OPEN FUTURE ETHIOPIA

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (SCPP) Approval

Document Title: OFE Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Approval Date: January 1, 2025

We, the undersigned members of the Board of Directors of OFE, hereby approve and endorse the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (SCPP) as the official guiding document for the organization's safeguarding practices. By signing below, we commit to upholding the principles and guidelines set forth in this policy to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable individuals, particularly children, in all our programs and activities.

	Board Member Name	Position	Signature
1		Chairperson	
2		Vice-Chairperson	
3		Secretary	
4		Member	
5		Member	

Approval Notes:

- This policy is effective immediately and will be reviewed and updated every three years, or sooner if necessary, to ensure continued alignment with best practices in safeguarding.

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ACRONYMES

SCPP	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
DSO	Designated Safeguarding Officers
OFE	Open Future Ethiopia

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Organizational Background

Open Future Ethiopia (OFE) is a registered local, non-profit organization, established in 2012 with the aim of empowering vulnerable communities through the delivery of educational material, learning activities, Livelihood support and Holistic care, to enable them to attain their full potential and achieve sustainable change in their lives. OFE Officially registered under registry number 2320, in line with the new CSO Proclamation No. 1113/2019.

Since its inception, OFE has successfully implemented a number of development programs in Across Ethiopia. These programs focus on major areas including educational scholarships, vocational and skills training, technology literacy and development, economic empowerment and livelihood support, nutrition and school feeding initiatives, healthcare services, water and hygiene initiatives, awareness-raising campaigns, emergency relief, and overall social development activities.

At the heart of OFE work is a strong belief in protecting and promoting the rights and welfare of all children and vulnerable persons. It is OFE's responsibility to ensure no child or vulnerable person is injured, abused, neglected, or exploited by association with its programs, staff, volunteers, or partners. The organization is dedicated to providing a protective, safe, and caring environment that upholds the dignity, safety, and all-around development of every child it touches.

1.2 Purpose of the Manual

The purpose of this policy, along with its associated procedures, is to provide clear guidance to all individuals working for, on behalf of, or in partnership with OFE on how to engage appropriately with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. It also aims to ensure that employees, volunteers, and other representatives are protected while carrying out their duties.

This policy serves to foster a shared understanding of safeguarding and child protection issues across all levels of the organization. It promotes the adoption of good practices across the diverse and often complex areas in which OFE operates, thereby strengthening accountability in this critical aspect of our work.

This document constitutes OFE's official Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (SCPP). While we acknowledge that local laws may vary from region to region, this policy sets out OFE's minimum safeguarding standards, which may, in some cases, exceed local legal requirements.

Any violation of this policy will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter and may lead to immediate termination of employment or contract, withdrawal of volunteer status, and reporting to law enforcement, regulatory bodies, or other relevant authorities.

2. SAFEGUARDING CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

2.1. Introduction

Safeguarding refers to the responsibility of an organization to ensure that its employees, volunteers, partners, vendors, operations, and programs do no harm to children, young people, or vulnerable adults (collectively referred to as 'vulnerable people' in this policy). OFE is committed to ensuring that these groups are not exposed to discrimination, neglect, harm, or abuse and that any concerns about the safety and well-being of vulnerable people within the communities where we work are appropriately addressed and reported to relevant authorities. Safeguarding also includes protecting employees and volunteers themselves when they are vulnerable, such as when they are ill or at risk of harm or abuse.

Child protection is a critical component of safeguarding, focusing on protecting individual children identified as being at risk of, or suffering from, significant harm due to abuse or neglect. It also encompasses systems and practices designed to prevent and respond to abuse.

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the risks faced by children, young people, and vulnerable adults, including the possibility of discrimination, neglect, abuse, and exploitation by individuals in positions of power or trust, including those engaged in international development work.

As such, organizations like OFE have a heightened responsibility to ensure that their staff, volunteers, and representatives uphold the highest standards to prevent harm through their work with target communities.

Through its programs, OFE staff, partner organizations, and volunteers may engage directly or indirectly with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. OFE acknowledges its duty to take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety and protection of these individuals, whether they are participants in our programs or members of the wider community where OFE operates.

