Manual on

Safeguarding Against the Violation and Abuse of Beneficiaries, Including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

Bahirdar

Ethiopia

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 4
Overview of BLDO’s Mission and Vision 4
Purpose of the Safeguarding Manual 4
The Importance of Safeguarding Beneficiaries 4
Structure and Scope of the Manual 5
2. BLDO Organizational Framework 5
Organizational Structure of BLDO 5
Key Personnel Responsible for Safeguarding 6
3. Core Safeguarding Principles 6
Zero-Tolerance Policy on Abuse 6
Rights and Dignity of Beneficiaries 6
Preventing Harm, Exploitation, and Abuse 6
Ensuring Accountability and Transparency 7
4. Safeguarding Policies and Procedures 7
Clear Reporting Mechanisms for Abuse 7
Investigations and Due Process 7
Survivor Support and Protection 7
Disciplinary Actions and Legal Measures 8
5. Risk Assessment and Management 8
Identification of Risks in Programs and Communities 8
Risk Mitigation Strategies and Plans 8
Screening and Vetting of Personnel and Partners 8
6. Preventative Measures 9
Recruitment and Screening of Staff 9
Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers 9
Safeguarding Training Programs 9
Community Awareness and Education 9
7. Support for Survivors of Abuse 10
Immediate Response and Care 10
Referral Systems for Support Services 10

Confidentiality and Survivor Protection 10
Long-Term Recovery and Reintegration 10
8. Accountability and Transparency 10
Oversight Mechanisms within BLDO 10
External Reporting to Stakeholders 11
Annual Safeguarding Reports 11
Feedback and Continuous Improvement 11
9. Collaboration with External Stakeholders 11
10. Monitoring and Evaluation 11
11. Crisis Management and Contingency Plans 12
12. Conclusion 12

1. Introduction

Overview of BeLDO's Mission and Vision

Beza Lehiwot Development Organization (BeLDO) is committed to improving the lives of vulnerable communities in Ethiopia. Our mission revolves around sustainable development, community empowerment, and ensuring that every individual, particularly the marginalized and at-risk groups, receives the assistance, care, and support they need for a better quality of life.

At the heart of our work is the protection and safeguarding of the dignity and rights of our beneficiaries. This includes ensuring that our programs and initiatives are free from any form of abuse, including sexual exploitation, abuse, or any other violations of their rights.

Purpose of the Safeguarding Manual

This manual serves as a comprehensive guide for all staff, volunteers, and stakeholders engaged with BeLDO. It provides clear instructions, procedures, and policies on how we prevent, report, and respond to violations and abuses that affect our beneficiaries. By following the guidelines in this manual, we aim to create a safe and respectful environment for all individuals we serve.

The Importance of Safeguarding Beneficiaries

Safeguarding is essential in every aspect of BeLDO's work. Violations and abuse, including sexual exploitation, can severely harm the victims and tarnish the integrity of the organization. Our commitment to safeguarding is not just a legal obligation but a moral one. We believe in promoting a culture of respect, dignity, and equality for all our beneficiaries, especially the most vulnerable groups in society.

Structure and Scope of the Manual

This manual outlines the policies, procedures, and guidelines BeLDO will follow to ensure that safeguarding is an integral part of our operations. It covers organizational responsibilities, risk assessment processes, preventative measures, and how we respond to allegations and incidents of abuse.

2. BeLDO Organizational Framework

Organizational Structure of BeLDO

BeLDO operates under a hierarchical structure to ensure clear lines of responsibility and accountability in safeguarding efforts. The structure includes senior management, program teams, and field staff, with designated safeguarding focal points at every level. At the top of this structure is the Executive Director, who is responsible for overall oversight of safeguarding within the organization.

- **Executive and Deputy Executive Director**: Provides strategic oversight into safeguarding policies.
- **Safeguarding Officer**: Coordinates all safeguarding-related activities, including training, reporting, and investigations.
- **Program Managers**: Ensure safeguarding practices are integrated into program designs and day-to-day operations.
- **Human Resources**: Handles staff recruitment, screening, and training to prevent abuse.
- **Field Staff**: Interact directly with beneficiaries, implementing safeguarding procedures at the community level.

Key Personnel Responsible for Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Officer plays a crucial role in managing safeguarding initiatives and ensuring the implementation of policies. They are supported by safeguarding committees, human resources, and program staff.

3. Core Safeguarding Principles

Zero-Tolerance Policy on Abuse

BeLDO operates under a strict zero-tolerance policy for any form of abuse or exploitation. Any incident of sexual exploitation, abuse, or mistreatment will result in immediate action, including investigation, support for victims, and potential disciplinary actions against perpetrators.

Rights and Dignity of Beneficiaries

All beneficiaries are entitled to dignity, respect, and protection. Our approach prioritizes the empowerment of individuals, especially women, children, and vulnerable groups, ensuring that their rights are respected and upheld at all times.

Preventing Harm, Exploitation, and Abuse

Prevention is at the heart of our safeguarding strategy. BeLDO is committed to taking proactive steps to minimize risks of abuse and exploitation, both within our organization and in the communities we serve.

Ensuring Accountability and Transparency

We aim to create a culture of transparency and accountability. This involves regular monitoring, clear reporting structures, and the sharing of safeguarding-related information with relevant stakeholders to ensure that our practices are continuously improved.

4. Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

Clear Reporting Mechanisms for Abuse

A key aspect of our safeguarding efforts is ensuring that there are clear and accessible reporting mechanisms for beneficiaries, staff, and stakeholders to report incidents of abuse or exploitation. These include:

- **Hotlines** and **email addresses** for confidential reporting
- **Community meetings** where beneficiaries can safely raise concerns
- A **whistleblower policy** to protect those who report violations

Investigations and Due Process

When an abuse or violation is reported, BeLDO follows a thorough and impartial investigative process. Investigations are conducted with the utmost sensitivity, ensuring the safety and dignity of the survivor. An independent review committee will be established for transparency in handling sensitive cases.

Survivor Support and Protection

The organization prioritizes the immediate care of survivors. This includes offering psychological support, medical care, legal assistance, and referrals to specialized services. We also ensure the survivor's confidentiality throughout the process.

Disciplinary Actions and Legal Measures

Any individual found guilty of abuse or exploitation within BeLDO's programs faces severe consequences, including termination of employment, legal actions, and being banned from future involvement with the organization.

5. Risk Assessment and Management

Identification of Risks in Programs and Communities

BeLDO conducts regular risk assessments to identify potential threats of abuse or exploitation in the communities and sectors we work in. This process includes:

- **Evaluating program activities** for potential vulnerabilities
- **Mapping out community dynamics** to identify at-risk groups
- **Assessing staff behavior** to ensure proper training and ethical conduct

Risk Mitigation Strategies and Plans

To reduce risks, BeLDO implements clear mitigation strategies, such as:

- **Screening and vetting** of all staff, volunteers, and partners
- **Regular safeguarding audits** to assess compliance with policies
- **Safeguarding plans** for each project and field operation

Screening and Vetting of Personnel and Partners

Staff, volunteers, and external partners undergo rigorous screening, including criminal background checks, to ensure they are fit for working with vulnerable populations.

6. Preventative Measures

Recruitment and Screening of Staff

BeLDO ensures that all potential staff members undergo comprehensive background checks and interviews to ensure they align with our safeguarding policies. We maintain a zero-tolerance stance towards any individual with a history of exploitation or abuse.

Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

Every BeLDO staff member and volunteer is required to sign a Code of Conduct, which outlines expected behaviors, boundaries with beneficiaries, and the importance of safeguarding. This Code is reinforced during regular training sessions.

Safeguarding Training Programs

Training is a critical part of our preventative measures. All staff, volunteers, and partners are required to participate in safeguarding training, which includes:

- Recognizing and responding to abuse
- Understanding ethical conduct and boundaries
- Ensuring that safeguarding policies are followed

Community Awareness and Education

BeLDO also engages the communities we work with by conducting awareness programs. These initiatives educate individuals about their rights, how to recognize abuse, and how to report any incidents they may experience or witness.

7. Support for Survivors of Abuse

Immediate Response and Care

If a beneficiary is subjected to abuse, BeLDO ensures that they receive immediate care and support, including medical treatment, psychological support, and legal advice.

Referral Systems for Support Services

We have established referral systems with trusted partner organizations that specialize in supporting survivors of abuse, including shelters, legal aid services, and healthcare providers.

Confidentiality and Survivor Protection

The privacy of the survivor is always maintained, and their identity is protected during and after the reporting process. No personal details will be shared without their consent.

Long-Term Recovery and Reintegration

We recognize that recovery from abuse is a long-term process. BeLDO will provide continuous support to survivors, including ongoing counseling, reintegration programs, and community-based assistance.

8. Accountability and Transparency

Oversight Mechanisms within BeLDO

To ensure accountability, BeLDO has established safeguarding committees that oversee compliance with the organization’s policies. Regular audits and reports are conducted to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding measures.

External Reporting to Stakeholders

BeLDO is committed to maintaining transparency in all its activities. We share annual safeguarding reports with donors, partners, and relevant authorities to demonstrate our accountability.

Annual Safeguarding Reports

These reports will provide data on safeguarding incidents, including types of abuse reported, actions taken, and outcomes. These reports will also include recommendations for improvements.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement

BeLDO encourages feedback from beneficiaries, staff, and stakeholders to continuously improve safeguarding practices and create a safer environment for all.

9. Collaboration with External Stakeholders

BeLDO works closely with national and international organizations, government bodies, and local community groups to strengthen safeguarding practices. We also advocate for stronger legal frameworks and protections for vulnerable groups in Ethiopia.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring and evaluation processes ensure that BeLDO’s safeguarding policies are being effectively implemented. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are used to track the progress of safeguarding efforts, ensuring that we can identify areas for improvement.

11. Crisis Management and Contingency Plans

In times of crisis, such as natural disasters or conflicts, BeLDO ensures that beneficiaries remain protected and safe from exploitation. Our contingency plans include emergency safeguarding protocols and partnerships with external agencies to offer protection.

12. Conclusion

BeLDO remains steadfast in its commitment to safeguarding all individuals under its care. Our focus on prevention, clear reporting systems, thorough investigations, and survivor support ensures that we maintain the highest standards of protection for all beneficiaries. Through collective responsibility and continuous efforts, we will continue to create a safe environment for those who rely on our services.

This manual offers a comprehensive safeguard framework for BeLDO's operations in Ethiopia, ensuring that every aspect of its community-based projects prioritizes the protection of vulnerable beneficiaries from abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse.