Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) in the International Aid Sector

Victim and Survivor Voices: Main Findings from a DFID-led Listening Exercise

DFID Safeguarding Unit, October 2018

Contents

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to this exercise, both directly and indirectly, whose willingness and bravery in providing often personal and sensitive testimony has been invaluable in shaping the findings contained within this report.

Every care has been taken to respect the anonymity of the representatives who participated in this listening exercise. All quotations are anonymised and contain no personal or identifiable details to ensure that it is not possible to trace individuals.

Foreword by the Secretary of State for International Development and Minister for Women and Equalities, The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP

Aid must be delivered in a way that does no harm. Unless we do all we reasonably can to prevent wrongdoing and unless we hold all those who do wrong to account, we will have failed in our duty to protect the most vulnerable. Earlier this year the media exposed serious sexual exploitation and abuse issues in the international development sector. Since then the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) has been **driving work to improve standards for the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, and sexual harassment** (taken together, SEAH) by or against individuals who work to deliver aid programmes. We must take all reasonable steps to prevent harm, and if harm does occur, to ensure that victims' and survivors' essential needs are fully considered and prioritised.

Unequal power relations, often related to ingrained gender inequalities, are at the heart of the matter. So to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, we need to put victims and survivors first. We must listen to those we serve and actively include victims and survivors in the design and monitoring of aid programmes. That is why DFID has been **engaging with representatives of victims and survivors** of SEAH both by and against aid workers, whose views and experiences are integral to informing our policy and practice.

We conducted a **targeted listening exercise** between June and October 2018. This included grassroots organisations representing women, children, people with disabilities, international non-government organisations (INGOs), think tanks, research houses, academics and independent experts. Three issues stand out in the testimony we heard: **1) barriers to reporting SEAH, 2) reporting mechanisms and systems, and 3) victim and survivor support.** This is not the first listening exercise of this kind and must not be the last. Many of the issues raised are not new.

The report aims to summarise our findings in a way that will be useful to those across the sector. It also outlines some **practical measures that DFID has taken in 2018** and others that we are currently exploring. The findings of this exercise informed our policy thinking and the commitments that donors and other parts of the aid sector will present to the 18th October safeguarding summit in London. **We are listening, and we are acting**.

October 2018

1. **Executive summary**

It is crucial to <u>listen</u> to those who experience and witness sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) and enable their voices to inform prevention, response and continual improvement. From June to October 2018, we reached out to and established an ongoing dialogue with a diverse range of both southern and international **representatives of victims and survivors**. As outlined in the foreword, the testimonies we heard led us to group the findings of our research into three separate but interlocking areas:

1. **Barriers to reporting sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment**
2. **Reporting mechanisms and systems**
3. **Victim and survivor support**

As critically important as these areas are, we are clear that effective protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment requires real **organisational cultural change and effective leadership** at every level across the sector. Robust governance structures are needed to ensure that within organisations there are **individuals with whom the buck can stop**. Equally important is therefore the wider process of tackling underlying gender inequalities and other types of power imbalance that contribute to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Some of DFID's measures in these wider areas are detailed in the 'What DFID is doing' section.

Barriers to reporting sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

Through the testimony we heard of the complex, interlocking barriers that too often prevent individuals - and particularly children - from speaking out. As a result, there is chronic underreporting of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment across the international aid sector. Only by listening to victims and survivors can we hope to understand these barriers, and ultimately overcome them.

We have heard accounts of **deep rooted power imbalances** between the communities receiving aid and the aid workers delivering it (as well as between community members and other actors present). The power imbalance is often 'gendered' - the abuse is predominantly men abusing women and girls. A 'macho,' male-dominated culture persists in humanitarian INGOs, reinforcing for women the sense that it is futile to report.[1] Victim and survivors commonly **fear a backlash from perpetrators**, who have access to resources and people in power, and the ability to deny them vital aid. They also reported a persistent failure of organisations to take cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment seriously, with reporting structures ineffective, not transparent, and under-utilised.

Fundamental **cultural and traditional barriers** that determine attitudes towards sex and gender commonly hinder openness to disclosing SEAH. Engrained attitudes towards sexual activity outside of marriage and fear of stigma can allow abuse to

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[1] *Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector,* House of Commons International Development Committee (2018).

perpetuate and go unreported. Tragically, we heard that this even extends to parents hiding or covering up sexual exploitation and abuse of their children in order to protect their reputation and future marriage prospects.

> *"Victims think 'why take the risk in reporting*
> *when you know you will just be ignored?'"*
> Direct quote one

We heard that many victims and survivors are discouraged from reporting because they **lack the belief that it will do anything**. Poorly designed reporting mechanisms are compounded by an atmosphere within aid communities where individuals do not feel supported to come forward and report. **Ineffective governance structures** have often left a situation where no one individual is responsible and therefore accountable. Representatives spoke of an entrenched 'us and them' culture between those who receive aid and those who deliver aid which undermines the channels for reporting where they do exist, although we also heard examples of INGOs and other actors having broken down that barrier.

Specific barriers to reporting relating to **accessibility** are faced by the most marginalised and vulnerable communities. Reporting mechanisms are not designed with the most vulnerable and marginalised groups - children and people with disabilities - in mind. For **people with disabilities** in particular, we found that reporting mechanisms are far too often inaccessible or unusable.

We recognise that, while important, having effective reporting mechanisms is still not enough: fundamental organisational cultural change and effective leadership is required at every level. A strong leadership culture and effective governance play a critical role in addressing, reforming and reinforcing norms, values, attitudes, and behaviours within an organisation to support prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

> ***Key messages:*** *For these reasons we need to drive change across the sector to foster an atmosphere in which individuals feel supported in coming forward. Recognising the sensitivities in doing so, this means working with communities to challenge the deep-rooted attitudes that too often prevent reporting for fear of stigma, reprisal and further isolation. It also means collectively as a sector acknowledging past failings and showing leadership in delivering a culture shift so that reporting no longer feels futile or dangerous.*
>
> *We must also redouble our efforts to ensure solutions that are sensitive and accessible to the most marginalised populations and urge actors across the international aid sector to support us in this. In all of this, victims, survivors and whistleblowers should be consulted and engaged, and reporting systems designed around their needs.*
> (see 'What DFID is doing').

Reporting mechanisms and systems

The reporting mechanisms available to victims and survivors are inadequate, too often **inaccessible and under resourced**. This is partly due to a severe lack of funding for their design and implementation and, more broadly, an institutional culture that does not take them seriously. Representatives interviewed cautiously welcomed the more concerted and cohesive recent push by aid actors to develop effective governance structures, reporting mechanisms and, ultimately, to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

> *"For people with disabilities who have been abuse, the systems in place are completely inaccessible. There is no way for their voices to be heard."* Direct quote two

Supporting wider research in this area, we heard of a need for a **single, inter-agency reporting system** from within the community, particularly in compact humanitarian camp settings[2]. Having one reporting system is often not on its own enough however, and we heard of the need for **additional reporting 'layers'** to diversify the choice available to survivors and victims and cater for the varied needs of the most vulnerable. We need to create mechanisms to reach disabled people, ethnic minorities, as well as those who are not literate, lack access to technology or are unable to speak the main language.