2.2. Definitions

- **Safeguarding**: The proactive measures taken to prevent harm to children and vulnerable persons.

- **Child Protection**: Actions taken to protect children who are suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm.

- **Abuse**: A violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. Abuse may be physical, psychological, financial, or sexual in nature, or may involve neglect, negligent treatment, exploitation, or other harmful actions that result in or could result in damage to a child's or vulnerable person's health, development, dignity, or survival. Abuse can be deliberate or unintentional, a single incident or repeated actions, and may involve criminal behavior.

- **Discriminatory abuse**: Abuse motivated by a vulnerable person's age, race, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristic.

- **Financial or material abuse**: The misuse or misappropriation of a vulnerable person's finances or property, including theft, fraud, exploitation, coercion in relation to wills or inheritance, or improper handling of possessions or benefits.

- **Neglect**: The persistent failure to meet a vulnerable person's basic physical or psychological needs, likely to result in serious harm to their health or development. This includes the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, or protection from danger, as well as emotional neglect.

- **Physical abuse**: The deliberate use of physical force against a vulnerable person, such as hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning,

drowning, suffocating, misuse of medication, or inappropriate physical restraint.

- **Psychological abuse**: The infliction of emotional harm, including threats, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, verbal abuse, isolation, or preventing access to needed services. It also includes actions like silencing, making fun of, or placing unrealistic expectations on a vulnerable person. Severe bullying, including cyber bullying, also falls under this category.

- **Sexual abuse**: Forcing, enticing, or coercing a vulnerable person to engage in sexual activities, with or without their awareness or consent. This includes physical sexual contact, non-contact activities (e.g., forcing a vulnerable person to watch sexual acts or pornography), grooming, and exploitation through the production of sexual images. Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by adults or peers.

- **Child**: OFE defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 years, in alignment with Ethiopia's National Child Policy (2018). Children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation due to factors such as their age, development, dependency on others, and socio-economic status.

- **Vulnerable person/people**: A broad term encompassing children, young people, and vulnerable adults who may be at increased risk of harm due to their circumstances or characteristics.

- **Vulnerable adult**: A person aged 18 or older who, due to disability, illness, age, gender, social or economic status, or situational factors, may be unable to protect themselves from harm, abuse, or exploitation.

- **Youth or young people**: OFE defines young people as those aged 14 to 29, as outlined in Ethiopia's Youth Policy. For OFE's youth economic empowerment programs, this range may extend to 35 years of age. While this group overlaps with both the 'child' and 'adult' categories, OFE acknowledges that young people have specific safeguarding needs distinct from those of younger children or older adults.

2.3 Scope

This policy is mandatory for all OFE employees. For the purposes of this policy, 'employee' refers to anyone working for or on behalf of OFE, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity. This includes directly employed staff, board members, contractors/consultants, employees and volunteers of sub-contractors, agency workers, interns, and all visitors to OFE's programs and offices.

The policy also applies to implementing partners working with OFE through coalitions or agreements. These partners are required to comply with this policy as a condition of their collaboration with OFE.

This policy outlines how OFE fulfills its legal and ethical responsibilities to ensure safeguarding and child protection, providing assurance to employees, volunteers, partners, and the public that:

1) OFE is committed to protecting and safeguarding vulnerable people.
2) All stakeholders can safely raise concerns through a clear and established reporting procedure.
3) All reports of abuse or suspected abuse are taken seriously and addressed promptly and effectively.
4) A robust system is in place for the documentation and monitoring of safeguarding issues.
5) Employees, volunteers, partner organizations, and subcontracted agencies receive appropriate induction and training on safeguarding principles.
6) OFE operates a thorough and effective 'safe recruitment' process.

In addition, specific procedures apply to individuals who work with or have direct or indirect contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, including those living in communities where OFE operates.

2.4 Policy Statement

Open Future Ethiopia (OFE) maintains a zero-tolerance approach to the abuse and exploitation of vulnerable people. OFE recognizes that safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and we are committed to taking all reasonable measures to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable people with whom we work, as well as those within the communities where we operate.

