

# Tip Sheet

## Safeguarding practices for recruiting and managing volunteers

### For CSOs in Ethiopia



RESOURCE  
& SUPPORT  
**HUB**



This tip sheet was developed with Civil Society Organisation (CSO) staff across Ethiopia. This tip sheet covers safeguarding practices for recruiting and managing volunteers. CSOs recruit lots of volunteers so it is important to ensure that the organisation's safeguarding measures apply to them, Volunteers:

- **Can play a role in protecting staff** and other people who interact with the CSO from sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) and other harms and abuses.
- **Can contribute to an organisational culture** where everyone who interacts with the CSO understands their right to be safe from SEAH and other harms and abuses.
- **Need to be supported** to know what the organisation's safeguarding measures are, how they apply to volunteers and how they can be used.

#### Working with volunteers can create SEAH risks for:

- The volunteer(s) themselves
- Other staff and representatives
- People who interact with the CSO

#### Examples of SEAH-related risks:

##### Risks for the volunteers:

- Volunteers are less likely to have someone trusted in the organisation to talk to. Also, it is less likely that they will know the policies, how to report, who to report to or even what to report.
- Volunteers may fear losing their (often sought after) work opportunity if they report an incident.
- Harassment and sexual requests from male staff: *"there's always a power relationship between a staff member and an intern [or volunteer]."*
- Some organisations do not have formal procedures on how they manage volunteers as they fear the staff may then be included in the legal definition of a worker (which costs more). This can affect how volunteers are treated and supported, including on issues relating to SEAH.

##### Risks for other staff and people who interact with the CSO

- Volunteers may not know what behaviour is expected of them, if there is a code of conduct, if it applies to them, and why it is important to uphold.
- In situations where rapid and large-scale volunteer recruitment is needed, e.g. in an emergency, it may be hard to keep to strict recruitment procedures. Harmful behaviour may go unchecked.
- Recruitment of volunteers can be complicated, e.g. they may not have references.
- Through working with the CSO, some volunteers may be in a position of power compared to others in the community which may lead to harassment or sexual requests.

Your approach to volunteer management may be different in a humanitarian or development setting.

Consider the risks of working with different volunteers and the characteristics of individual volunteers in your context. Identify how to mitigate the risks in volunteer management.

Some tips for volunteer management in emergency settings are noted below.

## There are different types of volunteers in Ethiopia:

There are different types of volunteers, and organisations across Ethiopia use the term volunteer differently. The risks of SEAH and other harms and abuses will vary for different types of volunteers and for the individuals who are volunteering – it is important to consider these differences throughout the volunteer management process. Some of the different types of volunteers in Ethiopia include:

- **Interns** who are placed for specific tasks or time (with or without incentive or stipend). These are often young people with some level of educational qualification.
- **Community based volunteers** who are often nominated by the community or government sector offices to support specific tasks such as mobilisation or awareness raising work. These people may have some formal education. They may be given a small stipend and their work hours are often low but are not regulated.
- **Casual workers** who work on short assignments or as the need arises, e.g. data collection, construction or manual labour. They may be given a small incentive or other benefit.

## The volunteer management process covers:

1. Safe recruitment and vetting
2. Supervision and support, including orientation and / or training
3. Closing the relationship

### 1. Safe recruitment and vetting:

#### Job description and advertising:

- ⇒ Write a job description for every volunteer or type of volunteer. It does not have to be a formal or long job description. If you are in an emergency setting or have little time you can create relevant bullet points like those listed above.
- ⇒ Include a statement on the CSO's commitment to safeguarding in the job description, advertisement (where relevant) and promotion.
- ⇒ Involve the supervisors in the job description development and throughout the recruitment process.
- ⇒ If the volunteer has access to vulnerable people, including children, it should be stated in the job description and considered in recruitment. This is important for ensuring [safe programmes](#).
- ⇒ If you are advertising jobs, use different methods in your job advertising strategy to reach a diverse group of volunteers. For example, you can work with universities, use job sites, posters or the radio.
- ⇒ Proactively aim for a diversity-balance across your volunteers, e.g. consider gender, disability, ethnic group, language and other different characteristics relevant to where you are working.

#### Interview and references:

- ⇒ An interview is important, especially for volunteers who will have to engage with vulnerable people or affected communities. If you are in an emergency setting or have little time:
  - An interview can be a short conversation in a space where others cannot hear.
  - In this conversation make the safeguarding and behaviour requirements clear.
  - Ask the potential volunteer a question about their behaviour, e.g. "how will you carry out your work duties in a way that does not harm or abuse others".

- ⇒ Aim to collect at least one reference for every type of volunteer, even in an emergency setting:
  - References can ask about behaviours.
  - A reference can be: SMS or audio file shared by the volunteer, verbal confidential conversation in person or by phone, written email or letter, discussion with the referee etc.
  - A community-led reference is where community leaders ask relevant members of the community for a verbal reference. The reference approval is then signed by two community leaders (this can be in one check list for a high number of volunteers).
- ⇒ Where possible or for longer term volunteers, carry out a background or criminal check.

## 2. Supervision and support, including orientation and training

- ⇒ Share and explain a job description, agreement, the Code of Conduct (CoC) and relevant policies, or summaries, in an **understandable format (e.g. with images), relevant language and with local examples**. Once a volunteer understands the documentation, ask them to sign or cross a contract and/or CoC.
- ⇒ Provide training / orientation so all volunteers know:
  - Who the safeguarding focal point is and how to contact them
  - What SEAH and other harms and abuses are
  - How to report misconduct
  - How they should behave as a volunteer
  - What will happen if they behave inappropriately
- ⇒ Make sure volunteers working in affected communities or with vulnerable people know what the community-based complaints mechanism (CBCM) is, how it works and what the different reporting channels are.
- ⇒ Set up a Human Resources management system to track the safeguarding needs for every volunteer.
- ⇒ Make sure supervisors can be approached for support and advice, e.g. on expected behaviour.
- ⇒ Hold small informal conversations on challenges and lessons about SEAH, e.g. women / men only.
- ⇒ Where there is misconduct, ensure that the pre-agreed steps are taken in all cases.

### In an emergency setting:

- Lead an orientation with a large group of volunteers together, or
- Give an immediate initial orientation (or just share visual materials) to those who need to start quickly and follow up with more detail later.

**Top tip!** For individual volunteers such as interns create a “buddy system”. Assign a staff member (not HR or their supervisor) who can help them settle and who is there for questions or concerns.

## 3. Closing the relationship

- ⇒ In every setting it can be valuable to acknowledge the end the of the relationship. With many volunteers, e.g. in an emergency or refugee setting, this can be in a group conversation.
- ⇒ Make sure the volunteer has no further access to CSO information and reaffirm the importance of confidentiality on any safeguarding issues or cases the volunteer may be aware of.
- ⇒ Make it clear to the volunteer and the community that the volunteer has ended their role.
- ⇒ In an exit interview discuss any safeguarding-related issues, e.g. on training or if the volunteer believes the CBCM is working and how it can be strengthened.