

## How CSOs can Design and Deliver Safe Programmes

For CSOs in Ethiopia

This note helps CSOs to design and implement safe programmes. It will assist staff involved in project design and implementation including M&E, safeguarding focal point (SFP), and others involved in programme operations and delivery.

For the purposes of this note, "programming" refers activities across at all stage of projects, operation processes, events and other initiatives delivered by CSOs. Safe programming should guide every CSO programme or project. It is one part of an organisation's safeguarding journey.

### What is safe programming?

- **Safe programming aims to make sure that as far as possible community members are safeguarded from intentional / unintentional risks of sexual abuse, exploitation and sexual harassment and other harms that arise from how programmes are designed and delivered.** This may also include harm and abuse that takes place between community members, or within families, as a result of the programme.
- In practice, safe programming includes:
  - Identifying, mitigating and managing the risks of harm and abuse that may be caused by CSO programme design and delivery.
  - Considering the safety and wellbeing of all community members throughout the programme cycle.
  - Being prepared not to deliver a programme where safeguarding risks have not been appropriately assessed and minimised and/or where the inherent risks to beneficiaries are unacceptable.
  - Documenting safe programming experiences to inform future work.

- Safe programming does not include the general protection risks that arise in society.

### Who are we keeping safe?

**Anyone who may come across your programme, including:**

- Programme participants/service users
- Other community members who interact with the CSO

**Examples of what programme safeguarding risks or issues can look like:**

- Programme services are located far away from the community centre in an area mainly used by one ethnic group. A boy is abused and harassed when walking to and from the services.
- The programme design gives one male staff member a lot of time alone with children. A male CSO staff touches a girl inappropriately while playing with her as part of an activity.
- Data protection risks are not included in the design. A female volunteer representing a CSO gets a young man's phone number from a programme Facebook group or telegram and sends him sexually inappropriate messages.
- A beneficiary selection committee member asks a woman to have sex with him in exchange for recommending a family for a CSO cash for work scheme.

For more, read: [What is safeguarding?](#)

## What do we need in place to support safe programmes?

- Appoint a SFP. Provide SFP(s) training so they can support colleagues to understand manage safeguarding risks and respond to reports.
- Ensure that all staff have received basic safeguarding training. Prioritise training for staff who will visit programme sites, including drivers and support staff.
- At a minimum, staff should understand:
  - ✓ Their relevant organisational policies and code of conduct
  - ✓ What safeguarding risks are, with examples from their operating environment
  - ✓ How to identify safeguarding risks
  - ✓ How and who to report risks or an unsafe situation to
  - ✓ What the reporting channels are in and how to use them
  - ✓ What a survivor-centred response is and why it is important.
- Complete a mapping of quality assured local support services and gaps (e.g. of financial, legal, psychosocial, medical, disability services and child protection support). Make sure all staff can access the details.
- Develop a plan so urgent cases can be referred to support services. Identify alternatives where services are not in place. Identify resources to assist a victim or survivor to access services (e.g. with travel).
- Share information and your procedures related to safeguarding risks and issues with CSOs working in the same area as you. Expect and ask others to share the same with you. In some areas there may be an organised network – sometimes called the “Ethiopia PSEA Network” – to coordinate sharing.
- Ensure that any investigations will be conducted by trained investigators only and that survivors or victims are supported by skilled staff.
- Ensure that survivor or victim support is monitored during and after the investigation.

- Make sure that disciplinary procedures are clear for those who have caused harm and abuse to programme participants, service users or other community members.

## Why is community engagement so important?

**Community engagement at every stage of the programme cycle is key to safe programming for many reasons, including:**

- Different community members are best placed to identify what makes them feel safe and less safe. This is essential for informing whether programmes may cause harm and abuse within communities or increase the risk of SEAH or other forms of abuse. For example, in contexts where rates of gender-based violence (GBV) are high, staff may be able to sexually exploit or abuse communities without it being recognised or reported.
- Communities can identify risks that may arise from the programme and suggest ways to mitigate those risks. For example, if a CSO is planning to build water points in the community which are in isolated places and therefore risky for girls and women to access, communities can suggest alternative locations which are safer.
- Communities are best placed to explain how, when, where and to whom they would feel most comfortable reporting abuse.
- By sharing information about expectations, listening and responding to community input, CSOs can start to build trust. To submit reports, communities need to trust that the CSO is committed to keeping them safe, that the reporting mechanisms are safe and confidential and that reports will be handled in an appropriate way.

