20 core elements: a toolkit to strengthen safeguarding report-handling

Contents

Introduction

This toolkit provides a set of principles, a description of the core elements of a safeguarding report-handling mechanism, and the supporting factors and processes. This document includes a set of symbols to help organisations put together a flowchart adapted to the safeguarding report-handling mechanism they have in place.

Purpose

This toolkit helps you to visually represent the safeguarding report-handling mechanism you have in place through development of a flowchart diagram.

Using pictures and diagrams instead of text makes a flowchart understandable and accessible to the communities who will use it. It enables:

- People sharing concerns or incidents to be clearer about how any issues they raise will be handled.
- People involved in processing concerns or incidents to know their role in the overall mechanism.

The elements and principles described here can also help you to evaluate the mechanism you have to identify strengths, weaknesses, or gaps.

Well-functioning safeguarding report-handling mechanisms will prevent as well as respond to concerns and incidents

They may prevent as well as respond to safeguarding incidents because they:

- Increase awareness of safeguarding policies.
- Log concerns for early detection of harm caused by staff, operations, and programmes.
- Demonstrate organisational commitment.
- Increase awareness of how concerns, incidents, and reports are handled.
- Reduce impunity.
- Rapidly respond to stop any further harm.

Please note, the toolkit does not tell you how to set up your whole safeguarding report-handling mechanism. Key resources that may help you to do that are:

- GCPS Consulting UK for CHS Alliance, 2017, PSEA Implementation Quick Reference Handbook.
- IASC, IOM, Save the Children, UNHCR, 2016, Best Practice Guide: Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms: Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- IASC, May 2016, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA): Inter-agency cooperation in community-based complaint mechanisms: Global Standard Operating Procedures.

Scope of the guidance

This toolkit supports the strengthening or establishment of safeguarding report-handling mechanisms, where safeguarding incidents are defined as:

Actions that involve one or more of the following:

- Personal abuse, exploitation, violence, and/or harassment (including when these are sexual in nature) or neglect against members of the affected community, including children and/or adults.
- Personal abuse, exploitation, violence, and/or harassment (including when these are sexual in nature) in the workplace against another staff member or associate.

Such safeguarding incidents are either:

- Committed or are allegedly committed by staff or associates.
- Caused by an organisation's operations and/or programmes.

A safeguarding report-handling mechanism must log and respond to a wide range of concerns and incidents – including, for example, bullying and physical violence – that may cause emotional, physical, or sexual harm. These forms of abuse may create a culture of violence and increase the likelihood of sexual abuse and exploitation or sexual harassment.

By "staff or associate" we mean anyone representing or collaborating with your organisation, whether they are contracted staff members, directors, consultants, advisers, interns, incentive workers, volunteers, trustees, contractors, suppliers, donors[1], journalists, or any spokespersons, or if they fill any of those capacities and work for one of your partner organisations or suppliers.

Distinguishing safeguarding incidents from broader misconduct

The definition of safeguarding excludes other forms of misconduct. Other forms of misconduct include those that are not of a physical, emotional or sexual nature – such as fraud, corruption, or abuse of alcohol and drugs during working hours.

These do not involve or target either staff members or members of the community. They may occur in conjunction with emotional, physical and/or sexual harm. These incidents must be addressed but are not "safeguarding" incidents. The same mechanisms should be in place for receiving and logging these forms of misconduct to avoid stigma of reporting emotional, physical and sexual harm. However the response and handling of the case will and should be different.

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[1] Note: a donor is a person or group that gives something, especially money, to a charity. This may be with or without conditions applied. For the purpose of this tool any form of organisation, agency (United Nations, governmental, or non-governmental), company, foundation, or trust acting at local, national, regional or international level can act as a donor. The donor and recipient relationship has specific power dynamics that may enable exploitation or abuse.

Plain language alternative terms

A plain language alternative for "safeguarding incidents" may be: harm or maltreatment caused by an organisation's staff, operations, and programmes.

Harm is:

- Injury, pain, suffering, or trauma of a physical or emotional nature.
- Intentional or unintentional.

Maltreatment is :

- "…all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."[2]
- Whilst this definition is specific to children, we use the term maltreatment in this toolkit to describe harm against all individuals – both children and adults.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all organisations

Where "organisations" are all government, donor, or United Nations agencies, charities, academic groups, inter-agency groups, and/or companies that work in development or humanitarian action in the United Kingdom or overseas. Partners of British organisations, including national, local, non-governmental and community-based organisations overseas, may use this toolkit. It may also be of use to those who operate independently.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of all those working in the humanitarian and development sector, including paid staff, volunteers, interns, consultants, advisers, private contractors, suppliers, trustees, directors, and spokespersons.

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[2] WHO, 30 September 2016, Child maltreatment: Key Facts,
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs150/en/

How terminology is used in this guide

The following section describes how certain vocabulary is used in this toolkit.

Advocate is a person selected by the survivor to share details of a concern or incident on their behalf.

Alleged perpetrator see entry for **wrongdoer (potential wrongdoer)**.

Assessment of report describes the actions taken by an organisation to decide if there is enough evidence on a concern or incident to indicate the need for further fact-finding or an enquiry.[3] In this toolkit it is used to describe the informal steps taken before a decision is made to carry out a formal enquiry or fact-finding process.

Concerns are a "cause of anxiety or worry."[4] They are suspicions and/or rumours held by an individual that a staff member, associate, or the organisation's operations or programmes have or are causing harm or maltreatment. These are currently not proven by evidence to be true.

Elements are the core processes, functions, and actions essential to an effective safeguarding report-handling mechanism.

Enquiry is "an [internal] analytical process designed to gather information in order to determine whether wrongdoing occurred and, if so, the persons or entities [that are] responsible." [5] Many organisations use the term "investigation" but most do not have the staff qualified to carry out a legal examination of the evidence, so here the term "enquiry" is used instead.

Fact-finding is the collection of basic information in order to clarify the nature of the report and to inform decision-making and next steps. It will help determine if there is enough evidence and whether or not a formal enquiry should commence.

Harm or maltreatment caused by an organisation's staff, operations, or programmes is personal abuse, exploitation, violence, harassment, or neglect against members of the affected community – including children and/or adults – or in the workplace against another staff member or associate. This is a plain English alternative term to describe a safeguarding concern or incident.

Initial assessment is action to establish if there is significant reason to carry out further fact-finding that would confirm if there was harm or maltreatment caused by an organisation's staff, operations, or programmes.

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[3] United Nations, 24 July 2017, Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Thematic Glossary of current terminology related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in the context of the United Nations, available at: http://pseataskforce.org/uploads/tools/1501161761.pdf; and Uniform Guidelines for Investigations, Conference of international investigators, 2009, available at: http://www.conf-int-investigators.org/?page_id=415

[4] Lexico from Oxford University Press, 2019, available at: https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/concern

[5] United Nations, 24 July 2017, Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Thematic Glossary of current terminology related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in the context of the United Nations, available at: http://pseataskforce.org/uploads/tools/1501161761.pdf; and CHS Alliance, 2017, PSEA Implementation Quick Reference Handbook, available at: https://www.chsalliance.org/files/files/PSEA%20Handbook.pdf

Organisations and their partners refers to all organisations, agencies, companies, foundations, trusts, independent actors, or inter-agency groups that are British or work in partnership with British organisations in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Perpetrator see **wrongdoer (potential wrongdoer).**

Reporter is the person who shares details of a concern or incident with the organisation, irrespective of their role in the incident(s), or their relationship to the survivor or potential wrongdoer.

Report is a catchall term covering:

- All general programme feedback.
- Complaints.
- Concerns or suspicions of maltreatment or harm.
- Allegations of safeguarding incidents, once these have been received by an organisation from either an internal or external source and the organisation has started to process the report through their report-handling mechanism.

The term complaint is used by many organisations to refer to reports of concerns or incidents involving maltreatment or harm of all kinds. In general use of the word "complaint" infers a negative opinion or expression of discontent. Given concerns or incidents raised may be criminal acts and/or human rights violations, it is felt inappropriate to use the term "complaint."

Safeguarding covers prevention, mitigation, and response actions to address the full range of personal abuse, violence, and harassment committed or allegedly committed by staff or associates, or caused by an organisation's operations or programmes.

A plain language alternative description for "safeguarding" would be: protecting people from maltreatment or harm caused by an organisation's staff, operations, or programmes.

Safeguarding report-handling mechanisms are a set of organisation-specific policies, processes, and procedures that describe:

- How to receive information about concerns or incidents relating to physical, emotional or sexual harm or maltreatment by staff.
- How to support survivors, and their children or other family members, friends, witnesses, and the (potential) wrongdoer to address their safety, security, medical, psychosocial, and legal needs.
- How to respond to the report to confirm or dismiss allegations – including fact-finding, formal enquiry, and disciplinary action.
- When to document certain details of a concern or incident.
- Staff roles and responsibilities in relation to handling concerns, incidents, and reports.
- The timeframe for action for each step.
- How, when and to whom feedback should be given.

Survivor is a person who has experienced maltreatment or harm committed by a staff member or associate or as caused by an organisation's operations or programmes. The survivor may be a staff member or a member of the community – child or adult.

Wrongdoer (potential wrongdoer): "Potential is the 'possibility of something happening or of someone doing something in the future.'[6] A wrongdoer is a person who does things that are immoral or illegal."[7]

Many organisations use the term "alleged perpetrator" throughout the handling of a report. The term alleged perpetrator refers to someone who is legally accused of committing a crime. Here, the term alleged perpetrator is used only once an enquiry has confirmed that a crime was committed or when legal authorities are handling a case.

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[6] Lexico from Oxford University Press, 2019, available at: https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/concern

[7] Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, HarperCollins Publishers, 12th Edition, 2014, available at: https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/wrongdoer

Principles of an effective safeguarding report-handling mechanism

Here are principles that guide 1) the development of a flowchart that represents your safeguarding report-handling mechanism and 2) the implementation of that safeguarding report-handling mechanism.

Four principles for developing your flowchart

The following four principles should influence and determine _how you design the flowchart_ that represents the organisations safeguarding report-handling mechanism. Each principle applies equally to all the elements of your safeguarding report-handling mechanism and all four should be reflected in any flowchart developed.
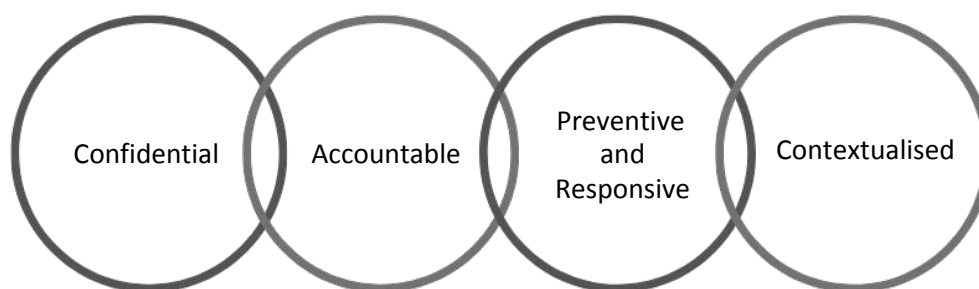
1.   Confidential

Confidentiality of all information assures the safety and wellbeing of all parties including the survivors, family and friends of survivors, witnesses, advocates, and subjects of a report. Organisations must:

- Receive safeguarding reports along with other forms of feedback so that individuals sharing details of safeguarding concerns or incidents do not fear being stigmatised.
- Have systems in place that allow people to report anonymously. The report-handling mechanism must reflect how cases will be handled when they are received anonymously.
- Establish data management protocols. Keeping records secure and making sure all shared data is filed and processed using coding systems is essential.
- Establish information sharing protocols. Defining what information is shared with whom, when, and why.

2. Accountable

Accountability and transparency is an organisation's commitment to all stakeholders to deliver in line with the expectations of those stakeholders. It requires that organisations:

- Assume responsibility for consequences of their actions.
- Build trust in all areas of work to encourage openness about more sensitive subjects.
- Make all stakeholders aware of the organisation's principles, plans, and resources.
- Are responsive to all feedback and reports received.
- Report back to communities, inter-agency networks, and donors about the way they have handled and responded to any safeguarding reports.

3. Preventative and responsive

Fully functioning safeguarding report-handling mechanisms may prevent as well as respond to safeguarding incidents. They create a safe and supportive workplace culture. To make a reporting mechanism preventative and responsive:

- Increase awareness of safeguarding policies that require that all reports will be acted upon.
- Log concerns to help identify trends in concerns for early detection of maltreatment or harm caused by staff, operations, or programmes.
- Display reporting pathways to demonstrate organisational commitment and increase awareness of how concerns, incidents, and reports are handled.
- Discipline staff when incidents are confirmed and updating staff, communities, partners and other stakeholders on the disciplinary actions taken.
- Rapidly respond to stop any further harm or maltreatment.

4. Contextualised

- Build upon sociocultural norms – especially those relating to gender power dynamics – in the location, and of the various population groups that may be present.
- Build on consultation with national and local stakeholders – including staff – to understand how the report-handling mechanism would work best for them.
- Acknowledge and build upon the work of the full range of actors and systems that are already present. Where establishing new mechanisms ensure they link and work with pre-existing ones.

Acknowledge and build upon the work of all actors

Some of your organisation's trusted partners will include individuals or groups who have their own reporting, referral, or support mechanisms. These can be built upon. This includes:

- Local community-based organisations.
- Communities themselves, including the most vulnerable and marginalised groups – women, older people, and youth groups.
- Relevant inter-agency working groups.
- Children's groups or networks.

Five principles for putting your safeguarding mechanisms into practice

The following five principles describe how you and your organisation should implement your safeguarding report-handling mechanism.

1.   Survivor-centred

A survivor-centred approach is one where the wellbeing and the wishes of the survivor of an incident are put at the centre of all actions taken. This includes ensuring:

- The safety and security of the survivor, any dependents, witnesses, or whistleblowers.
- Assurance that issues will be handled in confidence.
- The survivor's wishes (self-determination) and best interests are taken into account.
- The survivor is treated with dignity and respect, demonstrating belief and trust.
- Empowerment of the individual, their family, friends, and community.
- A timely response at each stage.
- No limitations on who reports or when they report. An individual can report a concern or incident at any time after it happens. Everyone is able and encouraged to report.

2.   Accessible

A visual flowchart enables you to both raise awareness of the value and importance of reporting, and get greater engagement from staff, communities, and all stakeholders. To be accessible the mechanisms must:

- Be staffed by and take into account views of diverse individuals. Diversity takes into account gender identity; age; disability; ethnic, linguistic, or religious identity; or any other dimension of exclusion.
- Establish a diverse range of ways to receive reports. For example some people may like to send an email, some may like to call, etc.
- Have systems for continuous and ongoing consultation and participation with diverse members of the population and key groups.
- Assess bias, and gender and power dynamics within your organisation through policy, training and staffing. Smaller organisations may reach out to external actors for support in capacity building in this area.
- Be available in all appropriate languages in user-friendly formats.
- Put in place ways to address differential power.

Ways to address differential power

Example strategies to address power differences and enable wider reporting include:

- Regular outreach activities – where staff have direct meetings with a range of individuals who are representatives of a cross-section of the community – including women, men, children, older people, indigenous and minority groups, displaced people and refugees.
- Identify community representatives or groups to link with your report-handling mechanism. They can have direct contact with communities and receive and pass on any reports.
- Include women, men, children, and older people at all levels (senior, mid-career, and junior) in your staffing structure.
- Make the individual responsible for implementing and monitoring your report-handling mechanism a member of senior management.

3.   Do No Harm
- Assess risks and mitigate against these risks throughout the life of the safeguarding report-handling mechanism.

4.   Flexible
- Adjust over time as the situation changes and lessons are learnt.
- Seek feedback every time someone uses the flowchart and reports a concern or incident.
- Continuously innovate as the mechanism is evaluated to ensure it is working as effectively as possible.

5.   Impartial and just
Actions must be carried out in ways that are free of bias and do not reinforce prejudice.

- Make decisions and judgements in an objective manner, based on evidence.
- Disclose any conflicts of interest that may exist when handling reports.
- Treat all parties to an incident, and all those involved in the report, with dignity and full respect for their rights, including their rights to due process (the rules and principles governing the fact-finding, enquiry and decision-making processes).

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit sets out 20 core elements that have been identified as core to any accessible and comprehensive safeguarding report-handling mechanism. These elements should all exist on paper, in policy and in practice.

The toolkit presents 20 symbols, one for each of the core elements. These can be used to create a flowchart that is more visual, has less text, and therefore is more accessible to a wider audience.

There are two main uses for the twenty core elements:

- Assessment of your safeguarding report-handling mechanism to ensure it covers all the 20 core elements.
- Development or updating of a flowchart to represent your safeguarding report-handling mechanism.

20 core elements of an accessible, comprehensive safeguarding report-handling mechanism

The 20 core elements and their accompanying symbols are as follows:

20 core elements of an accessible, comprehensive safeguarding report-handling mechanism			
Range of reporting mechanisms	Systems to bypass reporting pathway	Timeframe for action	Sort incoming reports
Prioritise reports	Document	Safeguarding focal point/ team	Senior decision making
Action plan	Safety and protection	Medical support	Mental health and psychosocial support
Legal authorities	Initial assessment of report	Fact-finding and enquiry	Disciplinary action
Feedback and communication	Donor feedback and reporting	Inter-agency coordination and collaboration	Case closure and organisational learning

Each of these 20 core elements is described in more detail in the section: **The 20 core elements of a safeguarding report-handling mechanism**.

The form that each core element takes and the order in which the elements will happen will be specific to the time, location, and purpose of your report-handling mechanism. Key factors that will influence the elements include:

- The organisations the mechanism is seeking to cover – is it for one organisation, for a range of organisations, or for a whole inter-agency group?
- The structure of the agency or agencies involved – whether they are private, public, not for profit; local, national, international; their governance structure; the number and type of offices, etc.
- The existing formal and informal services and report-handling mechanisms at community, district, and national level.
- The location of the organisation(s). What range of telecommunications are available, what language(s) is/are spoken, how physically remote the offices and implementation sites are?
- The systems and functions in place within the organisation(s) and any inter-agency networks that will operate alongside, support, and work with the report-handling mechanism.
- The resources – human and financial, including the appropriate referral and support services – available to support the report-handling mechanism.

The symbols used to depict each of the core elements are available for download as PNG files on the Bond website. These can be inserted in Word documents or PowerPoint presentations for use in the development of your flowchart, training, or monitoring and evaluation tools.

Using the 20 core elements to assess your safeguarding report-handling mechanism

The efficiency of your safeguarding report-handling mechanism may be monitored, evaluated, or assessed in a number of different ways. The process for evaluating your report-handling mechanism may be carried out through, for example: self-assessment, stakeholder consultation, peer review, or formal external independent evaluation. Tools developed for evaluating your mechanism may include, for example: checklists, feedback forms or surveys, feedback interview questions, or focus group discussion questions.

Knowing that there are 20 core elements to your safeguarding report-handling mechanism may support any of the above monitoring or evaluation methods. For example:

- A checklist could include questions on the presence and functioning of each of the elements.
- A feedback form or survey could seek to establish the level of efficiency of each of the elements.
- Analysis of responses on feedback interviews could review if there are certain elements that are consistently overlooked or weak.
- Focus group discussion questions could be structured around the efficiency of each of the 20 core elements.

Using the 20 core elements to develop or update the flowchart representing your safeguarding report-handling mechanism

If you are using this toolkit to develop or revise your flowchart it is assumed that either:

- You have not yet prepared a flowchart diagram that shows how safeguarding reports are handled within your organisation. Perhaps you are preparing to operate in a new location, or you have been operating in the location and receiving and responding to reports but have not yet had a chance to present your system for handling reports in a flowchart.
- You have a flowchart that represents your report-handling mechanism but informal feedback, an evaluation, or the fact that few reports are being received is indicating that the flowchart needs to be updated.

The elements and their symbols presented in this toolkit may be used to support you in the development of a visual flowchart to show how reports will be handled by:

- Your organisation.
- A group of organisations who will respond to reports together.
- All members of an inter-agency group.

The flowchart may also be developed by an agency and then adapted and adopted by another organisation. For example if an organisation is new to an area they may adopt the flowchart of an organisation that was already operating there. Or an organisation with less funding or capacity for putting in place their own systems may decide to adapt and adopt the flowchart of another organisation.

The flowcharts you develop may be:

- Internal – to show staff and associates. Internal flowcharts should ensure all elements appear on them.
- External – for other organisations and the general public. External flowcharts should be simpler and may exclude certain details or stages – such as information on documentation requirements or on reporting to donors.

Foundations to developing a flowchart depicting the safeguarding report-handling mechanism
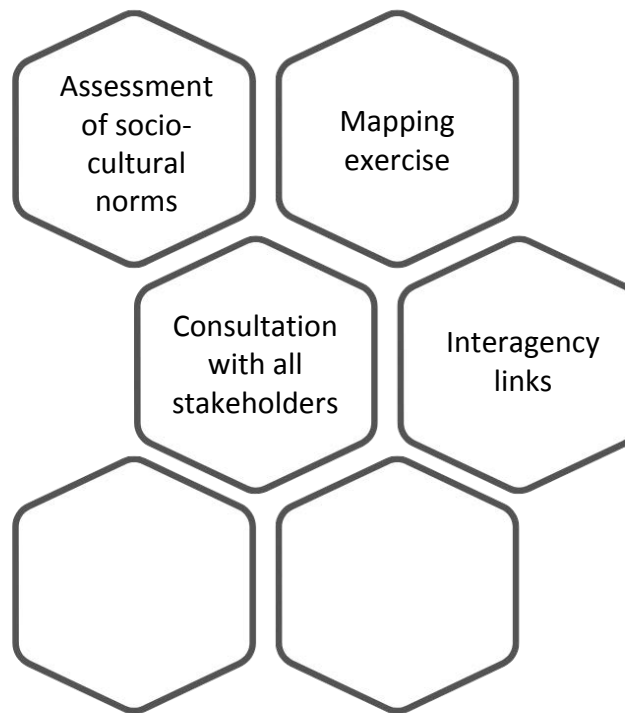
Before developing a flowchart, check your safeguarding report-handling mechanism is:

- Based on an assessment of the sociocultural norms of the setting and on a gender and power analysis.
- Builds upon and links to any existing preferred community and national-based mechanisms for reporting and dealing with concerns and incidents without duplicating or undermining them. These would be identified through a mapping exercise.
- Founded on needs and views of all stakeholders – including those who are often marginalised and excluded. This should be developed in close collaboration with the affected community, associates, national staff, and individuals from across the organisation, and other stakeholders and service providers in order to enable broad understanding and ownership. These needs and views can be established through consultation.
- Links to inter-agency report-handling mechanisms, enabling inter-agency collaboration and joint implementation of report-handling mechanisms.

Choosing the right words

The words you choose to describe your safeguarding report-handling mechanisms can influence the level of trust and confidence people have in your system and thus the number of concerns or incidents raised. Take the following steps to choose the words used to describe your report-handling mechanism.

Always:

- Agree how your organisation defines key terms related to safeguarding. See the accompanying set of definitions of key terms to support the development of your organisation's definitions (for suggestions see UK NGO safeguarding definitions and report-handling mechanisms: definition of key words, on the Bond website).

- Prepare a document that summarises how your organisation defines the key terms used in any publications, reports, policies, procedures, or guidance.

- Work with local stakeholders (offices, partners, and communities) to agree the most appropriate terms to use in each context you work in. In certain settings terms such as "complaint", "report" or "feedback" may deter individuals from sharing information about concerns and incidents. The name you give your report-handling mechanism can impact the number of reports you receive. Consider all options carefully with this in mind.

- Use local languages. Imposing the use of English terms with groups or in contexts where English is not the native language may lead to confusion.

- Identify the most relevant terms and map out and agree how the English terms we present in this toolkit will be translated into local languages.

- Be sure that the local language translation chosen is suitable for diverse audiences – for example identify child friendly vocabulary as well as words understood by adults.

- Set out locally appropriate visual representation of your terminology for groups with low literacy.

Avoid:

- Avoid technical and formal language in direct communications with communities. Many people will not understand terms like safeguarding and whistleblowing. There may be locally developed terms to describe safeguarding incidents – look for and use these terms – where they do not cause stigma.

Never:

- Never use language that blames the survivor. For example, speak about how a potential wrongdoer should not have behaved the way they did, do not state that the behaviour of the survivors may have caused an incident to occur.

Processes for developing or updating your organisation's flowchart

The following section outlines suggested processes for developing or updating your flowchart, whether it is internal or external. Ideally the flowchart would be developed through stakeholder consultation – involving the full range of people who are in regular contact with your staff, operations, and programmes. If this is not possible you can develop a temporary flowchart individually or as a small committee until it is possible to hold a more consultative process.

Through workshop facilitation

One option for developing the flowchart that will represent your safeguarding report-handling mechanism is a workshop. Depending on the size of your organisation and the range of different stakeholders in contact with your staff, operations, and programmes, you may have a small, medium, or large group of participants. From five to 25-30 participants is ideal. The following steps describe how such a workshop could be structured.

1. Organise a consultation workshop for a range of stakeholders. This should cover both internal and external stakeholders. The group should be diverse and represent a range of levels of power and influence. The workshop, or series of workshops, should be designed in a way as to enable maximum participation using strategies to overcome power differentials. Include participants who represent and have a deep understanding of the sociocultural norms and existing report-handling mechanisms of the organisation.

2. In order to come to an agreement on the subject of the consultation workshop, prepare and run through presentations covering:
   - A location specific definition of safeguarding. If a location specific definition has not been developed and agreed, present the definition used here and facilitate a discussion for adapting it to your setting.
   - The four principles for developing your flowchart (confidential, accountable, preventative and responsive, and contextualised).
     - Discuss if these principles are appropriate and relevant in the context.
     - Agree on suitable terminology to describe these concepts in the context (this may include local language options).
   - The 20 elements of an effective safeguarding report-handling mechanism.
     - Ask if there are additional elements relevant in this location that are not listed.
     - Allow for questions and answers.
     - Clarify that there are supporting factors which are not considered core elements but that need to be present for all elements to work – such as financial resourcing and staff capacity and that these will be discussed next.
   - Prepare and run through a presentation of the supporting factors and processes.
     - Explain clearly that these are essential to the functioning of a report-handling mechanism but they would not appear in a diagram that would be used to represent your report-handling mechanism either internally or externally.

3. Through plenary discussions, agree on the scope of the safeguarding report-handling mechanism you are mapping out:
   - What form of incidents does it address?
   - What geographical area does it cover?
   - Which organisations are included in the pathway?
   - Does it cover reports that come from internal and/or external sources?

4. Discuss and establish the context in which you will be implementing your safeguarding report-handling mechanism:

- What other governmental and non-governmental mechanisms for addressing safeguarding concerns exist in the community or country? How would this mechanism relate to those other mechanisms?
- What internal policies and procedures does your organisation have for handling any reports or feedback? What inter-agency policies or procedures exist? How would this flowchart fit with and address these other policies and procedures?

5. Review the core elements of safeguarding report-handling mechanisms.
- Break the participants into groups of two to six people.
- Print the symbols for the 20 elements each on a separate piece of A4 paper.
  – You will need at least one copy of each of the elements for each group.
  – Advise the groups they can draw additional symbols, as some of the symbols will need to be repeated within the flowchart.
  – Groups can put more than one symbol together at the same stage of the flowchart. For example: 1) a timeframe should appear when there is an expectation for referral to a specific form of support and/or; 2) a person within the organisation may appear alongside the bypass option.

- In plenary, ask for feedback on the symbols representing the 20 elements:
  – Do they make sense in this location? Are all elements relevant? If not, why?
  – Are they understandable to the various stakeholders in this location?
  – If they need adjusting, how do they need to be adjusted? What symbols could replace the ones developed for this toolkit?

NOTE: Research does indicate that if one of the elements is absent this could lead to weakness in handling certain cases. Where members of the group are against certain elements, try to find ways to adjust the name or symbol used for the element in such a way so as to ensure elements are not totally excluded from the pathways. For example, if it is felt that reporting to legal authorities is not possible in this setting as it would pose a risk to the survivor, maybe the "legal reporting" element could be added only on the internal reporting pathways, but the action would be to put a detailed note on file about incidents including how future case workers could access medical records, if at a later date it is safe for all parties for a legal case to pursued.

- Ask the groups to come up with real life examples of safeguarding incidents they have heard about, dealt with, or to which they have had to respond. They must make the examples discussed anonymous in order to protect everyone's safety and privacy.
  – If it would be too sensitive to have groups come up with real-life examples, use the case studies that accompany this toolkit – Safeguarding report-handling mechanism: Case studies by Bond.

- Using one example chosen by the group they should address the following questions:
  – What action was taken?
  – Which of the 20 elements was involved?
  – In what chronological order were the elements involved?
  – Which organisation or group led on specific actions?

- What is the partnership/collaboration between different organisations or groups related to these elements?

- At this stage the groups should lay out the symbols of the elements in the order in which actions were taken. Then they should answer the following questions:
  - Were there challenges in the handling of the safeguarding concerns or incidents?
  - Was there anything that did not work well?
    - If yes, does this relate to the order in which action was taken? Should the order of the elements have been different? Should one of the elements or actions have happened sooner or faster? Should someone else have carried out the action?
    - If no, does it relate to the fact that one of 20 elements was missing? When should the additional element have been addressed?
  - What barriers to reporting exist in the context?

- The groups should now change the layout of the elements to reflect an improved version that would address the challenges.

6. Put the core elements together to prepare a flowchart.
   - Ask the groups to continue working together and discuss:
     - Should the flow of the chart be top to bottom, bottom to top, left to right, or right to left?
     - What supporting text is needed alongside the symbols? What names, contact details, and phone numbers are needed?
     - What additional information or drawings may be needed to clarify the purpose of the mechanism?
     - Remind them:
       - All elements should appear at least once.
       - Elements can appear more than once within the flowchart.
       - Elements can appear together and can happen at the same time.

7. Present the flowcharts.
   - Ask all the groups to present their flowcharts in turn to all the workshop participants.
   - Facilitate a plenary discussion to come to an organisation-wide agreement on how the flowchart should look in an ideal situation.
     - Identify areas of overlap and consensus between the different groups.
     - Identify areas where there are differences.
     - Discuss why there are differences. Potentially reflect the differences in views with alternative paths based on different scenarios.

8. Agree next steps for finalising the flowchart. During the workshop all participants should agree on a timeline (even if it ends up evolving/changing). This should include the following main four phases:

   i. Consolidate and finalise the organisation-wide safeguarding report-handling flowchart.
      - It may be that it is not possible to come to a final consensus during the group workshop. Discuss options such as the safeguarding focal point, a small team of

four to five staff, or an external consultant taking the different pathways generated to propose one organisation-wide flowchart that compiles the work of the various groups.

   ii. Share the consolidated flowchart that represents your safeguarding report-handling mechanism with all relevant stakeholders for feedback.
- Edit and adjust based on this feedback.

   iii. Test the flowchart:
- Implement the flowchart in relevant locations and with relevant stakeholders.
- Monitor the use of the flowchart by:
  - Noting any changes in the way in which people are reporting to or using the safeguarding report-handling mechanism – for example an increased or reduced number of reports received.
  - Seeking feedback through focus group discussions or key informant interviews.
  - Adding a point of contact at the bottom of the flowchart that people can contact with feedback or if they have trouble using it.

   iv. Adjust the flowchart based on the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation.

Through individual or small-team work

Development of an organisation's safeguarding report-handling mechanism should ideally involve a range of stakeholders related to the organisation. A report-handling mechanism will be more effective if it is built upon the experience and views of a cross-section of stakeholders. Even a one-person organisation will have other actors who are in regular contact with the organisation, for example: clients, funders, a board of trustees or directors, stockholders, volunteers, community members who access or benefit from the organisation's services, and government agencies. The full range of parties should ideally be involved in the process of developing a safeguarding report-handling mechanism

Whilst development of your flowchart by one individual alone is not recommended, it may be hard to avoid in some instances. For example:

- In rapid response settings, where a report-handling mechanism is needed urgently.
- When carrying out a needs assessment in an area where your organisation has not operated before.
- When opening new offices.
- Where human or financial resources are limited.

Whilst in these circumstances a non-consultative process may be considered necessary, the flowchart that is produced should be considered temporary until a more consultative process is possible. There should be a clear plan and schedule for carrying out wider consultation at a later date.

1. Establish the scope of the safeguarding report-handling mechanism you are mapping out:

- What form of incidents does it address?
- What geographical area does it cover?
- Which organisations are included in the pathway?
- Does it cover reports that come from internal and/or external sources?
- Understand what other mechanisms exist that this report-handling flowchart has to show connection with.

2. Map out who within the organisation will be able to support the report-handling process at which stage.

3. Map out which external organisations will be able to provide services and support for report-handling, including: receiving reports, setting up helplines, assistance to survivors, having capacity for carrying out enquiries, and having the ability to address legal action requirements. Where appropriate, work with and build on existing inter-agency referral pathways. Do not work in isolation from other actors.

4. Consider a real-life example or use the case studies that accompany this toolkit – Safeguarding report-handling mechanism: Case studies. Consider how they currently flow through your organisation, in what order do actions happen?

5. Discuss the challenges to the way real-life cases have or are being handled at the moment?
   - What could be improved?
   - What could have been done differently throughout the process?
   - Was sufficient support provided throughout the process?
   - Were the appropriate stakeholders involved?
   - What are the lessons learned?
   - What would you/your organisation do differently in the future?

6. Review the core elements of your safeguarding report-handling mechanisms.
   - Print the symbols for the 20 elements each on a separate piece of A4 paper.
   - Discuss:
     - Do the elements make sense in this location? Do the names of the elements need to be changed?
     - Are all elements relevant? If not, why?
     - Are they understandable to the various stakeholders in this location?
     - If they need adjusting – how do they need to be adjusted? What symbols could replace the ones developed for this toolkit?

NOTE: Research indicates that if one of the elements is absent this could lead to weakness in handling cases. Where members of the group are against certain elements, try to find ways to adjust the name or symbol used for the element so the elements is not excluded from the pathway. For example, if it is felt that reporting to legal authorities in this setting poses too much risk, maybe the legal reporting element could be added only on the internal reporting pathway. The internal reporting pathway would state that staff keep a detailed records on file, including how future case workers could access medical records, if at a later date it is safe to pursue legal action.

7. Lay out the elements in the order they have been implemented in the past.

    i. Change the order if it seems that a different order would address challenges faced in the past.

    ii. Share the proposed flowchart that represents your safeguarding report-handling mechanism with all relevant stakeholders for feedback.
- Edit and adjust based on this feedback.

    iii. Test the flowchart:
- Implement the flowchart in relevant locations and with relevant stakeholders.
- Monitor the use of the flowchart by:
  - Noting any changes in the way in which people are reporting to or using the safeguarding report-handling mechanism – for example an increased or reduced number of reports received.
  - Seeking feedback through focus group discussion or key informant interviews.
  - Adding a point of contact at the bottom of the flowchart that people can contact with feedback or if they have trouble using it.

    iv. Adjust the flowchart based on outcomes of any evaluation or monitoring.

Drawing your flowchart using the 20 core elements

The processes described above will help you to establish general consensus as to how people feel the flowchart should look.

How to use the elements together

The order in which the symbols appear within the flowchart diagram should reflect the order in which actions should take place in your organisation, or across organisations, in your setting.

Symbols may be used together at a single point within the flowchart. One such example would be using the sorting symbol and timeframe symbol together to show that the different forms of reports received must be sorted and referred onwards within the organisation in a certain timeframe after receipt.

24 hours

Different symbols may be accompanied by short text – such as a name and telephone number where a named individual provides a specific service. The methods for receiving a report should always be accompanied by phone numbers and email addresses for service providers and individuals that are as local to the context as possible.

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Saneh
612-453-721

Each symbol should be used at least once, as the 20 elements are all considered essential. Each of the symbols may be used more than once within the flowchart. Additional elements that are relevant to a specific organisation can be added as required.

Bypass management

Bypass safeguarding focal point

Bypass police

All male management

Mixed gender management

Background colours can be added to show which functions are internal to the organisation and which are external. This may be particularly relevant and important to small organisations that do not have the staff capacity to cover all necessary functions internally.

During the development of your visual flowchart your organisation may like to work with other organisations (for example local community-based organisations or members of the relevant inter-agency working group) in order to create a flowchart that is in line with local norms and standards and that operates at an inter-agency level.

Internal function

Partner organisation

External consultant

Adding the "flow" to the flowchart

- After identifying the core elements, the symbols should be accompanied by an arrow or line that gives an indication of the direction of a report through the safeguarding report-handling mechanism.
- The direction of the flow of the report-handling process may be adapted so that it is based on the linguistic logic of the location for which the flowchart is being developed. For example, downwards, upwards, left to right, or right to left. The best choice for the direction of the flow should be confirmed with local actors.
- The flow may split in certain places to depict different choices that are made depending on the nature of an incident or the identity of the individuals involved. For example, if a survivor is an internal staff member it would not be advisable for them to be referred to group therapy led by other staff as their confidentiality would be breached, but a survivor external to the organisation could benefit from this.
- Ideally the flow lines should also indicate timeframes in which actions should occur.

Internal and external flowcharts

Flowcharts may differ in a number of key ways depending on whether they are for internal or external actors.

Internal flowchart: Suggested characteristics of a flowchart for use within your organisation

- Should be developed based upon the views of a wide range of internal stakeholders from across different levels of the organisation, who serve different functions, and who work in different locations or offices:
    - Staff and partners who have previously been and are currently involved in handling reports received by your organisation.
    - Representatives of different departments, teams, and functions within your organisation's structure. This should include those who work across all areas of your work – this may include: in administration, human resources, legal, logistics, operations, contracts, programme implementation (development and humanitarian action), policy, advocacy, communications, publication, media, or other sections depending on the structure of your organisation.
    - Individuals who function at a range of different levels within the organisation – senior, mid-level, and junior as well as filling volunteer and internship roles.
    - If there is a staff union they should also be represented.
    - Women (at different levels) in the organisation should be encouraged to participate.
    - Suppliers, contractors and partners.
- May include text – specifically names and contact details for the organisation's safeguarding focal points or advisers; and service providers' details.
- Can include photographs for focal points.

External flowchart: Suggested characteristics of a flowchart for use outside your organisation

- Should be developed based upon the views of a wide range of external actors after extensive consultation, for example: service providers, community based organisations, government agencies, faith-based organisations, and community and religious leaders.
- Should seek to involve diverse and marginalised community groups and members, including: women, men, girls, boys, and those of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics; individuals with disabilities; older people, and those from often excluded groups.
- Needs to be simplified and accessible to a wide range of individuals (and groups) across all language groups.
- Extensive effort should be made to double (and triple) check and confirm the key terms that will be translated into different local languages.
- Should have limited amount of text – where text is included it should be short and essential, and appear in all the most common languages of the context, including braille if possible and use other relevant communication methods to assist those with an impairment or disability.
- Phone numbers for helplines should appear in bold.

Putting it all together

- A sample diagram below shows what a safeguarding report-handling mechanism flowchart may look like when using the symbols provided and putting it together with arrows to indicate the passage of time.
- This flowchart is based on events described in case study 1 of the tool Safeguarding report-handling mechanism: Case studies.
- Further sample case study flowcharts are available in Word format on the Bond website. These can help you to develop your own flowchart.

Example response flowchart

Case study 1: Work place harassment

Response flowchart for Case Study 1: Workplace harassment

Report of concerns –
Ann feels uncomfortable, and should be able to discuss her concerns confidentially, not only report a specific incident

Need ability to raise concerns various ways – bypassing individuals if not confident concern will be taken seriously

Report to supervisor

Report to outside support agency – *organisations may consider the use of an outside specialist agency - such as a helpline - to help manage cases and to provide a confidential way for concerns to be raised initially*

Report to Executive Committee

Within 24 hours

Action planning between Exc. Committee and Supervisor *to develop action and decide next steps, timeframes and responsibilities, including:*

- How best to support Ann
- Enquiry /fact finding process (who to interview)
- When / how to inform Adam
- Possibly suspend Adam during enquiry
- Clarify HR procedures to ensure compliance with employment legislation

Support for Survivor – *throughout the process Ann should have on-going support and follow-up. Follow-up could be done by a nominated member of Executive Committee or outside agency. Safety & security is essential. External support is also necessary for mental health and psychosocial support.*

Enquiry

Support for potential wrongdoer – *throughout the process Adam should be supported. This support could come from member of Executive Committee or from an outside agency*

Review of outcome of enquiry by Executive Committee *– and decisions regarding further action such as disciplinary proceedings*

Communication to survivor – *tell Ann the outcome of enquiry*

Implementation of decisions of Executive Committee

Communication to potential wrongdoer *– tell Adam outcome of enquiry*

Update HR Records *to reflect enquiry and outcomes – in case of reference request in future*

Ongoing support *for Ann*

Review of incident / lessons learned *by Executive Committee and revision of internal procedures as necessary*

Using the flowchart

Once a flowchart draft is prepared, organisations should test it with a cross section of staff, associates, members of the affected/target population, and partners. Adjustments to ensure clarity will then be made prior to finalisation. The following actions could then take place:

- Align and harmonise the various pieces of your report-handling mechanism: the organisational policies, the flowchart, tools, aspects of your job descriptions, and other practices in relation to handling of reports (sorting, prioritising, documenting, fact-finding, enquiry, and disciplinary action). It may only be possible to adjust your flowchart at this stage, all other components may already be fixed.
- Include the flowchart in staff induction packs and print and display poster sized copies in offices and public spaces. Make sure these are translated into all relevant local languages and that local contact details are included.
- Train staff and associates on the contents of the flowchart and the way the safeguarding report-handling mechanisms should function.
- Share the finalised flowchart with the relevant inter-agency working group(s) who will have ideally participated in the process for the development of the flowchart.

An organisation should adapt the flowchart for each context where they work. Standard or generic flowcharts should not be distributed, except as examples.

The 20 core elements of a safeguarding report-handling mechanism

This section describes in detail each of the 20 core elements of a safeguarding report-handling mechanism. All safeguarding report-handling mechanisms should contain these twenty elements.

There is no order of importance or chronology reflected in the order in which the elements are listed in the table or in the explanatory text below.

20 core elements of an accessible, comprehensive safeguarding report-handling mechanism			
Range of reporting mechanisms	Systems to bypass reporting pathway	Timeframe for action	Sort incoming reports
Prioritise reports	Document	Safeguarding focal point/ team	Senior decision making
Action plan	Safety and protection	Medical support	Mental health and psychosocial support
Legal authorities	Initial assessment of report	Fact-finding and enquiry	Disciplinary action
Feedback and communication	Donor feedback and reporting	Inter-agency coordination and collaboration	Case closure and organisational learning

Each element is presented here with a number of questions to reflect upon when developing your flowchart for your safeguarding report-handling mechanism. These do not cover every single possible question you should ask yourself, but highlight some of the reflections that need to take place. For each element, do also consider: what other questions are relevant in your context?

Include a range of mechanisms for receiving reports

A wide range of ways to share details of concerns and incidents is necessary. This may include face-to-face, feedback desks, hotlines, complaints boxes, phone, SMS, email, website, meetings, radio call-in, community reference groups, or detection in field trip reports. Safeguarding report-handling mechanisms should receive both anonymous and identified external and internal reports.

- Survivors, advocates, and witnesses need to be able to report in ways they feel comfortable. Different ways to build trust in the systems established must be explored.
- Many reports will be provided anonymously – this should be allowed and encouraged.
- Hard evidence of a safeguarding incident is not needed for a report to be officially logged and responded to. Suspicion and rumours should also be recorded and monitored.
- Consultation should happen with all levels of staff and associates, and diverse representatives of affected communities to establish what the different barriers for reporting are. This will inform decisions on the development of the report-handling mechanism and enable targeted approaches to address reporting barriers.

Questions and considerations when establishing the range of methods to receive reports:

- How do people traditionally communicate their concerns? This may be different for girls and boys, women, men; those of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics; older people; or those with a disability? Take time to reflect on this, discuss at length, and find means of mitigation.
- Are there cultural issues with giving feedback or reporting? Both generally, as well as specifically in relation to physical, emotional and/or sexual harm or maltreatment?
- Are there existing reporting or feedback mechanisms for communities and/or staff? Are they effective or not? If not, why not? Do communities know about these existing reporting mechanisms?
- What are the barriers to reporting in the location? What costs may people incur in trying to access the safeguarding report-handling mechanism? What needs to be done to address these costs that may hinder someone's ability to report?
- Who is most likely to report and why?
- How can different groups be made aware of the mechanisms for reporting and giving feedback?

Have systems to bypass the reporting pathway

Handling safeguarding reports requires unbiased and fair action by staff. Staff who support the mechanisms may have a conflict of interest in relation to a specific case. This may impact upon actions including onward reporting, fact-finding, and/or response for the survivor/potential wrongdoer.

If there is a conflict of interest, the best interests of the survivor and the person who made the report must be the primary consideration. In addition some individuals, for their own reasons, not related to the staff involved, may feel uncomfortable reporting to certain staff members. There is therefore a need to be able to bypass any staff handling reports in your safeguarding mechanism.

- All mechanisms must have a system for bypassing individuals in case of a conflict of interest or discomfort on behalf of the reporter. The flowchart must include a process for bypassing any individuals who are involved at each step.
- Where possible, a safeguarding team is preferable to an individual safeguarding focal point as this allows for alternative options for reporting. Where this is not possible, someone who is not dedicated safeguarding staff, or someone outside the organisation in the case of smaller organisations, may be able to support any safeguarding focal points.
- If the survivor is a staff member the possibility of a conflict of interest increases.

Questions and considerations when establishing a bypassing mechanism:

- What conflicts of interest may exist?
- Are there enough staff in the organisation to designate a safeguarding focal point and alternate(s)?
- What alternative reporting lines already exist outside the organisation? Are there inter-agency mechanisms for handling safeguarding concerns? For small organisations, can they refer cases outside the organisation for response?
- How can reports bypass different reporting levels?
- Does the organisation have only one office, or do sub-offices report to a main office in a different location and/or a country-office to a head office? Can reports be to senior managers in a different location without having on-site management know about the report?
- If reports are bypassing senior management at the country level, how will an analysis of trends in reporting be established?

Set a timeframe for action

Some aspects of safeguarding have life and death consequences. Other consequences may impact on long-term mental and physical health, psychosocial wellbeing, and livelihoods of individuals. Rapid response is necessary to: gather evidence for legal action; accurately record the incident details as recalled by the survivor or witnesses; ensure the immediate safety of parties to the incident; and prevent further incidents or harm from occurring. Quickly responding to any incidents

or concerns shared with the organisation shows respect for all those involved. This aligns with the survivor-centred approach.

The organisation should set the timeframes for action throughout their safeguarding report-handling mechanism, including:

- Confirmation of receipt of report.
- Sorting/classification.
- Documentation.
- Initial decision-making and setting out a plan of action.
- Survivor referral and initial access to support services.
- Commencement of any enquiry.
- Performance management, disciplinary hearing, and/or disciplinary action.
- Feedback to the survivor, potential wrongdoer, person who made the initial report, wider community, and public. This supports the principles of accountability and being survivor-centred.

Questions and considerations when establishing the timeframe for action:

- What resources are available locally to deliver survivor response services? Are there local support or referral mechanisms that already exist that may be tapped into and/or built upon as part of this process?
- What is the timeframe for the next step in the safeguarding report-handling mechanism? What is the timeframe for delivery of services, to complete internal fact-finding, disciplinary action, and closure of the case? Is it feasible to set a timeframe for all possible cases?
- What capacity does the organisation have to carry out these functions in your location? Would it be useful (or feasible) to work with other organisations to do this?

Sort and classify incoming reports

Different concerns and incidents require different responses. Criteria must be in place to support staff receiving reports to make decisions on how to direct them, to ensure review by the right staff member, and subsequent prioritisation and appropriate action.

- Depending on the organisation and context incoming reports should likely be subdivided into:
    i. General programme feedback which would be referred elsewhere.
    ii. Complaints about general misconduct by staff, such as fraud, drug or alcohol misuse, corruption, nepotism, etc.
    iii. Concerns and reports of sexual, emotional or physical harm to members of the affected community by staff members.
    iv. Concerns and reports of sexual, emotional or physical harm caused by one member of staff against another.
- Sorting processes need to be evaluated and verified to ensure they work well.

Questions and considerations when sorting incoming reports:

- Does the organisation have the varied skills needed for handling all report types? If not, can they seek support from others, such as donors, partner organisations, a qualified volunteer, another office within their organisation, or an inter-agency safeguarding network?
- Do the different categories of reports need to be reviewed by different staff members within the organisation?

Prioritise

Once reports are received they must be prioritised for action. Prioritisation is important when organisations receive many reports, and should happen after reports are sorted or categorised, based on established criteria for prioritisation.
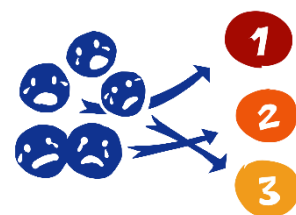
It is important that:

- The person prioritising cases keeps records of how decisions are being taken.
- That the prioritisation process is evaluated at intervals to ensure that the criteria are being implemented appropriately.

Questions and considerations when establishing a process for prioritising reports:

- What are the needs of the survivor? Are they at particular high risk of repeated harm? For example, is the survivor a child, especially a young child? Is the survivor an adult with a disability? A staff member in close and regular contact with the potential wrongdoer?
- When did the incident happen? Was it within the past 24 hours?

- What form of harm does the case involve?
- Are there immediate safety risks for the survivor, potential wrongdoer, other members of the community, or staff? Are others living or in frequent contact with the potential wrongdoer? Is it possible that the potential wrongdoer could harm someone else again.

Document and keep records

A confidential system for recording and managing all reports received must exist. The internal report management system must:

- Specify what information is needed to log a concern or incident.
- Specify what information is needed to open a report case file.
- Define when a log entry and report case file is to be updated.
- Generate a code for each new report entered that enables tracking and management of the case whilst maintaining confidentiality.
- Function at all levels of the organisation – local, national, regional, or international.
- Ensure that information can be recorded and stored safely and confidentially.

The case file will need to be regularly updated, noting any internal action and any external referrals. Using case management the organisation should be able to track roles and responsibilities with clear timelines, outcomes, and next steps.

Questions and considerations when establishing a system for documentation and record keeping:

- Who is logging concerns and incidents?
- Who will update case files through the life of the case? At what stage in the safeguarding report-handling mechanism will they be recording what data?
- Who has oversight of the report log and documentation system – at local, national and international level?
- Who has access to the different safeguarding documentation and records?
- What happens after a case is closed? Who needs to be informed?

Designate a safeguarding focal point or team

Safeguarding focal points should be designated within the organisation. In many instances they will not have a full time role working on safeguarding, but the safeguarding focal point role should be documented in their job description. Where organisations have the capacity, a gender balanced team of staff is better than having a single focal point.

Organisations must:

- Give designated focal points the decision-making powers to act on cases when received, as reports may be urgent.
- Identify a designated alternate for the focal point in the safeguarding report-handling mechanism in case of a conflict of interest – this can be someone internal or external to the organisation.
- Ensure direct access of the focal point to senior management and counterparts in donor and partner organisations or inter-agency groups.
- For larger international organisations ensure technical support from and direct access to regional and global safeguarding specialists.
- Small organisations may not have the capacity to have an internal focal point – in which case they may assign a member of the board of trustees or board of directors, someone from another organisation or inter-agency group, or a qualified volunteer to support the safeguarding report-handling mechanism.

Questions and considerations to establish when the focal point/team is involved in the processing of a case:

- Is the organisation resourced enough to have a dedicated focal point or team? If it is a small NGO can the focal point be a member of the board of trustees, a community volunteer, or a member of a partner organisation or inter-agency group?
- At what point(s) does the focal point first hear of, receive, and start processing any cases?
- Is a multi-disciplinary Safeguarding Committee established to support the focal point(s)?
- When does the focal point involve other staff members (for example senior management, head office, the potential wrongdoer)?
- When and how do they refer to external actors or other organisations?

Senior decision-making team

A person with power and authority must be mandated with oversight of the report-handling mechanism and be engaged in making key decisions. Having a senior position responsible for oversight ensures they have leverage within the organisation, and access to the most senior levels of decision makers. Safeguarding report-handling mechanisms must clearly state: first of all which reports are to reach senior level decision-makers, and secondly the timeframe for receipt by senior staff.

- Where the size of the organisation allows, there should be diversity in the management structure and team that directs the safeguarding report-handling mechanism.
- Good practice recommends the establishment of a multi-disciplinary Safeguarding or Crisis Management Committee to support the safeguarding focal point.
- Pathways for bypassing management structures must be in place in case senior management is involved in a concern or incident that is reported. See also the discussion on Systems to bypass the reporting pathway.

- What level of access to senior management does the safeguarding focal point(s) have?
- Does the organisation have dedicated safeguarding personnel within the senior management team?
- Do members of the senior management team have clear safeguarding responsibilities outlined in their job descriptions?
- What expertise does the senior management team have? Where can they access safeguarding knowledge and advice if necessary? Is further training available to them?

Action plan

An action plan clarifies who is to do what and when once a safeguarding report is logged. Two main courses of action need to be taken for safeguarding cases.

- Support for the survivor and/or witnesses through safety and security, medical and psychosocial support, referral to legal assistance and livelihoods and reintegration support.
- Internal processes (disciplinary action) that ensure appropriate consequences for any staff members shown to have caused harm.

Action plans should:

- Be developed in consultation with the survivor for aspects relating to survivor support.
- Have an agreed timeframe for each action to enable monitoring of the report as it works through the system.
- Name the staff responsible for each step in the action plan.
- Include feedback on action plan progress to the subject(s) of a report.
- Define when case files or documents should be updated.

Questions and considerations when establishing the action-planning step of the safeguarding report-handling mechanism:

- At what point in the reporting pathway will the action plan be drawn up?
- How will the action plan be monitored so that the safeguarding focal point and/or senior management team can track progress of the report whilst maintaining confidentiality?

Safety and security

Put in place systems to protect all parties – survivors, those making reports, witnesses, and advocates as well as the subjects of a report – from retaliation, negative repercussions or further harm.

- Carry out a risk assessment.
- Actions to ensure safety and security may be taken by the organisation itself or may require external referral.
- Staff members who are survivors of harm may have specific protection needs given they are more likely to know and have regular contact with the potential wrongdoer. Actions may therefore differ for cases involving a staff member as a survivor.

Questions and considerations when ensuring safety and security:

- What risks are present for the survivor(s), advocates, reporters, subjects of the report, or witnesses following the report of a concern or incident?
- How can ongoing confidentiality be assured? What could be possible causes of a breach of confidentiality?
- How will the outcomes of a case be disseminated?
- What services are locally available for ensuring safety and security – women's shelters, shelters for those who identify as LGBTIQ, safe care for children, etc.

Refer to medical support services

Survivors may need urgent, medium and long-term medical support. Service providers must be mapped out to enable organisations to support access to services, based on the survivor's wishes (see also sections on Safety and security, Mental health and psychosocial and Legal support.)

- Map out locally available services including information on: those that are adapted to certain target groups (children, women, those who identify as LGBTI), those that are able to communicate in different working languages, costs, contact details, those that have varied opening hours, etc.
- Include details for support service referrals in the action plan. These may build on pre-existing referral pathways.

Questions and considerations regarding referral to medical support services:

- Does the survivor want medical support?
- How will safeguarding referrals link with wider referral pathways for survivors of sexual and gender based violence or child protection protocols? Can the support services be linked?
- Do survivors need a medical certificate from police in order to access medical care? If so, which service provider do they need to see first?
- Is there a risk – to survivor, witnesses, advocates, or potential wrongdoers – in accessing medical support in the location? Or because they are a member of staff?

Refer to mental health and psychosocial support

Survivors should access rapid and ongoing psychosocial support, in line with their wishes. Service providers offering a range of different forms of mental health and psychosocial support services must be mapped out to enable organisations to support access to services, based on the survivor's wishes (see also sections on Safety and security, Medical and Legal support.)

- Map out locally available services, including those that are community-led, government run, delivered by private companies, and supported by non-governmental organisations.
- Include a range of forms of support that include specialised mental health services, community psychosocial support, focussed support, and those that strengthen community and families in your referral mechanism.
- Include details for support service referrals in the action plan. These may build on pre-existing referral pathways.

Questions and considerations regarding referral to mental health and psychosocial support services:

- Does the survivor want mental health or psychosocial support?
- Is there a risk – to survivor, witnesses, advocates, or potential wrongdoers – in accessing medical support in the location? Is there a risk because they are a member of staff and the only mental and psychosocial support services are delivered by the organisation implicated or a partner organisation?
- Are there sociocultural norms that make it taboo to speak about mental health issues? Are there other ways to describe this support that may be more acceptable?

Reporting to external legal authorities

External reporting may be necessary based on the nature of the report and/or the results of any fact-finding or formal enquiry exercise.

Agencies need to be clear on the limits to their own capacity to investigate and discipline individuals who may have committed a crime. Where an incident is potentially a criminal offence, a report to authorities for formal legal action may take place, if the survivor so wishes, and there is no concern of human rights violations against the potential wrongdoer.[8]

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[8] Secretary-General's Bulletin Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, ST/SGB/2003/13, suggests that referral to national authorities should happen after an enquiry, once evidence to support allegations of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse has been found.

Secretary-General's Bulletin Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, ST/SGB/2003/13, UN, 9 October 2003, available at: https://oios.un.org/resources/2015/01/ST-SGB-2003-13.pdf

The best interests of child survivors and adults with disabilities, as well as the principle of Do No Harm will guide a decision on external reporting to legal authorities.[9]

The nature of external reporting may take various forms depending upon the identity of the survivor and the potential wrongdoer. For example:

- Report to national legal authorities where the potential wrongdoer and survivor are nationals of the country where the incident occurred.
- When national authorities are unable or unwilling to act or there is considered to be significant risk from reporting to national authorities, it is possible to report to other nations' legal authorities when one of the parties to a legal offence is from another country.
- Report to UK legal authorities where the potential wrongdoer is a British national.[10]
- Any external reporting process and outcomes should be documented and filed.
- The potential wrongdoer should be informed of any decision to refer to national authorities.
- A survivor (or her/his parents) maintains the right, at any time, to file a criminal complaint with local authorities if and when they choose.

The decision to report to legal authorities should be:
- Based on the wishes of survivors, and, in the case of children, any caregivers.
- Informed by a mapping of any formal or informal binding legislation, including mandatory reporting requirements.
- Informed by a risk assessment covering all parties to an incident.
- Done on a case-by-case basis.
- Discussed with and be agreed upon by members of the senior management team.

There will be some contexts where an organisation chooses not to report to the legal authorities:
- It may pose protection risks for the potential wrongdoer, the survivor, or any witnesses.
- Survivors may not always agree to report to legal authorities.

UK charities, as part of their annual reports, will need to explain why a concern or incident has not been reported to legal authorities and show it is reasonable and justified under the circumstances.

Questions and considerations when referring to legal authorities:

- Has a criminal offence been, or potentially been, committed? What nationality is the potential wrongdoer – a national of the country where the incident occurred or of

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[9] IASC, 2016, Best Practice Guide Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms: Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, p.68

[10] Under the UK's Sexual Offences Act 2003: "If a United Kingdom national does an act in a country outside the United Kingdom, and the act, if done in England and Wales would constitute a sexual offence to which the Sexual Offences Act applies, proceedings may be brought against the person in [England and Wales] for that sexual offence as if the person had done the act there." Sexual Offences Act 2003, Section 72, Offences outside the United Kingdom, available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/part/1, accessed 10 October 2018

another country? (Note: foreign nationals or expatriates can still be referred to national authorities). Has the survivor expressed a wish to pursue legal action?

- Does the survivor or potential wrongdoer face human rights abuses if legal action is taken?

Initial assessment of the report

After a report has been received, registered, sorted and confirmed as a safeguarding case, a process for assessing the report will take place. The safeguarding focal point or a team brought together for this purpose will evaluate the report according to set criteria to determine its "credibility, materiality, and verifiability."

In summary, the report will be examined to determine whether there is the basis to warrant a fuller fact-finding and enquiry process.

Questions and considerations in relation to assessment of the report:

- Is there sufficient indication of harm to refer the case for fact-finding or enquiry?
- What happens to reports for which there is not sufficient information or evidence?
- In cases involving a staff member as a survivor, is external support needed for impartial assessment of the case?

Fact-finding and formal enquiry

The collection of further information about the case in order to determine decision-making. This may be divided into two stages: fact-finding and a formal enquiry.

Fact-finding is the collection of basic information in order to clarify the nature of the report and to inform decision-making and next steps. It will help determine if there is enough evidence and whether or not a formal enquiry should take place. For example, it may establish if there are witnesses or others who can confirm the facts shared by the survivor, though initial fact-finding would not involve interviewing those witnesses.

A **formal enquiry** is a "process […] to gather information in order to determine whether wrongdoing occurred and, if so, the persons or entities [that are] responsible."[11]

- Most organisations will not have the capacity internally and will have to seek external support to enable an impartial and confidential enquiry to take place.

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[11] United Nations, 24 July 2017, Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Thematic Glossary of current terminology related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in the context of the United Nations, Second Edition, available at: http://pseataskforce.org/uploads/tools/1501161761.pdf; and CHS Alliance, 2017, PSEA Implementation Quick Reference Handbook, available at: https://www.chsalliance.org/files/files/PSEA%20Handbook.pdf

- Enquiry procedures must be clearly documented, shared, and understood by those who raise concerns, in order to build trust in the enquiry process.
- If the allegations are found to be true and/or the safeguarding incidents are thought to be a criminal offence then – bearing in mind the wishes and best interests of survivor(s), human rights of the potential wrongdoer, and the principle of Do No Harm – reporting to legal authorities may be appropriate.

Questions and considerations when determining the fact-finding and enquiry steps of your safeguarding report-handling mechanism:

- What steps have to happen prior to a formal enquiry?
- Has a risk assessment taken place and safety measures been defined?
- Are the survivors of the report individuals who are internal (staff members) or external to the organisation? How does this impact on the fact-finding or enquiry processes?
- Does the organisation have capacity in country or in another country, regional, or head office to carry out an enquiry? Is it appropriate for the organisation to run the enquiry process?
- Will certain administrative or disciplinary actions be needed prior to an enquiry? For example should the survivor or potential wrongdoer be placed on administrative leave? Who will make this decision?
- What feedback will need to be shared with the potential wrongdoer and the survivor? When will this information need to be shared?

Consequences for acts of harm

Ensuring a proportional response to confirmed maltreatment and harm may prevent impunity. Following fact-finding, confirmation of wrongdoing and conclusion of any referral to outside legal authorities, appropriate action must be taken to sanction staff wrongdoers. These actions may include performance management, disciplinary action, or other consequences.

Administrative action may occur prior to disciplinary action. Administrative action may include, for example, preventing a staff member who is accused of perpetrating abuse from engaging in field activities where they have contact with community members; or putting them on temporary administrative leave or suspension when they are alleged to have abused a fellow staff member.

Even if an incident is not yet proven this does not mean the case should be closed. Disciplining the "potential wrongdoer" may not be appropriate, but it does not mean that the individual does not present a risk of harm to vulnerable individuals or groups. Preventive action may be necessary.

Questions and considerations relating to performance management, disciplinary action, and consequences for acts of harm:

- What form of report would require action from external actors – for example the government (including social services and security actors) or inter-agency bodies?

- What inter-agency safeguarding report-handling mechanisms exist for confirmed incidents of maltreatment and harm committed by staff? What level of information can be shared to ensure individuals are not re-recruited by other organisations? How can this be shared in a way that ensures ongoing confidentiality of the survivor?
- What role does the head office take if it is an international organisation?
- What actions will the organisation take to protect survivors – either members of affected community or staff members – from retaliation and further harm?

Feedback and communication

Safeguarding report-handling mechanisms must reflect the need for direct feedback to various parties. Depending on the nature of a concern or incident and the outcomes of the report-handling process, feedback may need to be given to the survivor, the community, staff, the person who made the report, and the potential wrongdoer.

Feedback must take places in ways that maintains confidentiality.
- Provide feedback in a manner that is adapted to the recipient.
- Make all feedback on the outcomes of any reports that is to be shared with wider audiences – including communities – anonymous and generalised.
- Share feedback with relevant stakeholders at set stages throughout the lifecycle of a safeguarding case – key moments include at the stage of report intake, during any fact-finding process or enquiry, and when there any administrative or disciplinary actions for the potential wrongdoer.
- Produce written summary reports depending on what is appropriate in the context and in relation to the form of concerns and incidents received. These may be presented in the form of annual reports; reports to host governments, donors, and trustees; and draft statements for community meetings. Feedback may cover trends in safeguarding incidents and generalised details of the organisation's response to show their approach to addressing harm.

Questions and considerations relating to feedback and communication:

- How quickly and regularly should feedback be given to the person who made the initial report in this context?
- Will the timeframes for feedback vary depending on the nature of the case?
- Who should give the feedback to each party?
- Will feedback be handled differently if the case involves a staff member as the survivor versus a community member?
- Who should give feedback to communities, and how?

Report to donors

Certain donors may require that all organisations they fund share details of any reported concerns or incidents. Organisations should review the contract they have with donors to identify any clauses that relate to reporting maltreatment or harm by staff, associates, operations, or programmes. There may be country level and/or head office reporting requirements.

Information to prepare and include in reporting to donors should be defined in guidance supporting the safeguarding report-handling mechanism. Only non-identifying information should be given to those who are not directly providing support to the survivor or addressing the case.

Questions and considerations when incorporating the need for donor reporting:

- Which donors are funding your programming? Where are the donors located?
- Where there is more than one donor funding the same organisation, do they all have reporting requirements? Are the reporting requirements the same?
- Do these conditions have a related timeframe for action?
- What needs to be reported?
- How can you adhere to donor conditions whilst applying a survivor-centred approach and ensure confidentiality? Can you negotiate with the donor to ensure the requirements are realistic and appropriate?

Inter-agency collaboration

Inter-agency collaboration is essential as:

- All organisations should be seeking to apply and maintain the same principles and standards of behaviour, as, for example, outlined in international Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines. There is an obligation to work in a collaborative manner in partnership with others.
- Staff and associates may work with and transfer between organisations within the same setting and across different locations.
- Communities may receive support from multiple organisations and may contact one organisation in relation to the behaviour of an individual employed by or associated with another organisation.

Actions that may mutually reinforce both your organisation's report-handling mechanisms and inter-agency safeguarding efforts include:

- Identifying and joining any inter-agency efforts to harmonise standards and practices in relation to the handling of safeguarding reports in your location.
- Linking your organisational referral pathways and report-handling mechanisms to those of other organisations operating in your area.

- What role does or can your organisation have in any inter-agency fora?
- Are there existing inter-agency reporting and data-sharing protocols and standard operating procedures relating to the handling of cases of maltreatment or harm caused by staff, associates, operations or programmes?
- Is there an inter-agency working group looking at issues of staff perpetrated harm and maltreatment? Is there an inter-agency focal point?

Case closure and organisational learning

When no further action is required, either in relation to support for the survivor, fact checking the incident, enquiry, or disciplinary action against the potential wrongdoer, or when a case is being taken over entirely by an outside organisation or agency, a case may be closed.

Even if an incident is not yet proven this does not mean the case should be closed. Details of the incident should be kept (confidentially) on file, and the survivor may still have ongoing support needs that should be addressed. Further information may come to light in the future that means the enquiry needs to be reopened.
When closing a case:

- A review should take place to ensure that any learning from the case process is documented and feeds into the functioning of the safeguarding report-handling mechanism.
- The individual who reported the case and the subject of the case should both be informed.
- Files should be maintained confidentiality - case closure does not mean a destruction of the case file. Organisational archiving policies and national legislation should determine how long case files should be kept.

Questions and considerations in relation to case closure:

- What are the criteria for case closure?
- What actions does your organisation take when closing a case? Actions may include: feedback to the survivor, the reporter, and the potential wrongdoer; informing senior management, the board of trustees, and donors; closing of the file; and entering data in case monitoring systems.
- Do you have a template for capturing lessons learned so as to understand and inform the way in which the organisation is handling reports?

Supporting factors and processes

The following section outlines the range of processes that have to happen, resources and roles that have to be in place, and systems that have to function to complement the safeguarding report-handling mechanism.

Good governance and leadership

- The organisation's management structures – both staff and trustees – should:
    – Model appropriate behaviour.
    – Support the development of a workplace culture that is diverse and unbiased.
    – Put in place structures that enable the organisation to be accountable to all stakeholders.

Organisational culture change and individual behaviour change

- Actions need to be taken to ensure that there is diversity and gender equality in the workplace, and that power imbalances are addressed.
- That staff and community members feel comfortable to discuss or report concerns they may have about harm that has potentially been caused by staff, operations, or programmes.

Capacity strengthening and awareness raising across the whole organisation

- Develop a capacity-strengthening plan – either as an organisation or through an inter-agency group.
- Train staff regularly using multiple means of capacity strengthening. Capacity building should take place throughout all stages of the recruitment and employment cycle, throughout the time spent with an organisation. It may include face-to-face group workshops, webinars, mentoring or coaching, online question and answer sessions, refresher training, workshops, updates to staff and associates, inter-agency training, etc.
- Topics of training should cover:
    – Prevention (eg responsibility to report, unconscious bias, gender equality, abuse of power, impunity).
    – Response (eg referral pathways, and disciplinary action as a general deterrence).
- Subjects should include:
    – Broader organisational and cultural issues such as why do bullying, harassment, abuse, exploitation, and violence occur in this workplace/operational context? The rights of all to live and work in a safe, protected environment and community. That not everyone is aware of these rights, and it is important as part of this process to raise awareness on rights and responsibilities to report.
    – What are the barriers to reporting, and what concrete steps can the agency take to prevent safeguarding incidents from occurring and to make it safer and more accessible for survivors to come forward?

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) relating to the handling of safeguarding concerns

- Detailed SOPs are needed that explain what to record, how to record it, who to share information with, and for what purpose. They should reflect how to make decisions and processes for risk determination. They will cover actions required for the survivor as well as the potential wrongdoer.
- Service providers who have been assessed in their capacity to respond to diverse individuals need to be mapped out and included in a referral pathway that links with the safeguarding report-handling mechanism. This should be regularly updated.
- Support for staff survivors has to be explicitly explained. Confidentiality issues may be more complex in these scenarios.

Appropriate resourcing

A budget has to be allocated that will cover all the following costs:

- Dedicated staff time.
- Survivor response – costs of medical, psychosocial support, legal, or other costs.
- Capacity building (including awareness raising on these issues and processes), refresher training, and mentoring.
- Outsourcing of certain functions – such as hotlines, safeguarding advice, or fact-finding or enquiries. This may be relevant for small organisations with limited internal capacity.
- Physical infrastructure (eg camp safe shelters) and support costs (eg transport and communications costs).
- Costs that cannot be covered by your own agency may be supported through inter-agency collaboration and referral to other organisations.

Consultation with the full range of stakeholders

- Consultation must take place when developing safeguarding report-handling mechanisms. Include, where possible, girls, boys, women, and men, and those of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics; those with disabilities; those from minority and indigenous groups; survivors; older people in the community; or others who are marginalised in the settings where you work, as relevant.
- Consultation should include displaced, host communities, and people on the move – depending on the nature of the population present.
- Consultation needs to take place with the full range of stakeholders in the location – national staff, local NGOs, government actors, service providers – operating at the various levels within the safeguarding systems – community, district, national, regional, and international.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

- Schedule regular internal reviews and analyses of the recorded reports and monitor systems at all levels. Analysis of trends of cases – where they are coming from, who is reporting, how are reports being received, who is not reporting – and adapt the system to address such gaps. Reviews of closed cases should feed into organisational learning to monitor trends in harm and maltreatment as well as reporting.

- Auditing of organisational safeguarding report-handling mechanisms, its operation, and any organisational gender bias and risk assessment is necessary on a regular basis.
- Review/evaluation of the safeguarding report-handling mechanism as a whole (as opposed to individual cases) on a regular basis, ideally every two to three years.

Outreach for reports

- There should be outreach that continually builds and reinforces understanding among staff and community members on:
  - Their rights.
  - What safeguarding incidents are? What should and should not be expected from staff, associates, operations, and programmes.
  - What report-handling mechanisms are in place.
- Regular outreach should reinforce how to respond when staff or associate behaviour is different from expected standards of behaviour. This includes awareness raising with communities themselves as to their rights and ability to share details of any concerns.
- Outreach does not involve actively seeking reports and questions staff or communities members about what safeguarding concerns they are aware of. This may cause harm.

Mapping of existing reporting and response mechanisms

- Consider community, district, and national-level structures, both formal and non-formal. Build on what works already, do not impose new systems when something exists and works.
- When adapting or adopting existing mechanisms, do consider issues of diversity – who is being included in which mechanisms, who is being excluded – and address these.

Mapping of legal frameworks

- Map out all relevant binding legislation – both formal and informal – to ensure your mechanism respects the legal structures in the country.
- Ask yourself:
  - What are the mandatory reporting requirements?
  - What are definitions of sexual, physical and emotional offences, what are the legal repercussions if cases are presented?
  - What are the risks for survivors, witnesses, and potential wrongdoers if a case is presented to local police?
  - What are traditional customary mechanisms for justice? Is it appropriate to seek out and work with these traditional customary mechanisms?

Provision of advice

- Safeguarding focal points should be willing and able to provide colleagues with guidance and advice on safeguarding as and when it is needed. Where there are sufficient resources this may be an internal staff member

Awareness raising actions with the community

- Ensure communities understand their rights and how to share details of a concerns or incident.
- Provide information in ways that is meaningful, accessible and not intimidating or complicated.

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