



Code of Conduct for Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR)



**Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees**

**The First Official Refugee Led Organization (RLO) in Ethiopia**

# **Code of Conduct for**

# **Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees**

# **(EFFR)**



## Introduction:

This Code of Conduct serves as a comprehensive guide for the team members of Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR) based on the UNHCR Code of Conduct consistent with the objectives of the EFFR. It aims to assist them in making sound ethical decisions in their professional lives. This document represents an ethical symbol that, while not strictly legally binding, is specifically designed to support staff in understanding their ethical and behavioral obligations. This Code applies to all members of the Foundation's team, whether they are members, employees, or consultants.

The Code of Conduct contributes to enhancing ethical oversight of the Foundation's activities and programs. EFFR staff are committed to the following core values and principles:

- Rights, Social Justice, Human Dignity, and Respect: Working towards achieving equality in rights and duties among all individuals.
- Refugee Protection: Ensuring the protection of refugees from exploitation, corruption, and sexual harassment.
- Assistance to Persons with Special Needs: Providing necessary support to persons with special needs.
- Inclusion of Individuals and Communities: Ensuring the involvement of all individuals, families, and communities in decisions that affect their lives.
- Promoting Respect and Tolerance: Fostering respect, compassion, and tolerance among refugees and returnees, and demonstrating equal respect for all people without discrimination based on color, race, gender, religion, origin, language, or other factors.
- Maintaining Absolute Confidentiality of Information: Whether it pertains to refugees or the Foundation.
- Improving the Work Environment: Building respectful and humane working relationships that enhance performance.
- Encouraging Learning and Capacity Building: To achieve positive change.
- Removing All Barriers to Equality: While respecting the cultures, customs, and traditions of all peoples.

## Objectives of the Code

This Code aims to:

- Establish Ethical Standards: Set ethical standards, fundamental rules and principles of public service etiquette, and high professional values and culture for the Foundation's team. It seeks to promote adherence to these standards, rules, and values, and to establish the foundations of good practices and sound governance. This is achieved by raising awareness among staff and guiding them towards sound professional ethics and self-discipline frameworks governing the Foundation's operations, consistent with applicable laws and regulations, by clarifying their job duties, responsibilities, and their role in improving job performance and serving the community.
- Create an Effective and Comfortable Work Environment: Contribute to making the work environment effective, advanced, transparent, comfortable, and constructive for employees in community work.



## Code of Conduct for Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR)

- Provide a General Guide: Offer a general guide to direct the work of the Foundation's departments and employees to achieve sound judgment and governance.
- Clarify Duties and Rights: Clarify job duties and rights, and the administrative and social responsibilities of the Foundation's employees.
- Develop Written Policies: Formulate written policies related to employees and volunteers in a manner consistent with existing laws.
- Apply Fairness: Apply fairness among employees in terms of unbiased evaluation methods, capacity development, and a spirit of responsibility.

### Principles of the Code of Conduct

1. Treat all refugees, returnees, and other persons with care, fairness, respect, and dignity.

**Treating Beneficiaries with Respect and Dignity:** This is our fundamental duty. Any behavior or comments by any EFFR staff member that demeans a beneficiary or beneficiaries is absolutely unacceptable, regardless of whether beneficiaries are present or not.

**Fair Treatment:** Fair treatment of beneficiaries requires impartiality and non-preference for any party, whether individuals or groups.

**Understanding Difficulties and Special Needs:** Staff and members must be aware of the difficulties faced by refugees and returnees, and understand the particular situations of women and men, and the risks faced by refugee children and women. They should identify the special needs of each of these groups and act in their best interest.

**Viewing Beneficiaries as Humans, Not "Cases":** It is crucially important that staff and members see the people we serve as human beings, not "cases," "populations," or "case numbers." Bureaucratic terminology can dehumanize individuals. As humanitarian workers, direct communication with the people we serve and understanding their situation through individual conversations or small groups helps us identify complex problems.