OFE is guided by the following key principles to protect vulnerable people:

- Every individual has an equal right to protection from abuse and exploitation, regardless of age, race, sex, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or parental status, gender identity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth, or any other status.
- The best interests of vulnerable people are paramount and will always be the primary consideration in our decision-making processes.
- OFE accepts its responsibility to fulfill its duty of care towards vulnerable people and will take appropriate action if a child, young person, or vulnerable adult is at risk or has been harmed.
- OFE will ensure that all employees and volunteers are fully inducted on our Safeguarding Standards **(Appendix III)** and procedures as part of the recruitment and on boarding process.
- OFE will ensure that all implementing partners are made aware of, and comply with, our Safeguarding Standards.

When working with or through partners or subcontracted agencies, OFE will ensure that their safeguarding procedures align with the principles and approaches outlined in this policy.

- ✓ OFE acknowledges that there will always be an element of risk in our work, and while it may not be possible to eliminate all risks, we are committed to taking all possible steps to reduce or mitigate them.
- ✓ OFE respects confidentiality and is committed to safeguarding personal data. Information will only be shared and accessed on a strict need-to-know basis, ensuring that only individuals with legitimate reasons are permitted access.
- ✓ OFE is committed to monitoring the implementation of this safeguarding policy, which will be reviewed every three years or earlier if necessary.
- ✓ **Cultural sensitivity:** OFE is dedicated to working in a culturally sensitive manner that respects the diverse backgrounds of the people we serve. We recognize the importance of balancing cultural considerations with the need to protect vulnerable people. As a non-profit, humanitarian organization, we uphold the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees that all rights apply to every child without discrimination. In line with Article 19, we are committed to protecting children from

abuse, irrespective of cultural context. Culture will never be used as a justification for the abuse or exploitation of children, young people, or vulnerable adults.

SECTION 3: RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1. Roles and Responsibilities in Safeguarding

All Staff and Stakeholders: All employees, volunteers, consultants, agency staff, sub-contractors, partner organizations, and visitors are required to adhere to this policy. Everyone has a responsibility to maintain an environment that actively prevents exploitation and abuse and encourages the reporting of any breaches through appropriate channels.

Managers: All managers are responsible for ensuring that employees, volunteers, consultants, visitors, and partner organizations are aware of and comply with this policy. Managers must foster a culture where safeguarding is a priority. They must act immediately on safeguarding concerns and support staff and volunteers who raise safeguarding issues.

Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO): Designated Safeguarding Officers are responsible for managing reports and concerns related to the protection of vulnerable people, ensuring they are addressed appropriately in line with OFE's safeguarding procedures.

At OFE, the Health & Nutrition Program Coordinator serves as the lead Designated Safeguarding Officer, with the following responsibilities:

- Monitor and record safeguarding concerns
- Ensure timely referrals to relevant authorities
- Oversee and update safeguarding training for all staff
- Review this safeguarding policy every three years or sooner if required
- Ensure implementation of the safeguarding policy throughout the organization, including induction and refresher training
- Ensure safeguarding monitoring and reporting mechanisms are consistently followed

Executive Director: The Executive Director is accountable for the overall implementation and enforcement of this policy across OFE. They must ensure all individuals linked with OFE are properly equipped and supported to meet their safeguarding responsibilities.

Board of Directors: The Board of Directors holds ultimate accountability for the effectiveness and enforcement of this safeguarding policy.

3.2. Procedure Overview

3.2.1. Recruitment and Selection

- ✓ OFE follows robust, safe recruitment and vetting procedures for all employees, volunteers, consultants, and partners (Refer to the OFE Recruitment and Selection Policy for detailed guidance).
- ✓ Criminal background checks will be conducted for those involved in 'regulated activities' (direct work with vulnerable individuals).
- ✓ All OFE employees and volunteers must sign and adhere to this Safeguarding Policy and the OFE Code of Conduct, which outlines expected professional behavior and safeguarding standards.