Above all, the testimony we heard pointed to the need for all victims and survivors to be able to **report face-to-face** and to a trusted person within the community, in absolute confidence. Representatives said the trusted mediator should ideally be female and advocated for community-based civil society organisations such as women's centres.

There is growing interest in the possibility of using **digital reporting systems** These tend to be used for internal reporting and have the benefit of supporting audit trails and providing anonymity. However, certain conditions need to be in place for them to be effective – including literacy, digital literacy, and access to relevant technology and infrastructure. The wider context can also present barriers to effective utilisation, including social norms, gender norms, age, language and having a disability.

Feedback and complaints boxes are commonly used within communities and favoured by some for providing anonymity, but again are often inaccessible to the most vulnerable people.

> ***Key messages:*** *We strongly urge the sector to invest in and prioritise face-to-face reporting, with a trusted mediator - preferably female-*

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[2] *Best Practice Guide: Inter-Agency Community-based Complaint Mechanisms – Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Save the Children and UNHCR (2016). The Best Practice Guide provides comprehensive guidance for establishing and operating an inter-agency CBCM to handle reports of sexual abuse and exploitation by humanitarian aid workers.

within the community. Supporting community based women's organisations can be an effective means of achieving this. It is also vital that all reporting systems are designed with the most vulnerable and marginalised groups - such as children and people with disabilities - firmly in mind. Engaging with child support associations and disabled people's organisations may be an effective means of achieving this.

Support for victims and survivors

The views we heard supported what has only recently become widely acknowledged - that a victim and survivor-centred approach to conducting investigations and the provision of support has been fragmented and localised rather than being system-wide.

Representatives spoke of the need for a **'holistic package' of support centred around the needs of the victim and survivor** - covering (not exhaustively) health, counselling and psychosocial support, the need for compassion and recognition, financial support and access to justice. Shifts in organisational culture, particularly in humanitarian situations, values-based recruitment and strong leadership with a zero tolerance approach to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, are also important.

> ***Key messages:*** *We strongly welcome the shift in focus towards a victim and survivor centred approach to conducting investigations and the accessible provision of critical assistance. To ensure real, long-term impact this momentum needs to be sustained through a collective, sector-wide push.*

2. Methodology

A targeted listening exercise was conducted by DFID between June and October 2018 to gain valuable insight into SEAH victim and survivor perspectives. The aim was to inform DFID's preparations for the international summit on 18th October and longer-term policy thinking. The listening exercise consisted of two parallel strands of engagement:

1. DFID Country office local partner engagement

From June to September 2018, 24 DFID country offices[3] consulted with representative local partners - rather than victims and survivors themselves - with direct experience of SEAH issues to better understand victim and survivor perspectives. The partners were mainly from civil society (including victim and survivor representative organisations), multilateral organisations and national governments. The offices also drew on relevant material from recent programme and policy engagement with partners. Returns were collated and analysed thematically by DFID's Safeguarding Unit.

2. Representative voices of SEAH victims and survivors

In parallel, from July to October 2018, DFID Safeguarding Unit conducted a targeted listening exercise in the UK with representatives of victims and survivors on how best to address SEAH in the aid sector.

The Safeguarding Unit policy team reached out directly to 30 representative bodies across a diverse spectrum of civil society organisations representing women, children, people with disabilities, the LGBT community and connected groups, as well as international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), think tanks, research institutions, academics and independent experts in the field. Most of the organisations and individuals have experience of engaging directly with victims and survivors.

Risks and considerations

- The Safeguarding Unit consciously engaged with representatives of victims and survivors of SEAH - rather than victims and survivors themselves - to minimise the risk of doing further harm by asking individuals who have been traumatised to relive their experiences. The findings of this report are not in most cases based on direct testimony, although in some cases we have drawn on written testimony recorded through partner organisations. However, we are confident that we have consulted leading experts in the field of SEAH in the international aid sector, who collectively provide an in-depth picture of the experiences of victims and survivors.

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[3] Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, North Sudan, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

- Participants who contributed to the research have been engaged throughout the development of findings and recommendations in this report.

Limitations

- **Methodological limitations:** One difficulty in obtaining insights has been the organisational sensitivity of the information, particularly given the current climate and media response in the sector. This has meant that some organisations have been reluctant to pass judgment on the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms of specific organisations. Given the remote environments in which the issues raised in this report can occur, there is also a scarcity of secondary written evidence.

- **Geographical limitations**: The 'DFID country office local partner engagement' is limited to evidence provided from <u>DFID focus countries</u>. We recognise that there is a wider discourse on these themes for example in Europe, Australasia, Latin America and North America. Many of those we interviewed directly through the 'Representative voices of SEAH victims and survivors' were from, or have worked in, these wider geographies where DFID has a much smaller footprint.

- **Time considerations:** This was a rapid review of the perspectives of representatives of victims and survivors to inform the initial stages of policy analysis. It does not constitute a comprehensive consultation in its coverage and scope. The voices we heard were weighed alongside the findings and recommendations from similar exercises. An internal DFID literature review was also conducted to inform our analysis[4]. We have drawn on a range of external sources, including academic literature and reports produced by INGOs. We are acutely aware that the evidence we have gathered does not provide the full picture of the problem.

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[4] *Reporting Complaints Mechanisms, Barriers to Reporting and Support in the Aid Sector for Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment*, DFID Violence Against Women and Girls Helpdesk Research Report, Victoria Schauerhammer (2018).

3. Barriers to reporting within communities

The testimonies we heard highlighted three key areas of focus, guided by the priorities of those who participated in the listening exercise: 1) barriers to reporting sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, 2) reporting mechanisms and systems, and 3) victim and survivor support.

Background

It is well documented that there is chronic under-reporting of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the international aid sector, for many complex reasons related to culture, gender inequality and power imbalances between abusers and the abused, as well as the inaccessibility of reporting mechanisms. The UN Secretary General's 2017 Special Measures report on SEA acknowledges that *"we feel certain that not all cases are reported"*[5]. This has made the collection of evidence and analysis of the problem inherently difficult,[6] resulting in poor understanding of the depth and scale of the problem, as well as inadequate or ineffective reporting measures (see section 4, Reporting Mechanisms).

Children in particular are likely to under-report sexual exploitation and abuse. Evidence indicates that between 30 - 80% of child victims and survivors do not disclose their experiences until adulthood, with many others never disclosing.[7] Children and their families do not speak out because of stigma, fear, ignorance and powerlessness. They are further deterred by their perception that grassroots organisations do not respond effectively to allegations - there is a sense that there is little point in reporting.[8]

The international aid sector has made efforts over the past decade to foster an environment in which those who have experienced or witnessed SEAH can report it. However, our conversations with victims' and survivors' representatives show that many complex and powerful barriers to reporting persist, which too often prevent those affected from speaking out.

Findings

Our engagement with representatives of victims and survivors of SEAH highlighted common, overarching factors that often prevent people from coming forward to report SEAH. It is important to note that the barriers identified are context-specific

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[5] *Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: a new approach*, United Nations General Assembly, Report of the Secretary General (2017)
[6] *No One to Turn To: The under-reporting of child sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers and peacekeepers,* Save the Children, Csaky, C. (2010).
[7] *Disclosing the Trauma of Child Sexual Abuse: A Gender Analysis*, Journal of Loss and Trauma: International Perspectives on Stress and Coping, Alaggia, R. (2005).
[8] Csaky, C. (2010).

and vary depending on the setting, for example a development, emergency or conflict setting. The key themes that emerged were:

Power imbalances:

Testimonies revealed that there are deep-rooted power imbalances between the communities receiving aid and the aid workers they depend on for vital provisions (including food, shelter, health). We heard of cases where aid workers abused their position of relative power by demanding sexual favours as payment for services that were critical to the survival of recipients and their families. Power imbalances can be particularly prevalent in humanitarian settings, where people lack the most basic services and their social networks are likely to become fragmented making them more vulnerable.

> *"Putting up with abuse may be seen as required*
> *'payment' for vital items needed for their*
> *survival or that of their families."*,
> Direct quote three

Power imbalances are often 'gendered'. SEAH is predominantly, though not exclusively, men abusing women and girls.[9] Representatives described a pervasive and structural gender imbalance in large humanitarian organisations, in which there is often a 'macho,' male-dominated culture. A positive recent example was cited however of the United Nations' (UN) ambition to achieve gender parity on boards, at senior management level, and throughout the workforce.[10] We recognise, however, that gender parity alone is not sufficient to bring about cultural change and shift power and gender relations.

> *'A lot of the senior management in the sector is*
> *male…it's like an old boys' network.'*,
> Direct quote four

The testimonies we heard highlighted that power imbalances exist between local and international staff which can foster an environment where SEAH occurs and deter reporting among the former. As Christian Aid have noted in their written evidence to the House of Commons International Development Committee, "*We are aware that national staff are much less likely to speak up and staff can be wary of official reporting mechanisms"[11].*

Victims and survivors may fear backlash from perpetrators who are powerful and have access to resources or people in power. This could include further abuse and violence

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[9] *Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector*, House of Commons (2018).

[10] https://www.un.org/gender/content/strategy

[11] *Written evidence submitted by Christian Aid to House of Commons International Development Committee inquiry 'Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector',* Christian Aid (2018) http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international -development-committee/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-in-the-aid-sector/written/81205.pdf

against the victim or survivor and their family or community. Wider evidence indicates that whistle-blowers are similarly deterred from reporting fellow aid workers due to a fear of retaliation. This is particularly pervasive among humanitarian staff, both volunteers and salaried. One study found very few participants willing to report alleged SEA by humanitarian workers, whether local, national or international.[12]

> *"As they [the victims] reported there were*
> *repercussions – they were treated badly.*
> *The aid agencies made their lives difficult,*
> *withholding aid.",* Direct quote five

Whether reports and complaints will actually be addressed often depends on how high-ranking and well connected the perpetrator is. Victims and survivors are reluctant to report where they judge there to be little likelihood of response.

Cultural or traditional barriers:

Reporting is limited in some populations due to social and cultural norms that hinder openness to disclosing. For example:

- Where sexual activity outside of marriage - forced or otherwise - is considered adultery, it may be met with violence, stigma, discrimination or exclusion within the family/community:

> *"Rape is commonly considered adultery and*
> *can have severe consequences if found out"*,
> Direct quote six

- In cases where men and boys were abused, there is a fear that reporting can result in being labelled a homosexual, a taboo within some cultures.

We heard that it can be easier for victims and survivors to report SEAH committed by a stranger than by a relative. When the abuser is, for example, a family member, families may cover up cases due to concerns about respect and protection and to avoid ridicule and stigmatisation.

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[12] *To Complain or Not To Complain - Still the Question: Consultations with humanitarian aid beneficiaries on their perceptions of efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse*, HAP International (2008). http://www.pseataskforce.org/uploads/tools/tocomplainornottocomplainstillthequestion_hapintern ational_english.pdf

Lack of incentive or trust in 'the system'

We heard that inadequate reporting mechanisms are only part of the problem. Victims and survivors do not believe that reporting will yield any results, based on previous cases that were not solved or where usually the victim or survivor suffered. Representatives attributed this lack of trust to an atmosphere within aid communities where victims and survivors do not feel supported in coming forward. This corroborates the evidence now documented across the wider international aid sector[13] showing that investigations are seldom timely, decisive or survivor-centred, and can sometimes be interrogatory in nature.

> *"A colleague reported an abuse of power; HR*
> *then copied the perpetrator into the email",*
> Direct quote seven

In some countries allegations of SEAH reported to the police by organisations that have conducted their own initial inquiry can be dismissed, because NGOs do not have the authority to investigate. This leaves no avenue for victims and survivors to report incidents, unless they are willing and able to report to the police themselves. For some, such as people with disabilities, this may not be feasible. Inadequate rule of law and corrupt police forces were cited as compounding the sense that it is futile to report.

To create supportive conditions for victims and survivors, it is essential to overcome the deep-rooted 'us and them' culture between communities and the aid workers living and working among them. Regular engagement with specialist community groups, such as those for women or disabled people, is central to building trust, so that communities know who the 'protection' person is within the aid community.

> *"They see a lot of people in t-shirts and*
> *communities don't know who to trust",*
> Direct quote eight

Aid workers, particularly in humanitarian settings, reported that they feel inhibited from reporting internal cases of sexual harassment and rape because of a male-dominated institutional culture. This is perpetuated by a failure of their organisations' leadership to uphold equal rights to protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and to systematically challenge the gender and power imbalances that put some people at increased risk.

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[13] *Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector*, House of Commons (2018).

Language barriers

The plethora of national and ethnic languages in many international aid settings often prevents aid workers from communicating directly with communities, including victims and survivors, other than through intermediaries. This can also undermine reporting of SEAH - both for international and national staff.

Lack of access to sign interpretation or accessible forms of communication can also be prohibitive, particularly for those with intellectual disabilities.

Children

We consistently heard from representatives that children are inhibited from speaking up about sexual exploitation and abuse due to fears of not being taken seriously, not being believed, or being stigmatised – particularly where the perpetrator is perceived to be trustworthy.[14]

Representatives pointed to the hidden nature of child sexual abuse, in which parents are often complicit through fear of reporting (for example to protect the reputation of their child).[15] We heard of ingrained cultural norms which would, for example, render girls unmarriable if SEA were reported.

> *"Within certain cultures, a girl is supposed to*
> *be married a virgin, so reporting a rape will*
> *make it impossible for her to marry.",*
> Direct quote nine

Adults working with children need to be trained to spot the signs and symptoms of various types of sexual exploitation and abuse, given that children may not know how to disclose.

Poor education about SEAH issues has led to a chronic lack of awareness of rights in certain societies. Corinna Csáky, author of Save the Children's 2008 report on child sexual exploitation[16], draws on her research in Southern Sudanese, Côte d'Ivoire and Haitian communities to point out that if children were educated in their rights, they would feel more confident in reporting, many of them said, *"If we knew about our rights we would know how to stand up for them".*

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[14] IASC (2004); Csaky, (2010); Wood, (2015).
[15] United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children (2012).
[16] Csaky (2010).

People with disabilities

Even where reporting mechanisms exist, they are often designed in a way that is not accessible or usable for victims and survivors with disabilities. Lack of accessible infrastructure and transport, and lack of access to interpretation services or information, were cited as barriers preventing people with disabilities from reporting SEAH, including those with mental health, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities. Other studies give examples of victims and survivors being prevented from accessing humanitarian agencies' offices due to a disability or hardship.[17]

Conclusions

Through this listening exercise, we have learned that it is vital to understand and overcome the complex, interlocking barriers to reporting SEAH in the international aid sector. Only then will it be possible to gauge the scale of the problem and how it can best be tackled. We do know that it will require the implementation of effective reporting mechanisms, designed around the needs of victims and survivors, as well as a fundamental shift in organisational culture and hierarchies, more gender parity and a shift in gender power relations.

We have heard deeply troubling testimonies of the obstacles faced by minority and vulnerable groups in reporting SEAH. Mechanisms – where they do exist – are often not inclusive, meaning children, young people, people with low literacy levels and people with disabilities (including mental health, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities), who have already been traumatised, are finding themselves further marginalised through their inability to speak out.

That is why we are redoubling our efforts to **develop solutions that are sensitive to, and useful for, the most marginalised populations**: women, children, refugees and internally displaced women and children, those with disabilities, and those affected by conflict and disaster. (see What DFID is doing).

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[17] Wood (2015); World Vision (2016).

4. Reporting mechanisms and systems

Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment reporting mechanisms are an accountability tool, and should be capable of addressing issues raised by those the sector aims to support and protect.[18] To be effective, they must overcome the complex and interlocking barriers to reporting that were listed in the previous section.

They are a mandatory requirement under the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on SEA (2003)[19], and commonly feature as part of organisations' quality assurance processes[20]. Both the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and CHS Alliance Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability require reporting mechanisms to be put in place in consultation with beneficiaries and communities, that are available, accessible and maintain the privacy, dignity and respect of complainants.

Despite their importance, evidence on effectiveness of specific reporting mechanisms is scant due to pervasive under-reporting and there having been few comprehensive evaluations of how they are operating across the sector. The evidence available suggests that inadequate and severely under-resourced reporting systems compound the problem of under-reporting of SEAH. A 2008 report by the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership for example noted that reporting mechanisms "*are limited to dropping a note in a complaints box or reporting to an individual or chain of people, each of whom will have to choose to take the complaint seriously and pass it "up" for action."[21]* Without governance structures that take reports and complaints seriously, combined with a culture of zero tolerance, the existence of reporting systems alone is insufficient.

In the findings of its recent report 'Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector,' the UK House of Commons International Development Committee stated that a severe lack of funding is the *"main obstacle to progress in the improvement of reporting of SEA."*[22] In the humanitarian sector it has been reported that, while aid agencies often claim to have reporting channels in place, their human resource departments are often not well equipped to deal with complaints.[23]

Despite these challenges, recent developments point to a more concerted effort across the sector to strengthen reporting mechanisms and ultimately prevent SEAH. The Bond network, for example, has been working with its members, the Charity Commission, DFID and an independent group of experts to progress on actions to improve safeguarding in the aid sector. One of four safeguarding 'working groups'

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[18] Danish Refugee Council (2016).

[19] *ST/SGB/2003/13 Secretary-General's Bulletin Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*, United Nations Secretariat (2003).

[20] IASC, IOM, Save the Children and UNHCR (2016).

[21] HAP International (2008); *Change starts with us, talk to us! Beneficiary perceptions regarding the effectiveness of measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian aid workers*, Davey, C., Nolan, P. and P. Ray (2010).
http://htp.www.pseataskforce.org/uploads/tools/1348212520.pdf

[22] https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/840/840.pdf

[23] *Amid Allegations of Abuse, Aid Workers Describe Culture of Sexual Misconduct*, Einbinder (2018).

created in March 2018 looked at current best practice and how to harmonise or align approaches to key accountability issues, such as reports and complaints mechanisms.[24]

Against this rapidly evolving context, we heard representatives' views on how reporting mechanisms are operating at grassroots level. The following sections describe some overarching findings and common experiences that SEAH victims and survivors have faced, as well as provide a breakdown of our findings on three specific reporting mechanisms.

It is important to recognise that effective safeguarding to prevent SEAH cannot be achieved through policies and procedures alone. To succeed, safeguarding requires real organisational culture change and effective leadership at every level. Putting effective mechanisms in place must occur alongside a wider process to tackle gender inequality and other types of power imbalance that lie behind SEAH, and acknowledge how age, race, (dis)ability, faith and other types of power dynamics play out in addressing SEAH.

a) Overarching findings

The representatives we spoke to, in DFID priority countries and internationally, reported a lack of reporting mechanisms for victims and survivors of SEAH within the communities where aid organisations work. Where these did exist, they were often inadequate, under-resourced, rarely trusted and insufficiently tailored to the needs of victims and survivors. The testimonies we heard were often contradictory, reflecting the fact that 'what works' in terms of reporting is highly context-specific. Despite this, it was possible to discern some common overarching themes:

- The importance of a single, inter-agency reporting system operating within the community, particularly in compact humanitarian camp settings.[25] Considerable research has been done in this area, highlighting the need for an intermediary platform separate from individual aid agencies, to enable inter-agency data exchange without data-sharing concerns. The mechanism would receive complaints against actors from multiple organisations, which would then be referred back to the proper unit within each organisation for follow-up.[26]

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[24] https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2018/06/safeguarding-where-next-for-the-sector

[25] Representatives referred to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises, composed of a number of UN and nongovernmental entities, which was established in March 2002.

[26] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/best_practice_guide_-_with_inside_cover_online.pdf

> *"A single reporting system has the benefit of being clearer, better value for money, and more effective in enabling the professionalisation of those interacting with survivors of SEAH."*, Direct quote ten

- The need for multiple 'layers,' or mechanisms, of reporting. As we heard, 'you need numerous reporting options, to ensure accessibility to the most vulnerable.' These should take into account the many factors that can restrict accessibility – such as literacy, mobility, eyesight, language (especially for refugees and minority ethnic groups), mental health, etc. so that systems can be tailored to individuals' needs.
- Irrespective of the mechanism deployed, reports against aid workers must be 'resolved' or pursued to a satisfactory conclusion as much as possible, including properly investigated with a clear outcome, to mitigate the risk of recurrence.
- There is a need for regular and meaningful feedback throughout the process. Without this, research has shown that victims and survivors lose confidence in the value of reporting, which can dissuade others from bringing forward allegations.[27]
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, without an 'enabling reporting culture' in place, all reporting mechanisms are likely to be ineffective. Such a culture includes organisational accountability, a clear response, as well as confidentiality, support and protection for those reporting.

b) Face-to-face reporting and community based complaints mechanisms (CBCMs)

Representatives of victims and survivors of SEAH informed us that the preferred reporting mechanism is face-to-face to a trusted person in the community, most often in confidence. This is the most common method by which SEAH cases are currently reported, and is championed across the sector as the only way to report that circumvents the need for victims and survivors to contact agencies – in effect, the perpetrators – directly.[28]

> *"They need to have that human interface, involving real people; anything less is not treating people like human beings"*,
> Direct quote eleven

Community-based complaints mechanisms (CBCMs), are reporting systems anchored within a community, designed to be both culturally and gender-sensitive, in order to maximise safety and effectiveness.[29] They are uniquely positioned to empower local

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[27] *Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector*, House of Commons (2018).
[28] *Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector*, House of Commons (2018).
[29] Hileman and Burnett (2016).

communities and shift the focus away from large international organisations, which are often not trusted. Their closeness to victims and survivors can enable them to tap into private conversations among peers, which is how many incidents become known.[30] To work effectively, CBCMs need to be inclusive, recognising that certain community groups (e.g. those who speak English) are often given prominence over others, particularly in humanitarian settings.

When discussing CBCMs, representatives highlighted that they should involve a trusted independent figure from within the community, who should ideally be female. This is supported by wider evidence, which suggests that women in operational and management positions can contribute to a more inclusive, less discriminatory and more effective workplace culture. Women's organisations and collectives, as well as other civil society actors, are therefore particularly well placed to play an independent mediating role, where they are not beneficiaries of, or involved in delivering, aid. It is not clear if the same applies when the victim or survivor is not female.

c) Digital reporting

People around the world are becoming increasingly comfortable with using digital and SMS tools to express opinions, share experiences and seek help or feedback. In 2015, there were 3.2 billion people using the internet and 7 billion mobile phone subscribers.[31] During this listening exercise, we sought to understand whether digital connectivity could be harnessed as an additional reporting channel.[32]

There are still significant barriers to realising the full development potential of digital technologies. Over 4 billion people around the world lack access to the internet and risk being left behind in a digital world. Those who are traditionally harder to reach through development assistance are also the least likely to have access to, and knowledge of, digital technologies. They include people living in poverty, those in remote rural areas, women, children and the elderly.

Despite these obstacles, evidence indicates that some organisations are supplementing their procedures with digital reporting systems. A report by UNICEF and Child Helpline International (2018) provides examples of digital reporting mechanisms being used as part of child helpline services (e.g. Childline Kenya offers online chat and counselling services and encourages the reporting of cases on social media).[33] Tools and case management systems for reporting SEAH are also used by aid agencies. An example is EthicsPoint,[34] which guides users through the reporting process while maintaining their anonymity.

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[30] This forms part of the 'Localisation' agenda - https://charter4change.org/

[31] *A New Reality: Child Helplines Report on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse from Around the World*, UNICEF and Child Helpline International (2018).

[32] A number of digital channels for reporting SEAH are known to exist, including SMS platforms and Apps as such as SafetiPin and HarassMap, tools and case management systems, such as EthicsPoint, and digital reporting tools embedded in online safe spaces for vulnerable people.

[33] http://www.ca.go.ke/childonlineprotection/index.php/about-cop

[34] https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/en/default_reporter.asp

Through our conversations with representatives we built up a picture of the risks, challenges and opportunities presented by digital systems as a vehicle to reporting SEAH in the international aid sector.

Findings

Representatives' views on the use and effectiveness of digital systems in reporting SEAH were varied and often conflicting, with no clear consensus on their value for victims and survivors. The suitability of these tools is highly context-specific.

Some of the people we consulted said that digital mechanisms were not an appropriate vehicle for victims and survivors to report serious crimes such as rape. Others noted that digital tools provide an additional reporting channel for victims and survivors, when used effectively and with the right technology available. One advantage is the anonymity they can provide in relaying highly personal and sensitive information, although concerns about confidentiality issues with the management of digital data were raised. When staff are trained to use these tools effectively, they can be useful for maintaining an audit and case management trail.

Representatives agreed, however, that digital mechanisms are not a substitute for the **bare minimum requirement of a trusted, face-to-face person** within the community that provides the potential for some level of support and follow-up. Communities and individuals must have trust in the system available to them and be able to use its mechanisms confidently.

Several factors were cited as determining the suitability of digital reporting systems. These include geographical location (as telephone and internet access could be limited in more rural settings), as well as availability and cost of the technology. There are age, disability, gender, cultural and even sexuality biases associated with digital reporting mechanisms, given that those without access to technology are often the people most at risk.

Research indicates that digital reporting mechanisms are particularly well-suited to younger users (15-24) with higher levels of digital literacy, and that boys and men have better access to technologies than women and girls. While digital technologies have the potential to improve reporting for people with disabilities, they are not designed with them in mind. The language of digital services is an important consideration, given the scale of illiteracy in many areas, and the fact that indigenous languages are commonly spoken but not written.

> *'The system has to provide follow-up and not just be a dark hole into which information disappears'*, Direct quote twelve

Finally, confidentiality and trust in digital systems are essential for them to be effective. Victims and survivors must have certainty about how their information will

be used and protected, as well as reassurance that the perpetrator cannot access it (this was particularly relevant for cases of sexual harassment in the workplace). As with all reporting mechanisms, victims and survivors must receive follow-up after they report an issue, so they have reassurance that the information has been received and acknowledged.

d) Feedback boxes

Representatives relayed that feedback or reporting boxes can be a useful and effective reporting tool, if used in the right context and environment. They are favoured by some community members as they can allow reports to be made anonymously, and reduce the risk of stigmatisation.

As with digital systems, feedback boxes were regarded as a supplementary reporting layer rather than a substitute for a trusted, face-to-face community advocate, due to their lack of accessibility for some groups. It was reported that aid agencies sometimes persist in using feedback boxes even where the majority of the population is illiterate. In other cases, feedback boxes were said to be poorly located (e.g. in the camp office next to the desk of the registrar), providing no anonymity or privacy for complainants.

> *"Over 80% of the population were illiterate,*
> *making feedback boxes useless",*
> Direct quote thirteen

In many contexts, explicitly linking the mechanism with reporting on SEAH can been perceived as negative or even confrontational. Therefore, research indicates that the labelling of feedback boxes should be neutral (using language such as 'feedback mechanism').[35]

As with anonymous digital reporting, we heard that good practice includes providing regular feedback and a clear resolution to the person reporting, to avoid the process feeling extractive or further traumatising the individual. Confidentiality was again regarded as essential.

Conclusions

The evidence from our conversations with representatives supports what is widely documented: that improving reporting of SEAH is critical to understanding the problem, and ultimately, preventing it. There has been a lack of funding and resources made available for research and implementation of reporting systems, which needs to be urgently addressed across the sector. Those we consulted during this exercise welcomed the sector's early response in these areas. They stressed that **momentum needs to be sustained if we are to see lasting change**.

We heard powerful testimony about the need to **prioritise and support face-to-face reporting**, with a trusted person – preferably female – within the community, most

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[35] Danish Refugee Council (2016); Hileman and Burnett, (2016).

often in confidence. This can include support from women's groups or disabled people's organisations for those who need support with face-to-face reporting, such as people with disabilities. The sector should support and work through CBCMs in a respectful way that does not undermine or put an undue burden on them.

Accessibility was identified as a key issue - too often, systems are designed without considering the **needs of marginalised groups**, further entrenching their isolation. Representatives from these groups should be consulted in the design and implementation of systems.

Furthermore, we consistently heard that, without **strong governance structures and leadership** with a culture of zero tolerance, effective and well-financed reporting mechanisms are not enough to empower individuals to speak out.

5. Support in the aid sector for victims and survivors

There have been several recent initiatives to shift the focus of the aid sector towards a survivor- and victim-centred approach to conducting SEAH investigations and providing support. However, such an approach still remains critically lacking across much of the sector. As the UN Secretary-General recently indicated, until now a victim-centred approach to SEAH within the UN system has been absent.[36]

As we have seen with reporting mechanisms, practitioners have put forward recommendations and guidance on survivor-centred reporting mechanisms and investigations.[37] Some guidance for victim and survivor assistance in development and humanitarian settings exists, such as the 'Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence,'[38] developed by the UN Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence; as well as the Interagency Gender-based Violence Case Management Guidelines.[39] These identify the essential services victims and survivors should be able to draw on from the health, social services, police and justice sectors, and offer direction on governance and coordination.[40] It has been noted, however, that little exists in the way of 'comprehensive best practice guidance on supporting survivors of SEA and sexual harassment.'[41]

Often, organisations have not received or been allocated the resources or funding they need to implement what guidance is available. In practice, this has meant victims and survivors of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment have rarely been able to access the vital services and support they need.

There is now recognition across the sector that this needs to change. Initial steps are being taken to tailor support to the needs of SEAH victims and survivors. The UN Secretary-General has pledged to elevate the voices of victims and survivors, and put their rights and dignity at the forefront of the UN's efforts to prevent and respond to SEA, announcing a Victims' Rights Advocate in February 2017 who took up office in August 2017.[42]

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[36] *Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector*, House of Commons (2018).

[37] *Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability*, CHS Alliance, Group URD and the Sphere Project (2014).

[38] *Essential services package for women and girls subject to violence: Core Elements and Quality Guidelines*, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2015).

[39] *Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Mapping of country level networks and global initiatives – 2017,* IASC (2017).

[40] Bishop and Hassan (2018).

[41] Bishop and Hassan (2018). To note however that a guide is in development by the European Interagency Security Forum (EISF) for publication shortly.

[42] https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/victims%E2%80%99-rights-advocate

These initiatives were welcomed by representatives we spoke to, but greeted with caution – too often warm words do not translate into real improvements for those affected at grassroots level.

Findings:

We heard testimonies of the types of support victims and survivors of SEAH are currently receiving, as well as views on what they <u>should</u> be receiving. This again reflects the myriad victim and survivor experiences. It has, however, been possible to draw out some overarching conclusions. Firstly, the testimony supported the narrative of a <u>sectoral failure to provide victims and survivors with anything close to adequate support</u>.

> *"The vast majority of survivors are not happy*
> *with the support they receive.",*
> Direct quote fourteen

This lack of support is exacerbated by victims and survivors not understanding their rights with regards to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, or the types of support they should expect. This ingrained institutional culture is evidenced in the wider literature. In her research in Cote D'Ivoire, Haiti and Southern Sudan, Csaky found that very few people knew of a survivor or victim having received medical, legal, psychosocial or financial support – this was not mentioned by aid agencies as being part of their response.[43]

> *"Support needs to be more systematic, over*
> *longer-periods of time, and more survivor*
> *centred"*, Direct quote fifteen

<u>Reflecting a growing consensus across the sector, representatives emphasised the importance of a victim- and survivor-centred approach</u>. This includes prioritising victims and survivors' wishes, safety, and well-being throughout the reporting and investigation processes, as well as when providing assistance. Far too often, it seems that victims and survivors are not consulted or engaged in the process of finding suitable solutions.[44] There is a clear need for broad engagement – inclusive of people with mental health, psychosocial, and intellectual disabilities – to consult on the most appropriate and accessible solutions.

<u>Representatives agreed that victims and survivors of SEAH require a 'holistic package' of support including a range of specific, essential services</u> – this is in addition, of course, to the real change in leadership culture and organisations' governance that is

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[43] Csaky (2010).
[44] *Inter-agency cooperation in community-based complaint mechanisms: Global Standard Operating Procedures*, IASC (2016).

required to prevent SEAH from happening at all. The following is not intended as a comprehensive list or any form of guidance on survivor support, but captures the evidence we heard:

1. **Health**: some, if not all, SEAH has health implications for victims and survivors. As we heard, 'support starts with medical care, including, if necessary and desired, access to PEP (post exposure prophylaxis) screening and medication to prevent pregnancy'.

2. **Counselling/psychosocial support:** victims and survivors need access to services such as counselling to help them cope after being traumatised. In one case where children were abused, a representative stated that 'children should receive counselling for all of their lives, rather than the formal support package ending at 16/17.' Psychosocial support requires specialised or trained medical staff to help victims and survivors navigate reporting, recovery, and accessing support from family and friends.

    > *"Some children were sent off to receive*
    > *psychological support and were given drugs*
    > *which did not benefit them"*,
    > Direct quote sixteen

3. **Compassion:** victims and survivors need compassion and empathy from their organisations, colleagues and wider support system. An important part of this is feeling listened to and believed. We heard how critical this can be, particularly where other aspects of the support system are missing. For aid workers, they require sexual harassment cases to be taken seriously by their employer. They might also require the ability to access leave, compassionate leave, or medical leave at critical junctions of the recovery process.

    > "*It may be as simple as having a trusted*
    > *advocate who can in effect say 'I believe you, I*
    > *know this is wrong'"*, Direct quote seventeen

4. **Financial support:** victims and survivors frequently express a need for financial support. This can include covering vital costs, such as bus fares to access critical services and emergency food support during the process of accessing services.