# How to integrate safeguarding throughout the project cycle

## 1. Start-up

- Gather information on local factors and resources which may have implications for safeguarding e.g. relevant laws, local culture, values and norms, community organisation, community power dynamics and changes, conflict, population displacement.
- Analyse how local factors and resources can support or need to be considered to design programmes that are as safe as possible.
- Put in place sufficient financial and human resources for safeguarding activities. Also consider “mainstreaming” safeguarding alongside other activities and resources.

### Examples of local factors and resources that will need to inform programme start-up and design.

- National law may require reporting to police before referrals to medical services.
- Communities may have internal ways of managing SEAH reports/complaints.

## 2. Planning & Design

### 2.1. Identify and assess the safeguarding risks

- Identify safeguarding risks and analyse their potential impact and likelihood. Include a range of community members in the risk identification and analysis process.
- Organise your risk assessment into categories, e.g. location; service user / target groups; programme / service type; staff, partners and related staff; external communication; protection of data; and other community members.

### 2.2. Embed safeguarding risk mitigation strategies into project design and planning

- Develop a risk mitigation plan and incorporate it into the project design. Test or verify risk mitigation plans with community members and adapt where necessary.

- Create clear direction with measurable objectives, timescales, roles and responsibilities to deliver a safe programme.
- Incorporate a risk mitigation plan into the programme budget, include resources for urgent immediate assistance cases that may arise.

### The impact and likelihood of safeguarding risks will be different for different groups.

Women and girls generally face greater risk of SEAH than men and boys.

Individuals who experience discrimination based on factors such as disability, migration status, race and age are at additional risk and may be even less likely to report abuse or suspicions than individuals who do not have discriminating characteristics.



## 3. Implementation

### 3.1. Establish community-based complaints mechanisms (CBCMs)

- With input from community members, create CBCMs that encourage, listen to and respond appropriately to reports of SEAH.

- Put in place different ways to report that are safe, confidential and accessible. Keep procedures simple and aligned. Reporting to someone face to face appears to be important.
- Identify any local CBCMs in place. Where existing CBCMs are deemed appropriate and are used by community members, use/build on the same system and create operating procedures with the other CSO(s).
- Avoid creating separate reporting systems for each CSO in one programme location. This may confuse procedures, obstruct trust and create challenges for victims and survivors. This requires CSOs operating in the same location to work together to develop common reporting system.
- Make sure that community members across programme locations:
  - Understand what safeguarding is and what their related rights are
  - Know what behaviour to expect from CSO staff and representatives
  - Know what they can report and how to report abuses/complaints
  - Know what to expect after submitting a report

### 3.2. Continue to reach out to communities and show commitment to appropriate prevention of and response to safeguarding risks

- Use community meetings, monitoring meetings and community visits to communicate the importance of reporting any safeguarding incidents/concerns.
- Remind community members how CSO staff should behave and discuss safeguarding risks.
- When any staff member receives a report or witnesses a safeguarding incident, they should ensure safety, listen, respect, not discriminate and maintain confidentiality
- Refer urgent cases to support services.
- Report all incidents to formal channels, senior leadership, donors and others as needed.

- Prioritise victim or survivor wellbeing and safety.
- **Only where information does not identify an individual or group**, provide anonymous feedback to communities on reports and response procedures. This must be done with extreme caution to avoid further harm or abuse of survivor(s) or victim(s).

### 3.3. Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)

- Systematically embed safeguarding indicators in the monitoring tool, assess the practice and share the monitoring report. Embed any new risks into the mitigation plans.
- Assess the risks of monitoring tools and procedures (e.g. monitoring visits, community meeting). Ensure that you do not bring additional risk while engaging with communities on issues that relate to safeguarding and safe programming.
- Regularly ask different groups in the community if the CBCMs are fit for purpose and accessible (especially if reporting is low).
- Make M&E activities safe and ethical, e.g.:
  - Enable participants to give informed consent (written/verbal depending on situation) if sharing information
  - Store and use data securely
  - Do not gather information that you don't need

## 4. Closure

- Review safe programming performance and share lessons for future programmes.
- Manage and close all the outstanding reports prior to closure.
- Report the outstanding issues that may hinder the case closure. Note that, such practice would be considered as a risk and should be prioritised and managed with all possible effort.
- Build safeguarding into the programme if it is being handed over to another organisation or community groups.