3.2.2. Induction and Support

OFE will provide all employees and volunteers with safeguarding training and support, including:

- ✓ How to respond to disclosures
- ✓ How to identify and act on concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult
- ✓ Recognizing signs of abuse
- ✓ How to report concerns about OFE staff, volunteers, or partner personnel
- ✓ Where to seek internal advice and support

Additionally, OFE will:

- ✓ Regularly review and communicate clear procedures for reporting and managing safeguarding concerns
- ✓ Consider the appropriateness of continued employment in cases of safeguarding allegations against staff or volunteers

3.2.3. Data Protection

OFE will maintain confidentiality of personal data unless consent is obtained or disclosure is legally required (e.g., reporting to child protection or law enforcement authorities). For more guidance, refer to the OFE Data Protection Policy and Statement.

3.2.4. Minimum Safeguarding Standards with Partners

OFE will brief external contractors, partners, and sub-contracted agencies on its safeguarding policy and ensure they meet OFE's safeguarding standards.

3.2.5. Social Media and Communications

In alignment with the OFE Social Media Policy, the following safeguards apply when using names, images, or media related to vulnerable people:

- ✓ Use respectful images that do not expose individuals to further harm or degradation.
- ✓ Obtain written consent from parents/guardians before using the images or names of children.
- ✓ For young people and vulnerable adults, obtain either their own consent or that of a parent/guardian, whichever is more appropriate.
- ✓ Clarify that participation in OFE activities is not contingent on providing personal information or images.
- ✓ Ensure employees, volunteers, and partners comply with OFE's IT Policies, including prohibiting access to or distribution of violent or sexual content, including adult pornography.

3.2.6. Risk Assessments

OFE will ensure risk assessments are conducted at all levels to identify and mitigate safeguarding risks.

3.2.7. Safeguarding Officer Support

OFE will provide continuous training and support for designated safeguarding officers to ensure they are equipped to protect vulnerable people and manage safeguarding cases effectively.

3.3. Raising and Responding to Concerns

OFE places a mandatory obligation on all employees, volunteers, contractors, and partners to report any concerns, suspicions, allegations, or

incidents suggesting actual or potential abuse, exploitation, or breaches of this policy.

- It is not the role of staff to determine whether abuse has occurred, but they must report concerns to their line manager, functional lead, or a designated safeguarding officer, who will initiate appropriate safeguarding procedures.

Responsibilities of Designated Safeguarding Officers:

- ✓ Ensure reports are handled according to OFE's reporting procedure and referred to the relevant statutory authorities.
- ✓ Ensure that reports, actions, and decisions are fully documented (Refer to OFE's Safeguarding Guidelines).
- ✓ Recognize that OFE is not an investigative body. Allegations or suspicions of abuse will be referred to appropriate law enforcement or welfare agencies to ensure proper legal handling and victim support.
- ✓ Protect sensitive information and maintain confidentiality. All personal data, including the identity of whistleblowers, will be shared strictly on a 'need-to-know' basis.
- ✓ Where the accused is an OFE employee, the lead DSO will oversee the case in coordination with senior leadership.

3.4. Reporting procedure

A. If abuse is suspected, the direct supervisor and the operational manager are informed first.
B. If one of them is under suspicion himself, the next higher level is informed.
C. Both employees listen to the incident and then report it to management.
D. Management separately invites the suspect and the alleged victim or the victim's caregiver to a more detailed investigation of the case.
E. If the suspicion is confirmed, local authorities are immediately involved, and suspension, dismissal and legal action follow.

Appendix I

OFE Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy & Code of Conduct

Confirmation of Understanding and Agreement

I, _____, hereby acknowledge and confirm that:

1. **Policy Acknowledgment:**

   - ✓ I have read and fully understand the OFE Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
   - ✓ I agree to adhere to the principles set forth in the OFE Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and I will use common sense to ensure the safety and welfare of children, young people, or vulnerable adults at all times.

2. **Respect for Children:**

   - ✓ I agree to treat all children, young people, or vulnerable adults with the utmost respect, regardless of their race, color, gender, language, religion, or background.
   - ✓ I will refrain from using language or conduct that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally insensitive.

3. **Prohibition of Harmful Actions:**

   - ✓ I will not engage in any form of corporal punishment toward children.
   - ✓ I will not engage in any sexual activities with children, nor will I hold, kiss, fondle, caress, or touch children inappropriately.
   - ✓ I will not use any form of technology, including computers, cell phones, video, or digital cameras, to exploit, molest, or access child pornography through any medium.

