



Foreign, Commonwealth
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Sarah Champion MP
Chair, IDC
By email

14 March 2022

Dear Sarah,

I had hoped to join part of the IDC's meeting this week with the Safeguarding Unit, who I met with last week, but I will be travelling so let me provide a written update on some of our safeguarding work.

The [Misconduct Disclosure Scheme](#) funded and championed by FCDO is being implemented by over 130 organisations. It has led to more than 29,000 checks on candidates since 2019 and over 142 NGO jobs not being filled because the candidate had a track record of safeguarding misconduct. We continue to work with the Home Office and others to encourage effective use of the DBS scheme by hiring organisations.

Last month [INTERPOL publicly announced](#) that the £10m FCDO-funded safeguarding project, [Project Soteria](#), is operational. Soteria creates an advanced level of collaboration between law enforcement agencies and aid sector organisations to prevent sexual offenders from working undetected in the aid sector and take action when they do. After a period of detailed consultation and design it will run until 2025 in selected countries in Eastern Africa and South Asia.

Over 2,500 people, most from the Global South, have enrolled on the [Open University safeguarding course](#). This is a free, 6-week course for professionals working in NGOs and development and humanitarian agencies.

The [Resource and Support Hub](#) is building the capability of organisations to safeguard against SEAH. National hubs in six countries -increasing to eight by May- provide direct, contextual support to civil society organisations. National hubs have trained mentors and 71 civil society organisations have been supported through the mentoring programme, with all demonstrating improved capability as a result. Between May 2020 and December 2021, 205,584 visitors accessed the RSH global online hub. RSH has produced 159 new products and is translated into four languages, with the national hubs translating resources into many more local languages. More facts and figures are [here](#).

FCDO has continued to fund [HQAI](#) (the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative) the body that certifies if organisations meet the Core Humanitarian Standard. We have worked with the CHS Alliance to promote and disseminate their Index on Preventing SEAH including via a [new toolkit](#) and [handbook](#) which is available in multiple languages.

Phase 1 of the SEAH data collection and reporting project is completed and the final report has been [published](#). The report gives an in-depth assessment and analysis of the existing data collection and reporting systems in the aid sector, primarily NGOs and the private sector. The next stage of the work is getting underway.

As part of our work to support survivors and victims we are continuing to engage with Loop, a new accessible digital platform. It will facilitate engagement with citizens and recipients of aid and be able to handle and appropriately process sensitive reports of SEAH. The next phase of work, currently underway, includes development of a voice recognition function in a variety of languages to enable greater access for all. The online real-time data is now live and available. Watch a [short video](#) for more information.

FCDO continues to take a leading role engaging with external partners to help maintain momentum. We chair quarterly meetings of the Cross-Sector Safeguarding Steering Group and coordinate the [annual reports](#) which update on progress and challenges across the sector. We were instrumental in securing strong cross-continental support (Europe, Africa, Asia) for statements in recent UN Executive Board meetings.

We will respond to the ICAI report by early April, but I would like to reassure you that consultation with affected people will continue to underpin all our work, fuller information about which can be found on [gov.uk](#).

Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment still occurs far too frequently in the aid sector. This remains a long-term and difficult challenge and I welcome the IDC's continued engagement. I believe that FCDO's sustained approach since 2018 is reducing the risk and improving the response and I am immensely proud of the work.

I am copying this to other members of the IDC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vicky Ford', written in a cursive style.

Vicky Ford MP
Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean