others to adhere to the values and principles of this safeguarding policy.

6. Communications Training and Support for Staff

MELCA-Ethiopia commits resources for induction, training of staff (paid and unpaid), effective communications and support mechanisms in relation to Safeguarding.

6.1 Induction

When a staff member starts with the organization they will receive an induction specific to their department and role. Staff will have an opportunity to reflect on this as part of their development in their role through their probation period and into their supervision and appraisal processes.

This includes;

- Introducing with MELCA-Ethiopia colleagues and work areas(welcome meeting)
- Provide all the necessary documents with some explanation
- Introducing safeguarding and other related policies.
- Role boundaries and professional propriety;
- Provision of the name, contact details and responsibilities of designated or named child protection officer(s) within the organization;
- Ensure familiarity with reporting processes
- Provision of a copy/access to any code of conduct or practice standards available to workers within the organization;

6.2 Training

All staff that, through their role, is in contact with vulnerable adults will have access to safeguarding training at an appropriate level. Sources and types of training will include:

- Training for project participants (IGA, SHGs, FSS groups)
- Training for SEGNI members
- Training for staff and designated Safeguarding focal person
- Training for vulnerable child, youth and adults (how to report, what to do and not to do)

6.3 Communications and discussion of safeguarding issues

To ensure effective communication of safeguarding issues and practices, commitment to the following communication methods will be needed.

- Team(Staff) meetings
- Board, General Assembly meetings
- One to one meetings (formal or informal)
- Community meetings

Information offered to MELCA-Ethiopia staff, relating to risks or concerns about a child or vulnerable adult, should be received on the basis that it will have to be shared with the relevant person or people in authority.

6.4 Support

We recognize that involvement in situations where there is risk or actual harm can be stressful for staff concerned. The mechanisms in place to support staff include: debriefing support for volunteers, Guards, counseling, giving awareness, advice and guidance.

7. Professional boundaries

Professional boundaries are the limits to the relationship between a support worker and a client. It also defined as limits which protect the space between the professional's power and the client's vulnerability. They are a set of standards we agree to uphold that allows this necessary and often close relationship to exist while ensuring the correct detachment is kept in place.

MELCA-Ethiopia expects staff to protect the professional integrity of themselves and the organization in its ongoing service provision.

The following professional boundaries must be adhered to:

- Not discussing a client's private health information with others;
- Keeping work contact numbers separate to your personal contact numbers;
- Not performing additional favors for clients, outside of the scope of your role

MELCA-Ethiopia's HRM manual contains guidance on staff (paid or unpaid) conduct.

If the professional boundaries and/or policies are breached this could result in disciplinary procedures or enactment of the allegation management procedures. Should staff, volunteers, students, relief workers, contractors or agency workers become aware that the professional relationship with a customer has been compromised they must report this to the manager of the service in the first instance, this might be their line manager. External workers, e.g. Agency staff, contractors, may report to their own line manager who will in turn report to the ARK manager of the service.

8. Reporting

It is the duty of all staff to report incidents of concern whether they affect the regulated activity or not. It is also the duty of staff to protect and assist learners when they wish to report. MELCA has an open style of management and we wish to support anyone who feels concerned about their treatment. The person reporting and the person harmed will be protected. It is their legal right to remain anonymous to other staff and the public. However, the safeguarding officer has a duty to pass on the names and details of any child or adult who has been harmed to relevant authorities.

The process outlined below details the stages involved in raising and reporting safeguarding concerns at MELCA-Ethiopia.

Reporting procedure/flow

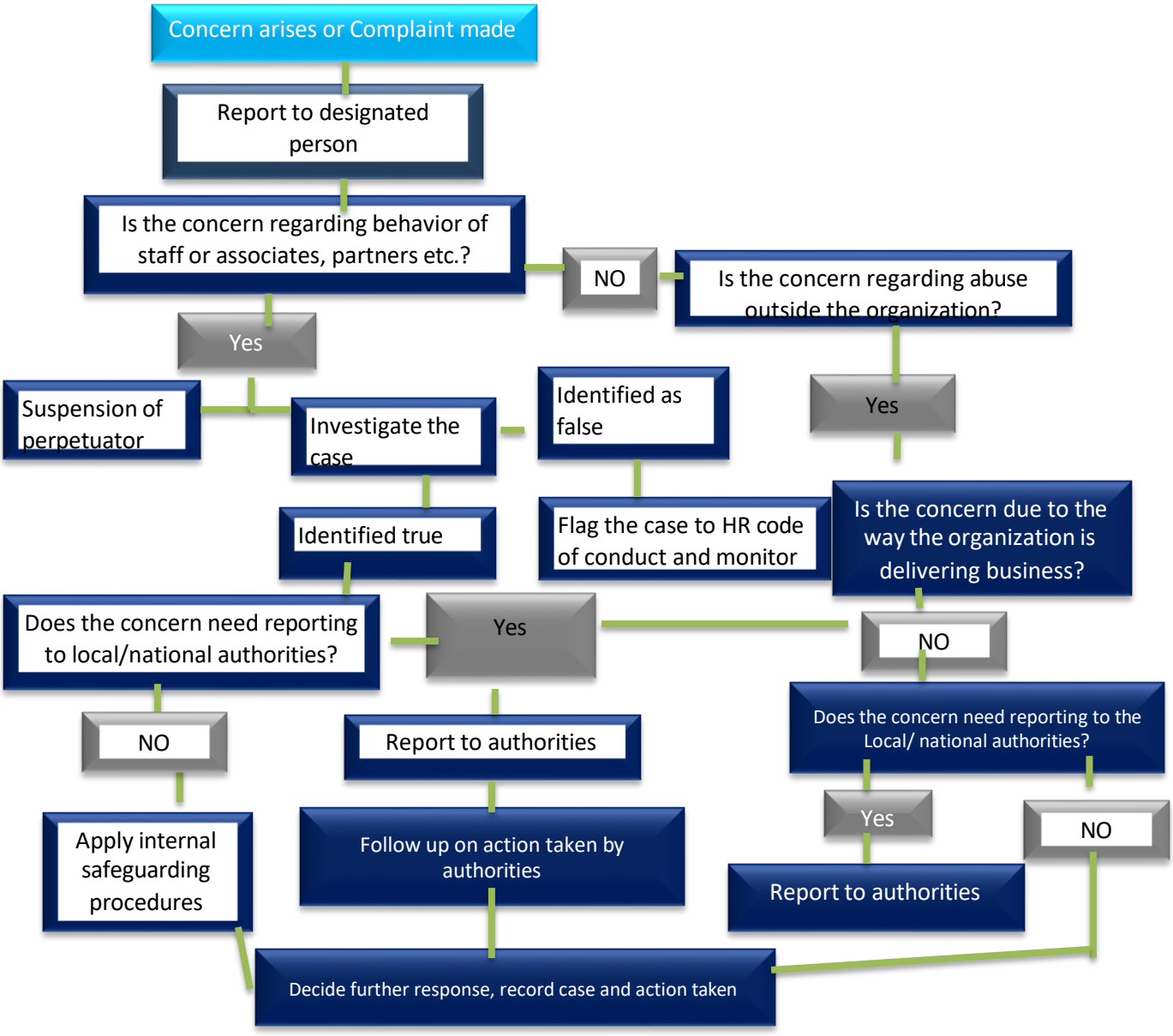


Figure taken from trainer's diagram

9. Allegations Management

A child safeguarding allegation may be defined as **a complaint involving one or more perpetrators and one or more children**. In many instances, it is hard to determine what child abuse is or abusive practices with children and what more a culture of poor practice that has developed over time. An allegation against a member of staff may arise from a number of sources (e.g. **a report from a child, a concern raised by another adult in the organization, or a complaint by a parent**). It may also arise in the context of the member of staff and their life outside work or at home.

MELCA-Ethiopia recognizes its duty to report concerns or allegations against its staff (paid or unpaid) within the organization or by a professional from another organization.

The process for raising and dealing with allegations is as follows:

Step 1: Any member of staff (paid or unpaid) or project participants from MELCA-Ethiopia is required to report any concerns in the first instance to **the Manager or Safeguarding focal person**. A written record of the allegation, investigation and outcome will need to be securely kept.

Step2: The allegation must be investigated and if there is a suspicion of abuse, this must be reported to the relevant Local Authority team:

Step3: follow the advice provided

MELCA-Ethiopia recognizes its legal duty to report any concerns about unsafe practice by any of its paid or unpaid staff to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), according to the ISA referral guidance document

10. Suspension of the alleged perpetrator

MELCA Ethiopia's safeguarding policy has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse. In essence, this means that abuse or neglect should never be accepted as a safeguarding concern emerges in various ways. Therefore, an alleged perpetrator of a safeguarding incident will be suspended immediately from all program duties to protect potential victims while an investigation takes place.

At the initial stage, the employer can verbally inform the alleged perpetrator of the suspension, which should be followed by an official written suspension letter to avoid misunderstandings and ensure fair treatment. The suspension must be supported by the organization's policy.

Suspension is a precautionary measure to prevent further risk or harm and to allow for an impartial investigation, ensuring the safety of survivors. It is not a finding of guilt but a temporary administrative step. The suspension may be with or without salary payment if the alleged perpetrator is a full-time or part-time staff member. Payment during suspension depends on the employee's contract terms, if stated, and there is no specific end date for the suspension; it depends on the investigation outcome.

11. **Monitoring**

This is the systematic and continuous collection and analysis of information about the progress of a piece of work over time. This process identifies policies implementation strengths and weaknesses, and helps to provide an understanding of the reasons for these, so that decisions can

be made to resolve any limitations. The main elements of monitoring are project inputs, performance and progress.

The organization will monitor the following Safeguarding aspects:

A. Process Monitoring, for:

- Reviewing and planning work on a regular basis
- Assessing whether activities are carried out as planned
- Identifying and dealing with problems as they arise
- Checking to see that personnel records are up-to-date, that job descriptions for new positions include reference to child protection etc.
- Checking to see that training has been undertaken according to schedule.
- What constitutes appropriate forms of discipline is discussed and clarified.
- Regular meetings with personnel and children include the opportunity to discuss child protection thus providing an opportunity for all personnel and children to raise problems and to document action that needs to be taken by the Child Protection Officer or others in order to resolve the problem.

B. Impact Monitoring, for:

- Measuring progress towards objectives
- Assessing the effectiveness of your child safeguarding policy and procedures in terms of working towards a child-safe organization / identifying changes that your child protection policy and procedures have brought about for children in your care.
- Adapting your policy and procedures to make sure that all children are protected at all times, when planning and undertaking monitoring, it is often easy to overlook impact monitoring at the expense of process monitoring.

12. Cyber bullying and Cyber Conduct

To promote safe, respectful, and appropriate online behavior in organizational activities and communication channels, MELCA developed cyber bullying and Cyber conduct standalone policy. This policy helps to prevent and address cyber bullying by establishing clear standards of behavior, providing procedures for reporting and investigating incidents, and educating the staff and program participants on its harmful effects.

MELCA-Ethiopia recognizes that online interactions are integral to their operations and relationships with staff, target participants, and clients. However, digital communication can also be misused in ways that harm individuals' dignity, privacy, and emotional well-being.

Organizational Commitment

MELCA Ethiopia is committed to maintaining a digital culture of dignity, equality, and respect. MELCA-Ethiopia will:

- Enforce zero tolerance for cyber bullying, harassment, or online abuse in any form.
- Provide regular awareness and training sessions to staff, youth, and partners on responsible and appropriate digital/online conduct.
- Protect the privacy and security of all data shared within organizational systems.
- Ensure confidentiality and non-retaliation for anyone reporting a case of cyber bullying or abuse.
- Collaborate with law Enforcement or regulatory bodies when necessary to address serious violations.

13. **Data Protection and Sharing information**

Information will be gathered, recorded and stored in accordance with respect to the policies of Data Protection Policy, Confidentiality Policy.

Data Protection Policy: A Data Protection Policy is **a statement that sets out how your organization protects personal data**. It is a set of principles, rules and guidelines that informs how you will ensure on going compliance with data protection laws.

Confidentiality Policy: ensuring that information is accessible only to those authorized to have access and is protected throughout its lifecycle.

All staff must be aware that they have a professional duty to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. However, information will be shared on a need to know basis only, as judged by the designated focal person.

All staff must be aware that they cannot promise service users or their families/ carers that they will keep secrets.

14. Conflict resolution and complaints

Conflicts in respect of safety of vulnerable will be taken forward by designated safeguarding focal person.

15. Communicating and reviewing the policy

MELCA-Ethiopia will make clients aware of the Safeguarding Policy through the following means website, telegram, email, publication brochures, staff meeting, workshops…

This policy will be reviewed by board members, every **five years** and when there are changes in legislation.

Annex- I

MELCA-Ethiopia's Code of Conduct

MELCA-Ethiopia's capacity to achieve its vision and mission depends upon the individual and collaborative efforts of all MELCA-Ethiopia Employees and Related Personnel. To this end, all MELCA-Ethiopia Employees and Related Personnel must uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct and abide by MELCA Ethiopia's policies. MELCA Ethiopia's Safeguarding Policy, and this Safeguarding Code of Conduct, defines the safeguarding conduct to be followed by all MELCA-Ethiopia Employees and Related Personnel to protect anyone, from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse, by MELCA Employees and Related Personnel.

Any violation of this Safeguarding Code of Conduct is a serious concern and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, in accordance with disciplinary procedures. All MELCA Employees and Related Personnel must read and sign this Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

As MELCA-Ethiopia Employee or Related personnel, I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Never be alone with children and/ or youth without another adult being notified.
- Use positive reinforcement rather than criticism, completion, or comparison when working with children and/ or youth and adults at risk.
- Act inclusively, seeking to make everyone feel welcome and valued.
- Treat everyone with equal care and concern.
- Make sure that any electronic communication is done with parental consent and is transparent, accountable, recorded and adheres to safeguarding policies
- Comply with the mandatory reporting regulations to report suspected child and vulnerable youth and adults abuse
- Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of children, youth and/or adults at risk.
- Ensure that for work-related purposes when I photograph or film a child, I:
  - ✓ comply with local traditions or restrictions for reproducing personal images,

- ✓ obtain informed consent from the parent or guardian of the child, before photographing or filming
- ✓ child, explaining how the photograph or film will be used,
- ✓ ensure photographs, films, videos and DVDs present children in a dignified and respectful manner and
- ✓ not in a vulnerable or submissive manner,
- ✓ ensure children are adequately clothed and not in poses that could be seen as sexually suggestive,

As MELCA-Ethiopia Employee or Related personnel, I will not:

- ❖ Use language or behavior towards children that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, and sexually provocative.
- ❖ Demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- ❖ Touch or speak to a child and/ or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- ❖ Inflict any physical or emotional abuse such as striking, spanking, shaking, slapping, humiliating, ridiculing, threatening, or degrading children and/youth.
- ❖ Threaten or use sanctions which have not been agreed, or make empty threat encouragement or warming of possible consequences.
- ❖ Smoke or use tobacco products with children, or possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time while working with children and/or youth.
- ❖ Engage in private communications with children via text messaging, email, Face book, Twitter, or similar forms of electronic or social media except for activities strictly involving MELCA-Ethiopia special cases.
- ❖ Take photos or videos without consent, store them in safe place designated by the organization and only use them in the ways agreed, in line with MELCA-Ethiopia's good practices of reports and guidelines.

I understand that as a person working with and/or providing services to Children/Young people and Adults at risk, I am subject to a criminal history background check. My signature confirms that I have read the Code of Conduct in the Children, Youth and Adults Safeguarding Policy. I agree to follow these standards and I understand that any action inconsistent with the Children,

Youth and Adults Safeguarding Policy or failure to take action mandated therein may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from MELCA-Ethiopia.