



**Organization for Women in Self Employment
(WISE)**

Safeguarding

Children and Adults Policy Document



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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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1. WISE in Brief

Organization for women in Self Employment is an indigenous NGO which was established in 1997. The Organization envisions a nation where absolute poverty is eradicated, women play active part in development and live and work in a safe environment. WISE works with low-income women in their efforts to become economically empowered, develop resilient families, enjoy equal rights and become active players and beneficiaries in the development of Ethiopia. Since its establishment, the Organization has been working with thousands of low income women and girls in their efforts to achieve self-reliance and improve the quality of their lives and recorded satisfactory achievements.

2. What is safeguarding

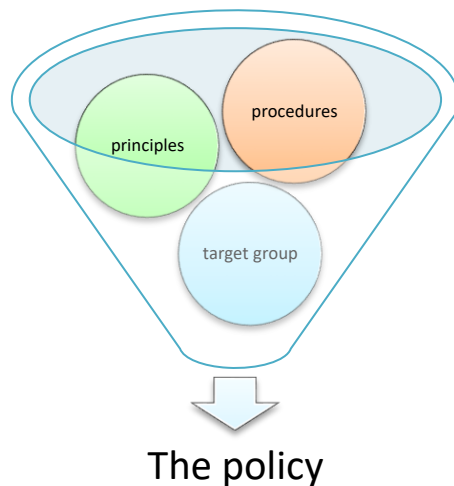
Safeguarding is an action aims at:

- ✓ Protect on from all forms of abuse and maltreatment
- ✓ Proactive actions to prevent harm
- ✓ Promotion of wellbeing by ensuring safe environment

Furthermore, it is promoting and protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, exploitation and abuse. A safeguarding approach entails minimizing the risk of harm to children and adults from staff, visitors, volunteers, partners and others within the working areas of the Organization. Thus, it calls for policies, principles and activities seeking to address child and adult safety and wellbeing.

3. Safeguarding policy

With this policy, WISE refers to a set of ideas and plans put to ensure the attitude and action we have towards safeguarding. The policy carries principles and procedures that are set for children and adults. In addition, a code of conduct, complaints handling mechanism and implementation of the policy together with monitoring and evaluation system (safeguarding audit) are presented accordingly.



3.1. Target Groups: Children and Adults

This policy is particularly developed for children and adults. Therefore, all the procedures and principles incorporated in this document are made referring to children and adults. So what do we mean by child and/ adult.

Definitions

Child

According to UNCRC 1989 "child" is a term to refer to a specific legal meaning to of any one below the age of 18 years. Likewise, chapter twelve of the revised family code states and make use of child as "minors" to refer to a person of either sex who has not attained the full age of eighteen years.

Definition of a Child: As defined above, "children" refers to a group of individuals, more than two, who are below the age of 18 years.

A Vulnerable Adult: This policy recognizes that every adult (a person aged 18 years or older) could be subject to harm or exploitation based on their age, gender, sexual orientation, health, social or economic status, or relationships of dependency and/or hierarchy they are involved in. Specific vulnerability is attributed to individuals who are, or may be, in need of community care services due to mental or other disabilities, age, or illness, and who are unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse or neglect.

Exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust to gain profit—monetarily, socially, or politically. This includes sexual exploitation.

Sexual Exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Survivor/Victim: The term "survivor" refers to a person who is alleged to have been subjected to abuse or exploitation. It implies strength and resilience. The term "victim" is used to describe an individual affected by the actions of an alleged perpetrator. However, using this term does not undermine the dignity or agency of the individual.

Safeguarding Concern or Allegation: A suspicion or allegation that a breach of this safeguarding policy has occurred or is at risk of occurring. This includes disclosures made by children or vulnerable adults.

Sexual Harassment: Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, verbal or physical conduct, or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behavior of a sexual nature that could reasonably be expected or perceived to cause offense or humiliation. Sexual harassment occurs when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Although typically involving a pattern of behavior, it can also take the form of a single incident. Sexual harassment may occur between individuals of the opposite or same sex, and any person can be either the victim or the offender.

Children rights in the context of Ethiopia

The FDRE constitution specifies rights of children under article 36 like this:

Every child has the right:

- a. To life;
- b. To a name and nationality;
- c. To know and be cared for by his or her parents or legal guardians;

- d. Not to be subject to exploitative practices, neither to be required nor permitted to perform work which may be hazardous or harmful to his or her education, health or well-being;
- e. To be free of corporal punishment or cruel and inhumane treatment in schools and other institutions responsible for the care of children.