**Direct Communication and Fieldwork:** Staff should make every effort to communicate directly with beneficiaries. For protection workers, it is essential to visit beneficiaries in their living areas. Staff should balance office work with fieldwork.

**Dealing with Stress and Resource Challenges:** The Foundation's work can be stressful when resources are scarce, and beneficiaries may feel uncomfortable in such situations. Staff must listen to their concerns and try to involve them in finding solutions.

**Caution Against Exploitation:** We must be cautious of individuals or groups who may seek to exploit or control resources at the expense of beneficiaries or specific groups. Special care should be taken in sectors where staff make monitoring decisions related to refugee status.

**Staff Training and Guidance:** Training and guiding less experienced staff to avoid stress and psychological pressure if they encounter difficulties during their duties.

2. Uphold the integrity of the Foundation by ensuring that my personal and professional conduct is perceived to be of the highest standards.



## Code of Conduct for Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR)

**Integrity in Personal and Professional Conduct:** The integrity of the Foundation largely depends on the integrity of its staff. This includes honesty and loyalty to the Foundation.

**Commitment to Respect:** Commitment to respect in life practices and dealing with others respectfully, and refraining from frequenting illicit and suspicious places.

**3. Perform my official duties and conduct my private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby maintaining and enhancing beneficiaries' trust in the Foundation.**

**Avoiding Personal Gain:** Using an office or position within the Foundation for personal gain is unacceptable and unprofessional. Similarly, conducting private business from the Foundation's office, or using the Foundation's facilities for private business, constitutes unacceptable conduct.

**Fundamental Professional Commitment:** Upon joining the Foundation, we all pledge not to seek or accept instructions regarding the performance of our duties from any other entity or authority outside the Foundation. Staff are committed to dedicating their full energy and capabilities to working for the Foundation.

**Outside Activities and Conflicts of Interest:** Permission must be obtained before engaging in any outside activity to ensure there is no conflict of interest.

**Non-Involvement in Political Activities:** Staff and members of the Foundation must not engage in any political activities in any form or accept funds for supporting political activities or participate in demonstrations, sit-ins, and other related activities.

**4. Contribute to building a harmonious work environment based on teamwork, mutual respect, and understanding.**

**Responsibility for Building a Collaborative Work Environment:** All managers and staff are responsible for building a collaborative work environment characterized by courtesy, respect, tolerance, and moderation.

**Rejection of Offensive Behavior:** Offensive behavior is inexcusable, even if a colleague performs competently in other aspects. Given diverse backgrounds and cultures, we should be careful to respect our colleagues, and negative views can negatively affect the work environment, leading to a lack of teamwork and transparency in decision-making.

**Avoiding a Hostile Work Environment:** A hostile office environment not only stifles ideas, initiative, and creativity, but often harms and leads to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and low morale.

**Trust and Open Dialogue:** There must be trust and open dialogue between management and other staff. Elected staff representatives should be protected in their legal role from discrimination or bias in the workplace.

**Managers as Role Models:** Managers should be open to all viewpoints, including those of junior staff, especially when these views conflict with their own. Managers are expected to set a good example.

**5. Promote the safety, health, and well-being of all Foundation staff as a necessary condition for effective and consistent performance.**



## Code of Conduct for Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR)

**Foundation's Responsibility for Staff Safety and Well-being:** EFFR is responsible for the safety and well-being of its staff.

**Staff Adherence to Safety Instructions:** Staff must strictly observe safety and security instructions and demonstrate responsible behavior that minimizes risks to themselves and others.

**Following Issued Instructions:** Staff must follow security and safety instructions issued internally by the Foundation, as well as those issued by the UNHCR and the Refugee and Returnee Service (RRS).

### 6. Protect and use the Foundation's confidential information.

**Confidentiality of Information:** Disclosing sensitive or confidential information without authorization can seriously jeopardize the efficiency and credibility of the Foundation and its staff, and endanger beneficiaries. This includes, but is not limited to, communications with the media.

**Information Sharing:** It is understood that these provisions do not affect procedures governing the exchange of information between the Foundation on one hand and government representatives, national authorities, NGOs, donors, and others on the other.