4. **Compliance with Legal and Safe Practices:** I will not condone or participate in any activities involving children, young people, or vulnerable adults that are illegal, unsafe, or abusive.
5. **Reporting Obligations:** I will report any suspicion, allegation, or incident of child abuse, or any violation of the OFE Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, following the reporting procedures outlined in the policy.
6. **Confidentiality:** I will maintain the confidentiality of all child protection-related information in which I am involved, and will only disclose or discuss

this information with those responsible for investigating incidents, or other authorized parties as specified in the reporting procedures.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read, understood, and agree to strictly abide by the OFE Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and OFE Code of Conduct. I acknowledge that it is my personal responsibility to comply with these requirements at all times.

Name: _____**Date:** ____/_____/_____ **Signature:** _____

Appendix II

Parental Consent for Photographic/Film Use of Children Under 18 Years of Age or Vulnerable Adults

I,_____ of Being the parent or legal guardian of the child/children named below, hereby give permission to take and use publicity photographs/films of the child/children named below:

Name of Child/ Vulnerable Adult: _____Age: _____

I consent to the use of these photographs/films for the purposes of **publicity, marketing, and advertising** related to **OFE** projects. I understand and agree that these images/films may be combined with other visuals, text, and graphics and may be cropped, altered, or modified at BHE's discretion.

I further consent to the storage of this consent form and the personal details within it by OFE on their database.

I understand that the **child's/children's names** will not be published or shared with the press or public without my express permission. Additionally, I understand that I have the right to withdraw this consent in writing at any time, and OFE will take reasonable steps to remove the photograph/film from future use.

I also acknowledge that I shall not receive any form of remuneration for this consent.

Name: _____**Date:** ____/_____/_____ **Signature:** _____

Appendix III

OFE Safeguarding Standards

This standard framework is from the Keeping Children Safe "Child Safeguarding Standards" and adapted for

Use for OFE. Each standard can be met in whole, in part or not met.

Standard		Potential evidence of standard being met
1. Policy	**1.1** The organization has a clear safeguarding policy that seeks to prevent harm to children, young people and vulnerable adults.	✓ A copy of the policy, signed by the board of directors. ✓ For programme or recruitment partners, that OFE volunteers are informed about the policy.
	1.2 Policies are publicized to staff, beneficiaries and wider communities.	✓ Policy or summary translated into local languages. ✓ Examples of ways the policy has been promoted, including to children, young people or other community members as necessary.
2. People	**2.1** The organization places clear responsibilities and expectations on its staff and associates and supports them to understand and act in line with these	✓ Clear responsibilities for a Designated Safeguarding Officer at appropriate level.
	2.2 Key staff are designated at different levels with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.	✓ Job descriptions with clear expectations on those with contact with vulnerable people. ✓ Job descriptions for OFE staff and volunteer include details of any contact with vulnerable people.

	2.3 There are written guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate behavior	✓ A written code of conduct; evidence of this being shared to staff and volunteers
	2.4 There are appropriate learning opportunities to develop and maintain the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge to keep vulnerable people safe.	✓ A copy of training plans, course attendance records and course evaluations. ✓ Evidence of induction for OFE volunteers to relevant safeguarding issues
3. Procedures	3.1 Organizations carry out local mapping exercises, Which provide information on the legal, Social welfare and child protection arrangements.	✓ Legal requirements are included in policies
	3.2 Safeguarding risks and mitigation strategies are incorporated into existing risk assessment processes at all levels.	✓ Risk assessments include appropriate and relevant risks ✓ Evidence of mitigation strategies implemented ✓ Risk assessments shared with OFE volunteers
	3.3 Safeguarding issues are integrated into programme design, delivery and evaluation	✓ Evidence of safeguarding issues in project proposals, plans, needs assessments, etc
	3.4 There are procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns arise	✓ A copy of a concern/allegation management
4. Accountability	4.1 Implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures is monitored	✓ Copies of reporting to boards, donors, etc ✓ Copies of minutes of meetings to review practice
	4.2 Learning from issues captured and informed future policy and procedure reviews	✓ Incident reports produced
	4.3 Policies and procedures reviewed at least every three years	✓ Evidence of review in annual plans / strategies