2. In all actions concerning children undertaken by public and private welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the primary consideration shall be in the best interest of the child.

3.2. Why Children and Adults

The reason behind for WISE to put children and adult as the target group of this policy is that children and women are more prone to redundant abuses and maltreatments. Facts are telling us here.

According to Nahom (2018) on his article entitled "Policy Briefing on Child Protection Policy of Ethiopia in Emergencies" 48.6% of Ethiopia people are children who are below 15 years old. Among 48.6%, nearly 18% are under the age of 5 years, which means 37% of the entire below 15 years old and these have encountered to the challenges of child trafficking, child labor, sexual abuse, orphan and vulnerable and other related problems. Child problems like labor, trafficking, marriage, sexual abuse and so forth are viewed as a grievous issue throughout the world. Particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the problem is very serious (ILO, 2016).

Since children are those who socialize in a safe and healthy environment are the adults of tomorrow, they are the bases for the future development of a country (Miles, 2009). Unless children are properly socialized, there will be a chance to become challenging for their personal and societal development (Gobena, 1998).

Ethiopia ratified the UNCRC in 1991. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on December 9, 1991 by virtue of Proclamation 10/1992 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) on October 2, 2002 by virtue of Proclamation 283/2002. The adoption of the two instruments marks a paradigm shift since it identifies children as bearers of not only care and protection rights but also civil and

political rights as well. These two instruments are comprehensive treaties which recognize the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children who are meant to be the adults of tomorrow.

3.2.1. Child Safeguarding – ensuring safe practice and appropriate responses by staff and volunteers to concerns about the safety or welfare of children. Child safeguarding is about protecting the children from harm, promoting their welfare and in doing so creating an environment which enables children and young people to grow, develop and achieve their full potential.

3.2.2. Adult Safeguarding - means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

This all indicates that children and adults (particularly women) are prone to abuses. Thus, this in turn calls for the definition of abuse.

3.3. Abuse

It is a cruel and violent treatment of a person or animal. It entails any willful act or threatened act by a relative, caregiver, household member or staff member of an organization which causes or is likely to cause significant impairment of various kinds. Abuse and neglect can take many forms. Therefore, according to the way an individual encountered abuse there are various forms or kinds of abuse. Here are some of them.

Psychological abuse: verbal, emotional and mental abuse. It can be both verbal and non-verbal communication. The impact of this abuse is often deeper and longer lasting.

Physical abuse: is the use of physical force against someone, in a way that injures or endangers that person. This includes hitting, kicking or shaking, throwing, biting, grabbing, squeezing, burning and so on. Failure protect can also be considered abuse.

Sexual abuse: any situation in which someone is forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity, even when it's with a partner the person is also having consensual sex is sexual abuse. This includes rape, pornography. In the case

of children, use of a child for gratification or sexual intercourse, molesting or prostitution is considered sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse: is often subtle and in some cases, victims don't recognize they are being abused. This kind of abuse will wear victims down, often over a long period of time, until they take responsibility for their abuser's actions and behavior towards them, or simply accept it. In the case of children, abuse occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency, consistency and emotional security are not met. E.g., exposure to violence, unavailability of parents/cares.

Socio-economic abuse: in the context of WISE, refers to violence against women including taking away the earnings of the victim, nota allowing wires to have a separate income, making people work without a salary, incurring physical abuse, making the women unfit for work, creating confection the household due women earning higher income. In the case of staff-women programme participants relationships, such a violence can occur if a staff member deprives a women from getting information on her account, deprives her rights to use savings and credit service, steal from her saving deliberately commit irregularity in the account of a women. Abuse can also happen SACCO leaders/Socio-economic primary group leaders and ordinary members.

Leaders with power can commit abuse of authority by depriving the rights of the women obtaining in saving and credit services or take away the saving of the women for their own use.

Neglect: refers to persistent failure to meet a child's physical and psychological needs. E.g., deprivation of food, clothing, hygiene, health care of education. This can happen to an adult who is incapacitated to care for herself/himself.

In the case of giving away children, to marriage, parents or careers are considered to below the age of 18 have committed abuse.

3.3.1. Child Abuse

According to the World Health Organization "child abuse" or "maltreatment" constitutes "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse,

neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power”. (WHO, 1999 Report of the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention)

3.3.2. Adult Abuse

Any willful act or threatened act by a relative, caregiver, a household member or a staff member which causes or is likely to cause significant impairment to a vulnerable adult’s physical, mental, or emotional health. Abuse includes acts and omissions

4. The Document

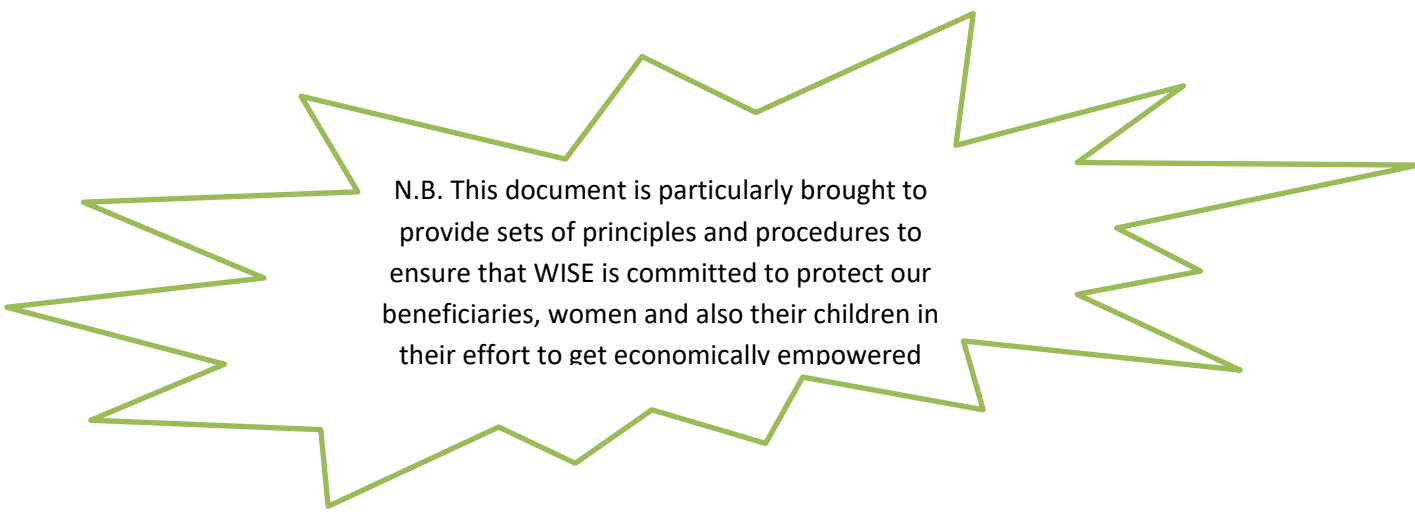
Using this Guide will help ensure that WISE is doing its best to implement best practice in the safeguarding of children and adults, particularly women.

5.. Purpose of the Policy

WISE is not only an organization for women it is also a home for them and their children as well. Most of the women have children that they bring to the working place; staff meet the children when they visit their working or living places when they do business development services or follow-up the performance of the mothers or deliver messages Children come to WISE’s premises for a number of reasons such as to use the library, with their mothers who come for training or other cases to deliver a message, to work during the summer season, etc. Therefore, WISE would like to ensure that the right relationship exists between our staff and the target members themselves but particularly with the children. We are committed to creating a safe environment for children and women so as to prevent physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

This policy statement relates to the relationship our staff have with the children of our target members and the members themselves (all ages) in such a way to build, earn and warrant their trust and also ensure the good image of our organization. The policy will help to minimize the risk of harm to children in our program. Indirectly, it

will create awareness of child protection to the family members of the children, particularly to the mothers.



N.B. This document is particularly brought to provide sets of principles and procedures to ensure that WISE is committed to protect our beneficiaries, women and also their children in their effort to get economically empowered

6. Declaration of Guiding Principles

WISE has brought core principles on the safeguarding of children and adults. The convention and the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child bases on four anchored general principles. Those are:

- ❖ Nondiscrimination,
- ❖ The best interest of the child,
- ❖ The right to life and maximum survival and development and
- ❖ Respect for the views of the child

Bearing in mind the abovementioned principles as a pillar for setting ours, the welfare of children and adults is paramount in our service.

1. Prevention: works to ensure every child and adult is prevented from any form of abuse

2. Equality of protection: with this we mean WISE believes and adhere that every child and adult needs to be equally protected. Thus, we put steps and measures to protect adults and children who are likely to suffer from harm, exploitation and abuse.

3. Creating a safe and healthy environment: We are committed to upholding the rights of every child and adult, who attends our service, including the rights to be kept safe and protected from harm, listened to and heard.

4. Building safe projects and programs: All children and young people have an equal right to attend a service that respects them as individuals and encourages them to reach their potential, regardless of their background. Children of the respective beneficiary women are entitled to safe projects and programs.

5. Keeping the best interest of children and adults: in our services, all actions and intervention we carry out are taken with due consideration of need.

6. Co- approach: WISE believes that safeguarding adults and children is not a sole responsibility left for particular individual or public or private entity. It is a responsibility that should be shared with organizations, individuals and other bodies who work directly or indirectly with children and women in particular. Thus, partnership is core.

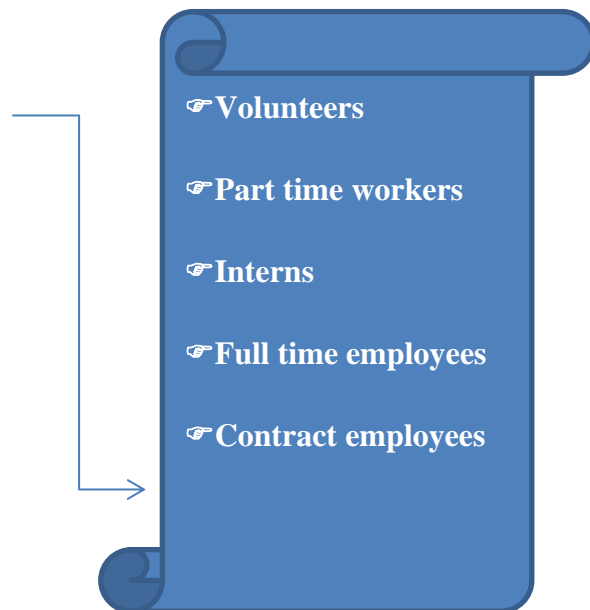
7. Dissemination of information, sensitization, education and training: with this we mean information that are vital and appropriate for children and adults will be distributed through various forms. In line with this, Education, training and awareness are our core tools.

8. Confidentiality: allegations and concerns regarding children and adults are taken for seriously and particular care will be taken with regard to sharing of information with other people.

9. Accountability: we feel accountable for every action, interaction and intervention we have with children and adults.

10. Ownership: everyone in WISE is responsible in fulfilling his /her individual duty for the protection and wellbeing of children and adults.

7. Scope



8. Codes of Behavior for Staff

WISE has a Code of Ethics that all staff members are expected to respect. The Human Resource Policy and Procedures manual of the Organization also prescribes behavior that are considered inappropriate or illegal and result in disciplinary measures. Specifically, the codes of behavior which relate to relationships with children and their mothers are specified hereunder.

- Refrain from bullying or harassing others sexually.
- Refrain from engaging with children or their mothers while under the influence of alcohol or other substances.
- Not take advantage of a position of power to enter into an intimate relationship.
- Act in good faith and treat other people with dignity and respect, without discrimination, harassment, abuse or neglect.
- Not use children for one's personal service or benefit.

- f) Refrain from using WISE's computers, WiFi facilities or premises to view, download, create or distribute inappropriate material, including pornography.
- g) Safeguard children from any abuse by any other staff, target members or visitors or users of WISE's facilities.
- h) Ask permission from the parents or guardians before taking pictures. Ask written permission from all concerned before publishing photos and stories.
- i) Do not spend time alone with a child or be in view of another adult when you are with a child. Be careful with conversation and physical intimacy.
- j) Not hire children under the age of 14 for any task. Children over 14 may, under special circumstances, be hired during the summer season, to engage in some light activities so that they receive some allowances to share costs with their mothers/parents during September, when schools are opened.
- k) Maintain professional boundaries with children.
- l) Not slap, hit or use any physical force on any child, advise mothers to refrain from doing so.
- m) Not use children for display to funders and visitors.
- n) Not discriminate children during kids' day events.
- o) Not ignore abuse of children but bring the matter to the attention of the management.
- p) Take care in sending verbal, non-verbal or written messages that could be misinterpreted by children or adults.
- q) Not ignore abuse of women and bring the matter to the attention of the management.
- r) Respect the Code of Conduct of WISE with respect to dressing code.
- s) Treat children and their parents with dignity and respect, without discrimination, harassment, abuse or neglect.
- t) Not touch sexual areas of the body and don't help children do intimate things such as going to the toilet or bathing when they can do these for themselves or their mothers/careers can do them.
- u) Stop any interaction with a child if a child says stop, or if the child appears uncomfortable with the interaction.

- v) Not publish pictures of children that are not decent and respectful. Also not publish pictures of crying children.
- w) Not give food to very young children without the knowledge of their parents/guardians as they can be allergic to some foods.
- x) Not allow children to play with toys or equipment that can be harmful.
- y) Protect young children from situations/materials that can cause harm, e.g. electrical equipment.

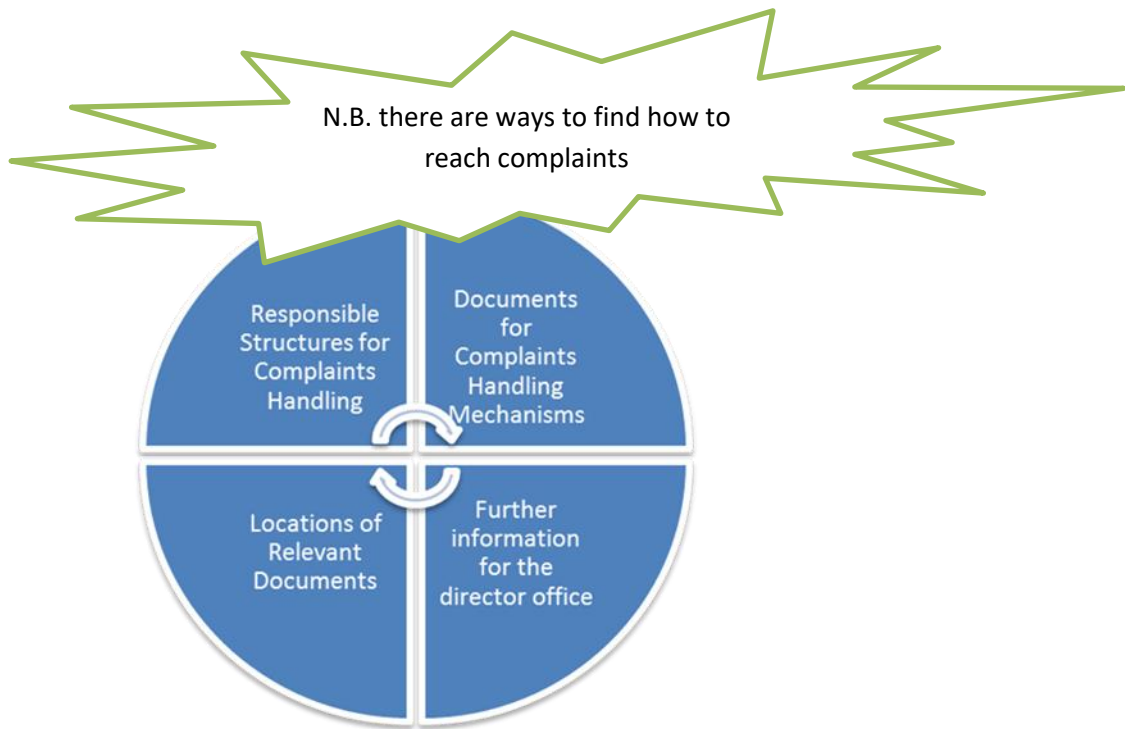
9. Complaints Handling Mechanism for Community Target Groups

WISE gives due importance complaints/grievances of both target community members as well as staff. Therefore, beyond policies, rules or procedures, efforts are exerted to build an organizational culture that promotes and ensures that every office applies an open-door policy. This policy is aimed to give target community (including their families) and staff members opportunity for exercising freedom of expressing their opinion, raising their concerns, ensuring quick redressal to their complaints or grievances on matters related to their relationships with the Organization (include the Union of WISE SACCOs and meket training service) Every officer is required to ensure that her/his office is always open for aggrieved target community members or staff and s/he should attend to cases immediately. The following sections describe the Organization's Complaints Handling mechanism, with reference to relevant documents for details. The system is applicable in both WISE and the Union of WISE SACCOs and meket training service.