5. **Access to justice:** finally, foremost for many victims and survivors is access to legal support and a justice system – whether criminal or civil – that will ensure justice is served. Justice systems, we heard, can often be inaccessible due to a lack of training for police, lawyers and judges, and traditional justice systems can be unfriendly or damaging to victims and survivors. In practice, they need a range of services including:

- Legal aid mobile clinics to ensure early identification of cases in communities, which would result in early reporting before all evidence is eroded;
- Access to information on what falls within the definition of SEAH, so individuals can determine what sort of behaviour is inappropriate and report it;
- A lawyer who will deal with the case pro bono, providing briefing and support from case start to finish, to ensure transparency in the justice delivery system;
- Pre- and post-trial counselling services;
- A health facility dedicated to dealing with forensic evidence collected from sexual abuse victims and survivors so that there are no loop holes in sexual abuse cases.

Conclusions

We have heard deeply critical testimony about the inability of aid organisations to deliver adequate support to victims and survivors. The international aid sector urgently needs to shift its focus and ensure that **the needs of victims and survivors of SEAH are put at the heart of all reporting mechanisms, investigations procedures and assistance programmes.**

We welcome recent initiatives by leading actors within the aid sector to promote a victim and survivor-led approach to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. But we recognise that a **sustained, collective effort across the sector** will be necessary if this momentum is to be maintained and if real, long-term change is to be delivered.

6. Conclusions

It is vitally important that we listen to and consult the people and communities we serve. This is far from the first listening exercise of this kind and it must not be the last. As a sector, **we must continue to listen**. While many of the issues raised here are not necessarily new, we heard deeply moving testimony which brought home just how much we still don't know about the scale of the problem. It is only by continuing to listen and engage that we can we hope to deepen our understanding.

Through our conversations, we also heard inspiring stories of people in traumatic situations demonstrating great bravery, resilience and innovation. We must learn from these.

Collectively, the voices we heard painted a vivid picture of a sector which urgently needs to reform its practices and culture. This has further strengthened our resolve that something must be done.

Barriers to reporting

We have heard of the complex reasons behind the chronic under-reporting of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the aid sector. Too often, victims and survivors are inhibited from coming forward for fear of stigma, persecution, refusal of access to aid or even retaliatory violence.

> **Key messages**: *We are realistic that these cannot be solved overnight, but the attitudes that underpin them should not go unchallenged. It is our duty as a sector to work with communities to foster an atmosphere in which individuals who have suffered sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment feel supported in coming forward, without fear of stigma, reprisals or damage to their future life prospects.*

We have heard loud and clear that we as a sector - donors, multilaterals, INGOs, implementing partners - share collective blame for creating and perpetuating a culture of impunity for perpetrators. Even when victims and survivors want to report, too often they feel it won't make a difference. A macho, male-dominated leadership culture, compounded by weak governance structures, have resulted in situations where organisations have no individual who can be held accountable for instances of SEAH; the buck stops with no-one.

> ***Key messages:*** *Strong leadership and effective governance are urgently required at every level across the sector, to effect fundamental organisational culture change. The role of leadership in addressing, reforming and reinforcing norms, values, attitudes and behaviours to support prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment is critical and should not be underestimated.*

Reporting mechanisms and systems

Even with strong leadership and good governance in place, effective and accessible **reporting mechanisms and systems** are essential in supporting people to come forward. As we have heard, far too little funding and resources has been devoted to designing reporting systems around the needs of victims and survivors. Consequently, mechanisms are seldom accessible to the most vulnerable and marginalised groups – such as children and people with disabilities – or designed with their needs in mind.

> **Key messages:** *Victims, survivors and whistleblowers should be continually consulted in how best to report sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Simplicity is essential, and we urge those across the sector to ensure that single, inter-agency reporting systems are made widely available, particularly in humanitarian situations. Above all, there is an overwhelming need for face-to-face reporting mechanisms with a trusted individual – preferably female – in all aid communities. We urge our partners across the sector to listen to the evidence and prioritise this through their interventions.*

Victim and survivor support

Echoing a growing consensus across the sector, we heard powerful testimony to the need for a victim- and survivor-centred approach - for their wishes, safety, and well-being to be a priority during the reporting and investigation processes, as well as through the provision of assistance.

> **Key messages:** *The widespread recognition of the need for a victim and survivor centred approach as best practice is welcome, but it needs to urgently translate into tangible action at grassroots level. Critical to this step change is the need for victims and survivors to be consulted and engaged in the process of finding suitable solutions, something which has so far been lacking.*

7. What DFID is doing

There is a lot to do. But DFID is determined to use its policies and programmes to drive up standards across the international aid sector to protect people – in particular the most vulnerable adults and children – from harm. And crucially, if harm does occur, DFID will ensure that victims' and survivors' essential needs are fully considered and prioritised. Below we have highlighted some measures DFID has already employed, as well as those we are exploring for the future.

Reporting sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

1. **Supporting independent reporting functions on DFID programmes**. DFID is working with the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) to explore funding for neutral, community-based PSEA officers to be hired where DFID funding in a humanitarian context exceeds a financial threshold. Officers would perform an independent advisory function and provide advice on onward referrals.

2. **Transparency on internal DFID investigations.** We are absolutely clear on the need to instil a culture of transparency on the number of internal SEAH allegations we receive, and how they are dealt with. DFID is ensuring that all internal allegations reported by DFID staff are fully investigated and reach conclusion in a timely, confidential manner. We publish figures annually on the number of cases of open and closed cases. We are also clear with our partners that transparency about SEAH will not be penalised, but poor handling of cases will.

3. **Enhanced due diligence guidance**: In March 2018 the Secretary of State announced that there would be new, specific and enhanced safeguarding standards for DFID's partners. These standards have now been agreed by DFID ministers and embedded in guidance for staff. The application of these new enhanced safeguarding standards will be assessed as part of DFID's due diligence process. DFID funding for partners will not be disbursed unless they meet the new standards. Guidance has been created, which focuses on the prevention and response to exploitation, notably sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Supporting victims and survivors

4. **Supporting grassroots women's organisations through the UN Trust Fund.** We heard vivid testimony of the vital role community-based organisations play in offering a trusted reporting mechanism for, and support to, victims and survivors of SEAH. That is why DFID is providing £21 million over six years to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), with a focus on SEAH, which channels support to grassroots women's organisations. This fund is the only global multilateral grant-making mechanism dedicated to

addressing VAWG and is administered by UN Women. We encourage other donors to support this important initiative.

5. **DFID support to the UN Victims' Rights Advocate in developing a UN Victim's Rights statement.** This consists of consultation with national victims' rights experts to share information on best practices and lessons learned, which will inform the identification of principals and elements to be included in a Victims' Rights statement. The statement will aim to outline a common understanding of the meaning of a victim-centred approach, and will serve as a common point of reference. It will also provide clear guidance for communities and allow victims to understand and claim their rights. The statement will look to be endorsed in the first quarter of 2019.

Women and girls

6. **DFID is tackling violence against women and girls.**
Britain is proud to be a global leader in efforts to eradicate violence against women and girls in all its forms - be it domestic violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation; child, early and forced marriage; and other and new emerging forms of violence. This leadership has seen us expand the resources dedicated to tackling VAWG to over 120 programmes in more than 30 countries.

In 2016, the independent aid watchdog (ICAI) carried out a comprehensive review of DFID's efforts towards eliminating violence committed against women and girls. It gave our performance the highest 'green' rating, recognising the crucial contribution UK aid makes around the world.

7. **DFID is supporting innovation in humanitarian gender based violence work**
We welcome news that Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad have both been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2018 for their important work in tackling sexual violence as a weapon of war. Dr Mukwege is the founder of the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where Healing in Harmony, an innovative music therapy programme which helps survivors of gender violence, is based. This work is supported by the Journey to Scale initiative and funded with the support from UK aid.

DFID will be supporting innovation in humanitarian Gender Based Violence work for the next five years, and we have approved an additional £2 million to contribute to the generation of better solutions to this complex, global problem.

8. **DFID is supporting initiatives to increase the number of women on the front line of the aid sector**. For example, through the UK's £100m commitment to rid the world of landmines and explosive remnants of war, our new programme, the Global Mine Action Programme 2, will help train all-female demining teams, often in areas where many of the men have died in conflict.

Hundreds of women from impoverished communities are being empowered through skills training in landmine clearance, vehicle mechanics and paramedic first aid.

9. We further recognise that there is potential to cause harm by putting women into these roles without seeking to change the culture in tandem – otherwise it can be a tokenistic gesture. That is why we provide appropriate support and investment in organisational culture change, which is a behavioural process.

Children

10. **DFID is leading the global struggle to end violence against children.** DFID is the largest donor to the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, an organisation leading the international community in preventing and responding to the endemic issue of violence against children worldwide.

11. **DFID is engaging with independent expertise in child safeguarding.** Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to safeguarding risks. DFID has been engaging with representatives of civil society to deepen our understanding of the particular safeguarding vulnerabilities and needs of children. We have brought in external expertise from leaders in child safeguarding, with a view to ensuring that DFID's institutional and programmatic approach to child safeguarding is fit for purpose.

People with disabilities

12. **DFID is developing a new Disability Inclusive Development Strategy for publication later this year**. This will include our commitment to support and protect the most vulnerable in humanitarian crises. We will introduce new measures to offer better protection and end physical, sexual and psychological violence.

13. The Disability Catalyst Programme supports the Disability Rights Fund, the International Disability Alliance, and the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to build the capacity of and support grassroots disabled people's organisations (DPOs) to advocate for their rights, including access to justice. This includes support to women-led DPOs.

14. We are working with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women to expand the number of grantees tacking violence against women and girls with disabilities. The UN Trust Fund has this year included specialist funding to tackle violence against women and girls with disabilities.

15. Gender was mainstreamed throughout the recent Global Disability Summit in July this year. A spotlight session was held on sexual and reproductive health rights, including the unacceptably high level of violence experienced by women and girls with disabilities.

Digital

16. **DFID's Digital Strategy (2018) sets out a vision and approach for 'doing development in a digital world'.** The Strategy commits DFID to making greater and better use of digital technology to tackle global poverty and deliver on the Global Goals. It will ensure that more digital products and services reach, include, and improve the lives of poor people, particularly those at risk of being left behind.

17. **Leave No-One Behind approach to Digital Inclusion:** Digital technologies have great potential to be used as a tool for inclusion of marginalised groups. By opening new channels of communication, providing access to knowledge and information and, enabling new kinds of participation in social, economic and political process. There is a risk that the digital revolution will not only leave many behind, but further exacerbate their isolation and exclusion.

Internal DFID work

18. **DFID is working to ensure that it has its own house in order.** We will hold ourselves to at least as high a standard as we hold our partners. Bullying, exploitation, abuse or harassment have no in place in our organisation. We have:

   - **Reviewed all internal staff cases** relating to sexual misconduct as far as records allow and invited the independent expertise of the Ministry of Justice to assure the findings.
   - **Simplified our reporting procedures** directing staff to a specialist mailbox and hotline to ensure concerns are dealt with quickly by the most appropriate and skilled team.
   - **Launched a sexual harassment survey** in conjunction with the department's Women's network. This is helping to get underneath this issue and provide further evidence for where improvements are needed.
   - **Updated or developed new policies,** including: Misconduct and grievance; criminality and the reporting of criminal offences; employee reference policy; security clearance and vetting; safeguarding policy; and standards of conduct and behaviour.
   - **Improved skills and capabilities**: investing in a three-year capability programme for managers; introducing new training on safeguarding children and adults; and working with the aid sector to highlight best practice and identify high risk roles that require additional training.

- **Shared best practice** across government through the International People Board and the cross Whitehall safeguarding group.
- Built our commitment to tackling misconduct into our **standard operating procedures** to ensure consistency and confidence of approach.

But we know that there is still work to be done to strengthen our internal culture and behaviours. We will continue to build on the measures above and adapt them where necessary as we learn from experience.

Research

19. **Building our knowledge base.** We have invested over £25m in building an evidence base to make our work on VAWG (violence against women and girls) prevention more effective and will continue to invest in programmes to end violence against women and children. We have used evidence from DFID's VAWG research to develop a significant portfolio of programmes that tackle violence against women and girls. Over the past five years we have supported over 120 initiatives that included elements of VAWG prevention work, in addition to the 23 projects directly aimed at tackling VAWG.

8. Definitions

Sexual Violence is used as an umbrella term for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. It includes acts of a sexual nature against one or more persons or that cause such person or persons to engage in an act of a sexual nature by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or such person's or persons' incapacity to give genuine consent. Forms of sexual violence include rape, attempted rape, forced prostitution, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, child pornography, child prostitution, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, forced public nudity, forced virginity testing, etc.[45]

Sexual Exploitation, as defined by Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13, constitutes any actual or attempted abuse by UN personnel of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. It is a broad term, but it includes transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationships.

Sexual Abuse as defined by Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13: means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

All sexual activity with children (as defined under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as any person under the age of 18) is considered to be sexual abuse, regardless of the age of majority or consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.

"Sexual abuse" is a broad term, which includes a number of acts including "sexual assault" for example, (rape, attempted rape, kissing / touching, forcing someone to perform oral sex / touching) "sexual offence" and "sexual offence against a child".

Sexual Harassment: is defined as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

In context of the United Nations, sexual harassment primarily describes prohibited behaviour against another UN staff or related personnel, which may also include nationals of the host state. It is defined for UN staff by ST/SGB/2008/5 and similar directives for uniformed personnel and involves any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another, when such conduct interferes

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[45] *United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, United Nations (2017).

with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Beyond UN regulations, the definition of sexual harassment does not require a link to the work environment. Sexual harassment may be perpetrated against beneficiaries, community members, citizens, as well as staff, personnel, etc.