

Recommendations to the IDC Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Aid Sector – Keeping Children Safe Global

1. Give victims and survivors the ‘right to a review’

The FCDO should offer all victims and survivors the right to an external safeguarding practice review if they have reported a serious case of SEAH by a staff member at an organisation funded by the FCDO and consider that the organisation has not adequately responded to the incident. Where the survivor is a child or a disabled adult, a parent or guardian should be able to request the review. A dedicated fund should be put aside by the FCDO for the case review and a number of competent and wholly independent service providers identified. Particular attention should be given to identifying independent service providers in or with experience of FCDO focus countries. The survivor should be offered the opportunity to choose the service provider and be provided with clear information on the progress and outcome of the review. This should include information in their own language, in accessible formats or as an oral briefing, if required. Efforts should be made to proactively communicate the initiative widely to survivors who should be able to contact the FCDO directly to request the review. All organisations in receipt of FCDO funds (including private sector) should be required to cooperate fully with the scheme and ensure the people they were established to serve are aware of it as a condition of receiving funding.

Key advantages

- Gives victims and survivors a direct route to hold organisations to account on their response to a safeguarding concern.
- Sends a clear and unequivocal message that the rights and well-being of victims and survivors are priority in FCDO safeguarding initiatives.
- Effective even when legal accountability is limited or not an option.
- Increases confidence in reporting because an independent mechanism exists to hold organisations to account if they fail to adequately respond to reports.
- Offers an opportunity to put decision-making about who carries out the review in the hands of victims and survivors. Victims and survivors being enabled to make informed choices is a key feature of a good quality survivor-centred approach to managing safeguarding concerns.
- Since organisations will be aware that they could face an mandated external review of their safeguarding response at any point, without warning, it will rapidly and systematically drive up standards of safeguarding practice across the sector, particularly in areas where the Due Diligence Assessments demonstrated evidence of

substantial weakness: responding to concerns, investigations and protocols for supporting victims and survivors.

- Avoids giving one 'watchdog' or ombudsman wide powers without an accountability mechanism, which would, by way of illustration, be like a Police Force without the Independent Office for Police Conduct.
- Reasonable value for money (estimated about 8k per case though this will vary depending on the complexity) when compared to the sums spent on other recent safeguarding initiatives.

2. The FCDO rightly holds organisations to high standards of financial accountability, as a minimum, it should apply that same level of scrutiny to organisations on their responsibility to protect people from exploitation and abuse.

This should mean regular external reviews of safeguarding policy and practice in all programme locations. Where organisations do not meet the standards then the FCDO should apply the same set of measures it would use to address financial failings. This should be set out in detail in all funding agreements.