Our complaints handling mechanism has two sections

- ✓ complaints handling mechanism for community target members

- ✓ complaints handling mechanism for staff members



Complaints handling mechanism for community target members	Complaints handling mechanism for staff members
1 The Cooperative Societies Proclamation	1. The Labor Proclamation
2 Human Resource (HR) Policy and Procedures manual	2. Human Resource Policy and Procedures Manual
3 Orientation Fliers to Members	3. Orientation and Induction
4 Suggestion Boxes	4. Suggestion Boxes
5 Leaders Meetings	5. Management Meeting
6 Safeguarding policy	6. Safeguarding policy

7	Gender, Workplace Safety and Health Policies and Procedures	7. Gender, Workplace Safety and Health Policies and Procedures
8	CCRDA's Code of Conduct	8. CCRDA's Code of Conduct
9	Union Manager/Director/Union Board	9. Director/Board
10	General Assembly Forums	10. All staff meetings

Further details of each complaints handling mechanism are presented below. CCRDA's code of conduct, suggestion boxes, human resource policy and procedure and thus safe guarding policy are commonly shared for community target members and staff members.

A) For target members

❖ The Cooperative Societies Proclamation

The Cooperative Societies Proclamation No. 985/2016 issued by the government of Ethiopia for the formation and regulation of cooperatives in the country provides Article 25 and Articles 61-67 in relation to the rights and duties of members as well as complaints handling procedures. In accordance with the Proclamation, cooperatives develop their bylaws that govern their operations, members handling and other matters. Cases that cannot be resolved by the Mediation Sub-committees are handled by elected conciliators. Again, if the cases could not be resolved by the conciliators, they can be forwarded to arbitrators who conduct their hearing and fulfill their duties in accordance with the Civil Procedure Code. The final stage for presenting grievances is the Regular Courts.

❖ Bylaws of Cooperatives

Each Saving and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) formed by WISE have bylaws approved by their respective General Assemblies. The bylaws contain several articles of which is the election and duties of the Mediation Sub Committee (Article No. 23). The Committee is charged for handling complaints or conflicts between the cooperative and its members in an amicable manner. If the Committee fails to resolve the case, the above steps can be pursued.

❖ **Orientation Fliers to Members**

WISE and the Union of WISE SACCOs have produced a flier to inform members about their rights and responsibilities as well as different procedures of their cooperatives. The document clearly describes procedures for complaints handling within the cooperatives and beyond as per the Cooperative Societies Proclamation.

❖ **Suggestion Boxes**

The Organization has placed suggestion boxes in its premises with a clear sign for community members coming to the premises for training or to seek resolve to personal or cooperative issues. Target members who do not wish to bring their issues openly to officers have this opportunity of writing their issues and putting them in the suggestion boxes. The boxes are checked by responsible officers at least once a month and brought to the attention of the Director of WISE and/or Manager of the Union.

❖ **Leaders Meetings**

Aggrieved members have the option of tabling their complaints at their SACCO Leaders monthly meetings. This is usually done in writing. The Chairperson of the SACCO has the obligation to present complaints to the committee which deliberates and provides responses to the aggrieved. Minutes of the deliberations are kept by the Committee and replies are given either verbally or in writing directly or through the assigned staff. Urgent cases can, through the Facilitators of the SACCOs, be brought to the attention of the respective Chairperson of the SACCO, Director of WISE or Manager of the Union. (Ref. Bylaws of SACCOs)

❖ **Union Board**

Members with complaints on the Secretariat of the Union or that could not be resolved by the SACCO leaders can present their cases to the Union Board, which holds its meetings monthly. One of the responsibilities of the Board is to address complaints of member SACCOs as well as their individual members.

❖ **Safeguarding Policy**

The policy help to minimize the risk of harm to children and women target members in the program. Indirectly, it will create awareness of child protection to the family members of the children, particularly to the mothers. The document indicates the redressal system for any complaints that may arise by children themselves or their mothers/custodians.

❖ **Human Resource (HR) Policy and Procedures**

The HR Policy and Procedures of both WISE and the Union describe the rights and obligations of employees, code of conduct of employees as well as disciplinary measures particularly with matters relating to their relationship and performance related to target members. Complaints presented on employees are addressed in accordance with pertinent articles in the HR Policy and Procedures manuals.

❖ **CCRDA's Code of Conduct**

As a member of the network organization for charities, CCRDA, since 1999, WISE has signed the Code of Conduct and is committed to abide by it. The document is available in both Amharic and English and copies are found in the Resource Center. Target members can solicit information from staff on how they can use this mechanism for their complaints. The aim of the signing the Code is to make signatories accountable for their actions and decisions to all stakeholders including the beneficiaries they serve.

❖ **General Assembly Forums**

Target community members can present complaints at the cooperatives' General Assembly Forums. Elected leaders are expected to address the complaints promptly.

b) For Staff

❖ **Human Resource Policy and Procedures Manual**

The HR Policy and Procedures manuals of both WISE and the WISE SACCOs Union present entitlements, obligations, procedures for implementation, procedures for grievance handling by the organizations, etc. New employees are informed of their rights and obligations as well as procedures during their orientation and induction period. Access to the manual is available in different ways including the data center, supervisors' offices, Director's office and Finance office.

❖ **CCRDA's Code of Conduct**

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❖ **Orientation and Induction**

A short description of key entitlements and obligations as well as procedures is handed over to newly-recruited employees during their orientation and induction sessions. Employees are given orientation and induction by immediate and higher supervisors before they commence their duties and responsibilities. A copy of the Staff Code of Conduct is also issued to new employees along with letters of employment and job descriptions.

❖ **Safeguarding, Gender, Workplace Safety and Health Policies and Procedures**

These policies are produced by the Organization to ensure that staff enjoy their rights and are also accountable for their duties and responsibilities. The policies describe

what are expected of the staff and the Organization as well as implementation mechanisms. As the documents describe the rights and obligations of staff, they also explain ways of raising complaints to the concerned in case of violation.

❖ **The labor Proclamation**

The country's labor Proclamation no. 377/2003 provides for the protection of the rights of employees. Issues not addressed in the Organization's HR Policies and Procedures are dealt with in line with provisions of the country's labor Law, Articles 12-13, 136-143. Aggrieved employees can take their cases up to labor Courts at different levels of the justice structure.

❖ **Regular Meeting Forums**

Staff can present their complaints openly at Staff Meetings, Management Meetings and/or Department Staff Meetings. Responsible officers are expected to address the complaints promptly.

10. Implementation and Training

- All new staff shall receive orientation when they join the Organization.
- Staff that have direct contact with children and target members shall discuss the policy, its implementation and challenges once in three months.
- Management team members shall be responsible for informing their staff on the policy and its implementation.
- The Institution Development Department and the Union of WISE SACCOs shall be responsible for informing target members on the policy and grievance reporting.
- Aggrieved target member or child can report to the Director of WISE/Manager of Union of WISE SACCOs directly or branch manager.
- Any staff member shall raise concerns confidentially about unacceptable behavior by other staff or about any risky situation.

- The Amharic version of this policy shall be distributed to the leaders of each cooperative. A copy of the key subjects shall be posted on the notice boards of the offices of WISE along with the Code of Conduct of Staff.

11. Safe Recruitment

One element of this Safeguarding policy is safe recruitment as it plays an important role in protecting staff and communities from abuse and exploitation. WISE strives to employ people of integrity in addition of competence. Therefore, the following measures shall be taken during the recruitment of employees at all levels.

- a) Interview panels shall include safeguarding in their recruitment interviews. This can help interviewer gauge the understanding of candidates in keeping people safe and creating a safe environment.
- b) Background check will include the suitability of candidates to work with vulnerable communities, specially children and women. Recruiting panel members must ensure that the candidates do not have histories of bad behavior.
- c) The orientation and induction programme shall include introduction to policies and procedures including safeguarding
- d) The job description of all employees shall include a responsibility of safeguarding children and adults.
- e) A copy of the code of conduct of WISE shall be given to the appointee along with the appointment letter.

12. Monitoring and Review

- 1.2.1 Two focal persons (one from the WISE and the other from the Union) shall
be assigned for safe guarding issues. The person shall be responsible for monitoring and audit on safeguarding policy implementation.

- 1.2.2 Incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints shall be treated confidentially.
- 1.2.3 In case of any misconduct by a staff, the disciplinary procedures of WISE described in the HR Policy and Procedures manual shall apply.
- 1.2.4 Annual audit shall be conducted by the focal person using the template annexed here with
- 1.2.5 The audit results will be presented at the annual participatory Review and Reflection programme of the Organization were all staff gather.
- 1.2.6 Remedial measures shall be endorsed by the meeting for the management to take action.

13. The policy shall be reviewed when necessary

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