### 7. Prevent, oppose, and combat all forms of exploitation and abuse of refugees and other persons of concern.

**No Abuse of Authority:** The existence of scarce humanitarian resources at our disposal places us in a position of power over individuals whose survival may depend on our assistance. This power must not be misused. Soliciting services, accepting bribes, or offers of services in exchange for protection or assistance is absolutely unacceptable.

**Unequal Relationships:** Unequal power relationships generally exist between EFFR staff and beneficiaries. Therefore, we must bear in mind that sexual, emotional, financial, or employment relationships between staff and beneficiaries, even if we ourselves view them as consensual and non-exploitative, can be perceived by others in the humanitarian community and the public as an abuse of power and trust, or a conflict of interest.

**\* \*\*Refraining from Sexual Relationships with Beneficiaries:\*\*** According to the Secretary-General's bulletin of 2003, **\*\*sexual relationships with beneficiaries undermine the credibility and integrity of UN work and are strongly discouraged\*\***. In case of any doubt, it is in the interest of staff to discuss such relationships with their supervisor. Where supervisors are consulted, they are expected to respect confidentiality and handle with sensitivity.

**Employing Beneficiaries for Private Services:** Staff who employ beneficiaries for private services, such as housekeeping, must realize that this may be perceived as an abuse of their economic power or a favoritism of certain individuals. In some places where we work, the economic gap between us and the people we serve is so vast that any association with us can be considered a privilege and a beneficial position.

**Rules for Private Employment:** On the other hand, working as a private employee for a staff member is sometimes the only possible source of income for a refugee and their family. This means that we must do everything in our power to avoid this being perceived as an abuse of our authority and/or in favor of those we employ. One basic rule is to ensure that working conditions are no worse than



## Code of Conduct for Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR)

locally accepted standards, whether or not governed by local law. Reporting such employer relationships or discussing their existence with our supervisor is a step aimed at establishing clarity in what can become an ethically ambiguous situation.

**Consultations and Support:** Staff and supervisors can also utilize regular advisory options such as the staff welfare section, staff council, and staff associations.

**Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:** Sexual exploitation and abuse violate universally recognized international legal rules and standards, and thus have always been unacceptable and prohibited conduct for EFFR staff. Degrading or exploitative behavior, such as exchanging money, labor, goods, or services for sexual favors or other forms of humiliation, is prohibited for EFFR staff or any other UN staff. This includes any exchange of assistance due to beneficiaries.

**8. Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that conflict with human rights, or activities that threaten the Foundation's image and interests.**

**Commitment to Law and Ethics:** No staff member of integrity will participate in or support any illegal, exploitative, abusive, or unethical activities that violate human dignity or conflict with UN resolutions or international human rights standards. It does not matter whether these activities are carried out within the Foundation's premises or using the Foundation's assets, or whether this is a common practice within the community we work in or tolerated by local police or the judicial system.

**Sexual Exploitation and Abuse as Gross Misconduct:** Sexual exploitation and abuse constitute acts of gross misconduct, and thus are grounds for disciplinary action, including summary dismissal.

**Reporting Concerns:** Any concerns or suspicions of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by a fellow worker, regardless of whether they are in the same agency or not and whether within the UN system or not, must be reported through existing mechanisms.

**Private Life:** Our private lives must remain private. The Foundation has no business regulating our private conduct, unless it is illegal under local law or has a negative impact on our work or the people we serve.

**Prohibition of Sexual Activity with Children:** Sexual activity with children (persons under 18 years of age) is prohibited.

**Prohibition of Exchange for Sexual Services:** The exchange of money, labor, goods, or services for sexual favors or other forms of degrading or exploitative conduct is prohibited. This includes prostitution.

**### 9. Refrain from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, or favoritism in the workplace.**

**Impact of Discrimination and Harassment:** Discrimination and harassment have a negative impact on the workplace environment, professional life, and staff well-being.



## Code of Conduct for Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR)

**Zero Tolerance for Discrimination:** Discrimination, harassment, or bullying (mobbing) based on race, gender, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, disability, political conviction, hierarchy within the Foundation, or any other distinguishing characteristic, shall not be tolerated.

**Forms of Harassment:** Harassment can take many forms; it can be physical, verbal, visual, or written (including electronic media such as emails). It can also be a single incident or a series of incidents and can occur at work or outside working hours. Harassment usually involves a person in a position of power or authority. Staff, whether individually or as a group, can be victims or perpetrators of harassment.

**Creating a Safe Environment:** EFFR staff are committed to creating and maintaining an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Managers at all levels have a special responsibility to support and develop systems that specifically adhere to the highest standards of conduct in the workplace, free from intimidation and personal favoritism due to their authority, and the inherent risk of abuse.

**Personal Relationships at Work:** Consensual sexual and/or romantic relationships with a colleague may not cause harm to either party and may not have adverse professional consequences. However, staff in supervisory or authority positions must be aware of the difficulties that may arise and the potential negative perception by other staff when entering into such a relationship with subordinates. Difficulties may arise concerning: maintaining appropriate boundaries between professional and personal life, demonstrating bias in performance evaluations, compromising sound professional decisions, or negatively impacting team relations in the work environment. It may be particularly difficult to convince other staff that their colleague was not favored due to the relationship.

**Reporting Supervisory Relationships:** This applies not only to relationships between direct supervisory staff but also to relationships, for example, between a head of a field office and all staff working in that office. The supervisor of the situation. The supervisor will then inform the staff member whether he/she should seek a new assignment or transfer with the aim of removing the authority or hierarchical relationship between the involved staff.

**Utilizing Consultation Options:** Staff and supervisors can also utilize regular advisory options such as the staff welfare section, staff council, and staff associations.

**10. Compliance with Local Laws and Financial Obligations.**

**11. Perform my official duties and manage my private affairs in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, thereby maintaining and enhancing the Foundation's trust.**

My actions will be free from any consideration of personal gain. I will resist any undue political pressure in decision-making.

I will not seek or accept instructions regarding the performance of my duties from any entity or national authorities outside the authority of the Foundation, and I will act in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules for staff and members.



## Code of Conduct for Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR)

I will not accept any honor, decoration, or gift for performing a service from any external entity or any other source outside the Foundation without prior permission.

I will not engage in any external profession or business without prior authorization from the Foundation, nor will I accept any payments or subsidies from any entity outside the Foundation, or participate in certain political activities such as running for or holding public office.

I will avoid assisting individuals or companies that have undertakings with the Foundation as this may lead to preferential or perceived treatment, and I will never participate in activities related to the procurement of goods or services, or in human resources activities that may give rise to conflicts of interest.

**12. Contribute to building a harmonious work environment based on teamwork, mutual respect, and understanding.**

I will respect all colleagues regardless of status or position and will allow all colleagues the opportunity to have their opinions heard and their experiences and efforts recognized.

I will share relevant information with other colleagues and strive to respond in a timely manner to inquiries.

I will respect the privacy of my colleagues and avoid misinformation, and I will seek to resolve disputes and problems as they arise, guided by mutual respect and a positive, open approach between management and staff representatives.

As a member, manager, or supervisor, I will be open to the views of all team members and will provide timely feedback on the performance of each team member.

**13. Promote the safety, health, and well-being of all Foundation staff as a necessary condition for effectiveness and improved performance.**

I will remain aware of and comply with all instructions regarding occupational safety and health, and if I have doubts about the instructions, I will immediately inform my supervisor.

As a manager/supervisor, I will strive to ensure that the health and well-being of staff are not jeopardized.

**14. Protect information and resources to which I have access and use them according to my position within the Foundation.**

I will do my best in all matters of official work and will not disclose any confidential information about refugees and returnees.

I will protect, manage, and use financial and material resources efficiently and effectively, bearing in mind that these resources are placed at the disposal of the Foundation for the benefit of refugees and returnees.

**15. Prevent and combat all exploitation and abuse of refugees and returnees from Yemen and other persons of concern.**



## Code of Conduct for Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR)

I pledge not to abuse the authority and influence I have by virtue of my position in the Foundation.

I will not request any service or compensation from refugees or other persons of concern in exchange for protection or assistance. I will not engage in anything related to sexual, emotional, financial, or employment exploitation with refugees or other persons of concern.

Be cautious in establishing a relationship with beneficiaries that is considered non-exploitative and consensual, and report this relationship to my direct supervisor to obtain appropriate guidance on whether this relationship is naturally available to us.

I will act responsibly when employing or otherwise involving refugees or other persons for whom special services are provided, and I will submit a written report on the nature and terms of the employment to my supervisor.

Refrain from any involvement in criminal or unethical activities, activities that conflict with human rights, or activities that harm the image and reputation of the Foundation.

I will not endorse or participate in any way in illegal, exploitative, or abusive activities, including, for example, child labor, human trafficking, and sexual activities with persons under 18 years of age.

16. Refrain from any form of harassment, discrimination, physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, or favoritism in the workplace.

I will not participate in or tolerate any form of harassment in the workplace, including sexual harassment and abuse of power.

As a manager/supervisor, I will not request services, loans, or gifts from employees, except those of symbolic and non-material value.

Immediate intervention without delay is required in cases of conflict of interest and abuse of power in establishing sexual relationships with employees under my supervision

### Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

#### Section 1: Definitions

**Sexual Exploitation:** Means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

**Sexual Abuse:** Refers to actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

#### Section 2: Scope of Application

\* This bulletin applies to all staff and members of the Foundation, and everyone who contracts with the Foundation as consultants and others.



### Section 3: Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate universally recognized international legal rules and standards.

**Acts of Gross Misconduct:** Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are considered acts of gross misconduct, and thus are grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal without notice.

**Prohibition of Sexual Activity with Children:** Sexual activity with children (persons under 18 years of age) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or local age of consent. A mistaken belief concerning the age of a child is not a defense.

**Prohibition of Exchange for Sexual Services:** The exchange of money, labor, goods, or services for sex, including sexual services or other forms of degrading or exploitative conduct, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance due to beneficiaries.

**Sexual Relationships with Beneficiaries:** Sexual relationships between EFFR staff and members and beneficiaries of assistance, based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the Foundation's work and are strongly discouraged.

**Duty to Report:** When an EFFR staff member has concerns or suspicions of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, they must report these concerns through established reporting mechanisms.

**Responsibility to Create a Safe Environment:** EFFR staff are obligated to create and maintain an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Managers at all levels have a special responsibility to support and develop systems that maintain this environment.

**Non-Exhaustive List:** The standards outlined above are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Other types of sexual exploitative conduct or sexual abuse may be grounds for administrative action or disciplinary action, including dismissal without notice, pursuant to the Foundation's Staff Regulations and Rules.

### Section 4: Duties of Heads of Departments and Offices

**Creating a Safe Environment:** The head of the department or office, as appropriate, shall be responsible for creating and maintaining an environment that prevents sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and for taking appropriate measures for this purpose. In particular, the head of the department or office shall inform his or her staff of the contents of this bulletin and ensure that each staff member receives a copy.

**Focal Point for Reporting:** The head of the department or office or mission shall designate an official at a sufficiently senior level to serve as a focal point for receiving reports of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

**Confidentiality in Reports:** All reports of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse must be handled confidentially in order to protect the rights of all involved. However, such reports may, when necessary,



## Section 5: Referral to National Authorities

If, after a proper investigation, there is evidence supporting allegations of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse, such cases may, after consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs, be referred to national authorities for criminal prosecution.

## Acknowledgment

I acknowledge .....Maintain the integrity of Ethio Friends Foundation for Refugees (EFFR) through my personal and professional conduct, which upholds the highest standards. I will demonstrate my integrity by acting honestly, and by being patient, respectful, and kind to all refugees and returnees, my colleagues, partners, donors, and the government.

Signature.....