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Safeguarding Aid Workers

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Megan Nobert is a Canadian born legal professional, academic, and humanitarian, having worked in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, Zambia, and South Sudan on issues of humanitarian law and gender-based violence. While in South Sudan in 2015, she was sexually assaulted by another humanitarian, and this led to her going public about her experience in July 2015. This experience also inspired her to start Report the Abuse, whose mandate was to break down the silence on sexual violence against humanitarian aid workers. During its operation, Report the Abuse broke down considerable barriers within the humanitarian community, inspiring survivors of sexual violence to speak up and creating the first good practice tools to assist humanitarian organisations in addressing sexual violence against their staff.

She continues to bring her experience and passion for addressing safeguarding concerns of both aid workers and beneficiary populations to the aid community.

Introduction

Considerable attention in the aid world and media is currently directed at the amorphous concept of safeguarding. This term, originally from the UK legal system and applied to vulnerable adults and children[1], was linked prominently to the humanitarian sphere in February 2018 with the publication of Oxfam GB's experiences with staff misconduct in Haiti, some years ago, as well as the efforts and actions of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in its response. Now used to cover all forms of aid worker misconduct, safeguarding is in danger of becoming a devalued buzzword in the aid community.

The use of the word to-date has been primarily in the context of sexualised violence against aid beneficiaries. A lot has been written on the safeguarding of aid beneficiaries and vulnerable communities following recent events. By contrast, this article aims to unpack safeguarding as it relates to the protection of aid workers themselves, which has received less attention but is now finally becoming a growing part of the conversation.

The link between the safeguarding of aid workers and safety and security work is strong. There is a human impact that a safeguarding violation can have on

staff – up to and including experiencing rape – as well as the emotional cost that such violations, and a weak organisational response, can have on all staff members involved.

Furthermore, continuing safeguarding violations create work environments where staff are more distracted. They become focused only on what is happening to them, making them vulnerable to missing a change in their security situation and inadvertently placing themselves at risk. Work environments where safeguarding is weak can result in higher staff turnover and staff dissatisfaction and is a breeding ground for further safeguarding-related incidents.

Safeguarding has to date been seen as sitting outside the security risk management framework, but the risks that aid workers themselves face – evidenced by the growing number of reports emerging within the aid sector[2] – need to become an integral consideration in humanitarian security risk management systems and processes.

This article draws out why the safeguarding of aid workers is vital and also highlights current workstreams and opportunities that are feeding into practical efforts to strengthen safeguarding in the aid sector.

1   Bergtora Sandvik, K. (2019). 'Safeguarding' as humanitarian buzzword: an initial scoping. Journal of International Humanitarian Action. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-019-0051-1. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

2   Nobert, M. (2017). Humanitarian Experiences with Sexual Violence: Compilation of Two Years of Report the Abuse Data Collection. Report the Abuse. Available from: https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2191-Report-the-Abuse-2017-Humanitarian-Experiences-with-Sexual-Violence-Compilation-of-Two-Years-of-Report-the-Abuse-Data-Collection.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019]; Mazurana, D. and Donnelly, P. (2017). STOP the Sexual Assault against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers. Feinstein International Center. Available from: http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/SAAW-report_5-23.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

What is safeguarding?

The moment that sparked the majority of recent conversations about safeguarding – and, really, the mainstreaming of the phrase in the aid industry – was a publication about sexual misconduct committed by Oxfam GB staff in Haiti in 2010, which were brought to wider public attention in February 2018.[3] Although that specific incident did not include beneficiaries of aid programming, the next phases of the conversation focused on this demographic. Considering the additional level of care that aid work is supposed to provide for vulnerable populations, it is entirely understandable and necessary that safeguarding has focused on the sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiary populations.

This is not to say that the safeguarding of aid workers has not been part of the conversation before February 2018. In dribbles and through confused messaging, the importance of ensuring that aid workers are protected from sexual violence has been acknowledged. Some agencies have built excellent processes in relation to safeguarding over the past few years. Who actually is the 'target' of safeguarding, however, remains unclear, with discussions ranging from protecting child beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse to the complexities of aid workers using sex workers to addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

A comprehensive, consistent definition of safeguarding still does not exist. An analysis of what is being put forward by DFID, including at the Safeguarding Summit on 18 October 2018, makes it quite clear, however, that safeguarding goes beyond just protecting aid beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse. It specifically includes protections not only for those receiving aid but also for those delivering aid.

There are logical reasons to draw these two elements of what can occur in aid environments together. For the most part, we are talking about the same group of perpetrators.[4] Both acts of misconduct take place in the same environment – the delivery of aid across the globe. Given that, to date, a confusing mess of descriptors and acronyms are being used – Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA); Protection

of Affected People (PAP); Sexual Violence in the Workplace (SV in Workplace); and Sexual Harassment and Abuse (SHA) – the prospect of combining workstreams to develop a comprehensive yet efficient, shared understanding of the root causes of these different behaviours is welcomed.

All this said, as noted, there remains no comprehensive, agreed upon definition of safeguarding at this time. For the purposes of this article, and perhaps to set the stage for a definition in the near future, 'safeguarding' refers to the:

> *protection of individuals involved in either the delivery or receipt of humanitarian or development aid from acts of sexual violence, sexual exploitation, abuse, bullying, and other forms of harmful conduct by representatives or employees of aid organisations.*

In reality, what does this mean for aid workers? For starters, it means ensuring work environments where any acts on the continuum of sexual violence are prohibited.[5] As sexual violence can be slightly amorphous, the 'continuum' includes all of the following: unwanted sexual comments, unwanted sexual touching, sexual harassment, aggressive sexual behaviour, attempted sexual assault, sexual assault, rape, and other sexualised acts.[6]

The safeguarding of aid workers goes beyond just sexual violence, however. It also includes bullying and harassment, which has emerged as a genuine issue in the industry,[7] as well as incidents of discrimination, sexism, homophobia, and racism.

In essence, we are talking about ensuring that aid workers have a sense of safety and security in the workplace, and, going further than the protection from physical harm that we have typically provided in the past to include mental and emotional health. This is just as important and, as noted in the introduction to this article, the impact of not safeguarding aid workers is significant.

3 Gayle, D. (2018). Timeline: Oxfam sexual exploitation scandal in Haiti. The Guardian. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/15/timeline-oxfam-sexual-exploitation-scandal-in-haiti. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

4 Mazurana, D. and Donnelly, P. (2017). STOP the Sexual Assault against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers. Feinstein International Center. Available from: http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/SAAW-report_5-23.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

5 EISF. (2019). Managing Sexual Violence against Aid Workers: prevention, preparedness, response and aftercare. EISF. Available from: https://www.eisf.eu/library/managing-sexual-violence-against-aid-workers. [Accessed 21 March 2019].

6 Due to the lack of a comprehensive or agreed upon definition at this time, this list is derived from the previous work of Report the Abuse and reflects the definitions and categories now being used by Insecurity Insight in their soon-to-be-launched reporting system for aid workers who are experiencing sexual violence.

7 See Shale, S. (2018). The Independent Review of Workplace Culture at Save the Children UK. Save the Children UK. Available from: https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/gb/reports/independent-review-of-workplace-culture-at-save-the-children-uk.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

When addressing safeguarding violations, particularly when the depths of what it includes is understood, there is a natural reaction to be concerned about our ability to properly prevent, and respond to, incidents. Fear is understandable, but we cannot let it hold us back. To begin with, there are basic standards that we can start adhering to while we develop a better understanding of the issue.

First, we must avoid a one-approach-fits-all perspective on the issue. It is important that we recognise that the identity of individuals in our organisations can change not only the impact of the event but also their risk of being targeted. This can be due to socially- or culturally-held beliefs that allow for the subjection of women, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) community or those of particular races, ethnicities, religions, nationalities or abilities to violence, exploitation and assault. It is also true that the intersectionality of these factors can either increase or decrease both risk and impact; this can be felt particularly when considering the impact felt by international versus national staff.[8] How do we make sure that this is addressed? By asking our staff about their risks and discussing with them how best to reduce their exposure to these risks would be an excellent first step. Addressing organisational culture, as will be seen below, is another key element.

The key principles of response should also be adhered to, just as those for other types of incidents like kidnapping and physical assault are. These principles are: confidentiality, transparency, dignity, and adopting a survivor-centred approach.[9] The staff under your care deserve the same level of respect that you would expect if you found yourself experiencing a safeguarding violation.

With that set out, it is vital that we recognise that no one in any aid organisation across the globe is alone in trying to safeguard their staff members. This is, quite literally, a problem that all organisations are grappling with at this time, and there is a great deal to be learned by sharing approaches, good practice, and identifying trends in our responses.

Current trends

Given the scope of the issue, no description of the current trends in the safeguarding of aid workers can call itself complete, and with changes coming rapidly, these can quickly become outdated. That said, setting out, briefly, how we got here, up-to-date actions and initiatives will show us where things will be going in the next year. At the very least, it should provide the reader with a sense of where to start in learning more about how to safeguard their staff.

It would be incorrect to suggest that the conversation about the safeguarding of aid workers only began in February 2018. Although the semantics might have changed, the issues themselves and the work to prevent them are far from new. The history of safeguarding aid workers goes back decades, to the innumerable aid workers – in particular women and those working on gender and gender-based violence – who have been raising concerns and reporting their experiences. In more recent years, it has included EISF's work on gender and security,[10] the work of Report the Abuse,[11] followed by the Humanitarian Women's Network,[12] the Tufts Report on sexualised violence in the aid world,[13] and, most recently, the #AidToo movement.

The #AidToo movement, which emerged around November 2017 through media outlets, has been the impetus for significant revelations about the failure of employers to properly safeguard staff and others from sexualised violence in the workplace.[14] Rather than pointing the finger at a few organisations that have found themselves in the media, there is a need for collective recognition that all organisations must reflect on their efforts to provide safe work environments for their staff. Some sense of this emerged from the DFID Safeguarding Summit on 18 October 2018, and perhaps we will see progress stem from the commitments made at the event, by donor bodies and organisations including the United Nations.[15] What is most likely to create tangible change, though, is not commitments, but concrete actions being taken collectively throughout the aid industry.

8   Jones, E. et al. (2018). Managing the Security of Aid Workers with Diverse Profiles. EISF. Available from: https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2285-EISF-2018-Managing-the-Security-of-Aid-Workers-with-Diverse-Profiles.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

9   EISF. (2019). Managing Sexual Violence against Aid Workers: prevention, preparedness, response and aftercare. EISF. Available from: https://www.eisf.eu/library/managing-sexual-violence-against-aid-workers. [Accessed 21 March 2019].

10 Persaud, C. (2012). Gender and Security: Guidelines for mainstreaming gender in security risk management. EISF. Available from: https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/1137-Persaud-2012-Gender-and-Security-Guidelines-for-Mainstreaming-Gender-in-Security-Risk-Management.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

11 See https://www.eisf.eu/theme/managing-sexual-violence/report-the-abuse/

12 Humanitarian Women's Network. (2016). Full Survey Results. Humanitarian Women's Network. Available from: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/hwn_full_survey_results_may_2016.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

13 Mazurana, D. and Donnelly, P. (2017). STOP the Sexual Assault against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers. Feinstein International Center. Available from: http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/SAAW-report_5-23.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

14 See http://aidnography.blogspot.com/2018/02/oxfam-haiti-aid-industry-metoo-bibliography.html

15 DFID. (2018). Safeguarding Summit 2018: Host's Outcome Summary. DFID. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-summit-2018-hosts-outcome-summary. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

Referencing initiatives

As it currently stands, privacy laws and the fear of legal action are holding aid organisations back from providing full details on the actions of their former employees. In some cases, this means a failure to inform others that a staff member was released or allowed to leave due to a safeguarding violation – be it against another staff member or a beneficiary. This leaves an enormous gap and creates the potential for serial perpetrators to float from organisation to organisation across the aid system, leaving a wake of survivors behind them, along with reputational damage for the organisation, safety and security risks, and a compromised ability to safely undertake aid operations.

The only practical referencing initiative at the moment is being led by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC). The premise behind their *Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme*[16] is remarkably simple, cost-effective, and has had impressive uptake by major aid organisations in Europe already: setting out an agreement between aid organisations to allow the sharing of information about safeguarding violations as part of their recruitment processes. Practically speaking, it allows participating aid organisations to inquire with past employers about any investigations and/or disciplinary actions that might have been taken in the course of employment. This allows employers to make decisions about whether potential employees are fit to work in their organisation.

The *Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme* has been developed in line with European data privacy laws, balanced with the need to ensure that perpetrators are not allowed to continue committing safeguarding violations. However, at the time of writing, it had not yet been utilised.

Although it is still in the early stages, it is one to watch, primarily as it can be implemented immediately, at low-cost, and could prove an effective way to address floating perpetrators.

Humanitarian passport

Also intended to ensure that perpetrators are not allowed to float through the aid system, is the concept of a humanitarian passport being led by Save the Children UK. It would be a piece of electronic technology built on blockchain, which would track identifying details about an individual aid worker, as well as details on any acts of misconduct that they might have committed.

Experts have pointed out some rather significant gaps and problems with the initiative. The technology that it would need to rely upon does not exist yet in the format needed, and even where parts of it do exist, it only functions in Western countries where only a minority of aid work is conducted and where the majority of aid workers are not nationals. Issues around privacy laws have not yet been addressed, and there are questions about who would pay for the technology, how it would be used, data sources, data verification, and usability. It is in the early stages, however, so more information would be needed on how it might be structured and implemented.

Background checks

In an effort to address the accountability gap and floating serial preparators, DFID announced at the DFID Safeguarding Summit in October 2018 that it has launched a project called Soteria, coordinated by Interpol and Save the Children, to ensure aid organisations have access to criminal record searches using Interpol's database.[17] Although the Interpol database does cover a significant number of countries, the reality is that many of these countries do not have criminal database systems that can be relied upon. For example, in countries where corruption allows alleged perpetrators to bribe their way to a clean record. Further, in order to appear in a criminal database at all, the individual has to have committed a crime in a place where it was illegal, been caught, charged, prosecuted, and sentenced. This further reduces the likelihood that an alleged perpetrator will be found through a database search, even one that is as comprehensive as Interpol's database.

This does not mean that we should dismiss the idea of database searches – quite the contrary – but this should be seen as only a tool to ensuring that those who have committed safeguarding violations are not allowed to enter the aid world, not a catch-all solution.

Updated approaches to training

It is now common for some form of Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) to be offered to international aid workers, particularly those going to work in higher risk areas, prior to deployment. Security training is also increasingly provided to national staff. It has become the norm to include a module on safeguarding in some security training courses with the aim of preventing safeguarding violations. Any module on safeguarding must be designed from a survivor perspective. It

16 See https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/inter-agency_misconduct_disclosure_scheme_final_draft_002.pdf

17 DFID. (2018). International summit to crack down on sexual predators in the aid sector. DFID. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/international-summit-to-crack-down-on-sexual-predators-in-the-aid-sector. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

should also include an element of bystander training to empower those who might see something to raise the issue with their employer.[18]

HEAT courses, or any other training for both international and national staff, must ensure that prevention is not about dictating staff behaviour or perpetuating stereotypes. Unfortunately, the approach of prevention has traditionally been to suggest that to prevent safeguarding violations from happening staff – primarily female staff – should adhere to lists of acceptable behaviours. Although basic rules of safety and security, as well as being culturally appropriate for a location, should absolutely be adhered to, the reality is that there are very few actions a person can realistically take that would entirely avoid their being exposed to a safeguarding violation. It can happen in a short skirt, long skirt, or under a burqa.

One of the ways to address a shift away from prevention strategies where the onus is placed on the individual at risk is to focus on potential perpetrators, i.e. to tell staff not to commit safeguarding violations. This places the responsibility for committing safeguarding violations where it belongs: on the individual committing the act. Getting to a point where employees fully understand the consequences of committing safeguarding violations requires unpacking perceptions about gender equality, social norms, power, and masculinity, with more nuance than simple prohibition. This sends a clear message about what will not be tolerated, and is, therefore, a good place for organisations to start.

Another trend has been the use of female-only security and safety trainings. This has, particularly in the earlier stages of addressing safeguarding, been an important step for ensuring female staff are given the space to share their experiences and feel empowered coming forward. However, it has also sent the message that safeguarding is a women-only problem, thereby inadvertently suggesting that men do not need to focus on their own behaviour, or that safeguarding violations cannot happen to men.

The recent move towards inclusive security awareness training recognises a few different steps forward in promoting safeguarding. First, there should no longer be a suggestion that a gender ghettoed conversation about safety and security is acceptable. Everyone needs to be part of the conversation, particularly as it pertains to safeguarding. This is primarily for two reasons: a) both men and women can be survivors of a safeguarding violation, as well as perpetrators of it, and b) conversations around prohibited acts and prevention only work when everyone is in the room. If we are going to bring issues around safeguarding out of the shadows, we must recognise that prevention and response include everyone in the organisation: not just one gender, not just staff in one area of responsibility, not just the gender or gender-based violence specialists.

Inclusive risk assessments

When conducting risk assessments for safety and security, we routinely rely on the opinions and knowledge of those closest to the ground. Why would we approach the safeguarding of our staff in any other way? Including staff in our conversations about how to prevent their exposure to violations, particularly national staff and those who may be more marginalised, allows for richer and more comprehensive risk assessments. It is simply good practice to ask those who may be impacted by risk for their thoughts on how best to prevent or mitigate it. In actively creating the space to discuss and understand staff member's risks, we can do a better job at safeguarding.

EISF recently produced a guide for security personnel to better consider the impact that identity can have on an individuals' risk profile, including both inclusive security risk management and inclusive security trainings.[19]

Reporting systems and information management

As trust is being rebuilt in aid organisations to encourage survivors to report and bystanders to speak up, Insecurity Insight has launched a global reporting system for safeguarding violations experienced by aid workers. While this is not a perfect solution, as reporting systems are best placed to directly communicate with the aid organisation that employs the alleged perpetrator so that investigations and actions can take place, this reporting mechanism will fill an important gap that has existed since Report the Abuse closed in August 2017. The new system will provide survivors with the space to speak about their experiences to an independent, third-party reporting platform.[20]

This reporting platform, and those internal to aid organisations, rely on good information management systems that allow them to collect data on incidents

18 See https://www.saferedge.com; https://www.redr.org.uk; https://www.inclusivesecurity.org.
19 Jones, E. et al. (2018). Managing the Security of Aid Workers with Diverse Profiles. EISF. Available from: https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2285-EISF-2018-Managing-the-Security-of-Aid-Workers-with-Diverse-Profiles.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].
20 See http://www.insecurityinsight.org/aidindanger/

of safeguarding, track investigations across vast organisations, and be able to provide up-to-date information on what is happening or has happened in response to a complaint. Given the reluctance still felt by many survivors to report on the record, the ability to track anonymous reports and perpetrator names to establish patterns of behaviour or multiple perpetrations is vital.

This is an issue that most aid organisations across the globe are struggling with and good practices are anticipated to emerge on this topic in 2019 as a result of conversations at the DFID Safeguarding Summit in October 2018.

Accountability

Criminal accountability is a necessary aspect of any discussion on safeguarding. An atmosphere where there is accountability for criminal acts is also one in which aid can be delivered more safely. For survivors of safeguarding violations, particularly those that are more severe, it can be an essential piece of the healing and recovery process. Unfortunately, the reality of where most aid work is undertaken makes the likelihood of criminal accountability rare. Even where safeguarding violations are criminalised in a particular locality, this does not mean that the justice system is fully functioning, that accessing the system will be safe for the survivor, or that there is a realistic possibility of criminal justice occurring. Unfortunately, as with kidnapping, robbery, or the murder of aid workers, safeguarding violations will rarely result in criminal convictions.

Major Western governments have recognised this specific gap and are in the process of closing loopholes that have allowed their citizens to escape criminal accountability in the past, particularly for acts committed abroad. In particular, work is underway in both the UK and Canada at the moment to ensure that they can more easily prosecute nationals for acts committed abroad. While such changes in their laws are an excellent step in the right direction, they will need to address other issues including the chain of custody for evidence, the logistics of investigating in another country, issues around language and translation, difficulties getting witnesses to attend, and judicial economy.

Recognising that criminal accountability will often be a challenge, it is even more important that aid organisations ensure they have processes in place to investigate appropriately. Some larger aid organisations have developed internal investigation capacities, in particular ensuring that their investigators understand how to collect evidence on and speak to survivors of safeguarding violations. For smaller aid organisations without the funds for dedicated investigation teams, training on investigating safeguarding violations can be provided to certain staff members, for example, safety and security personnel or human resources staff. Smaller aid organisations are also working on lists of qualified independent investigators who can be contracted for individual investigations.

There may be a need at a future date to consider an industry-wide system for ensuring independent, neutral, confidential, dignified, and survivor-centred investigations.

Donor commitments

In addition to the conversations and commitments that came out of the DFID Safeguarding Summit,[21] similar conversations are being had by aid networks in major Western countries. Aid organisations with offices in Canada,[22] the USA,[23] Switzerland,[24] and the UK[25] will likely have staff involved in collective efforts to collate information and develop good practices on the safeguarding of aid workers. Language emerging from these major donor governments indicates that future funding may be linked to organisational efforts to safeguard employees and beneficiaries.

Unfortunately, one of the biggest gaps at the DFID Safeguarding Summit was the lack of collective commitment by donors to fund safeguarding efforts. Funding for safeguarding activities still must be obtained on an individual grant basis or from unrestricted funding sources. In the long term, more sustainable funding streams will need to be identified in order for activities like those outlined in this article to be implemented to a high standard or for the period of time required to create real change.

In the meantime, building safeguarding into existing safety and security funding lines may be one way to address the resources gap. This should not take away from the funding of any other safety and security issue, but it should reflect the knowledge that if we are going to improve safeguarding, it needs to be seen in increased safety and security budgets. This suggestion is made in recognition of the reality that funding for safety and security work is often hard-fought and highly debated.

21 DFID. (2018). Safeguarding Summit 2018: Host's Outcome Summary. DFID. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-summit-2018-hosts-outcome-summary. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

22 See https://ccic.ca/news/ccic-leaders-pledge-on-preventing-and-addressing-sexual-misconduct/

23 See https://www.interaction.org/documents/ceo-pledge-on-preventing-sexual-abuse-exploitation-and-harassment-by-and-of-ngo-staff/

24 See https://www.chsalliance.org/what-we-do/psea

25 See https://www.bond.org.uk/ngo-support/safeguarding-guidance-and-resources

Conclusion

The aid sector needs to focus on what will work in both the short and long term and go beyond on-paper changes that only serve to look good for donors or the public. Otherwise, it is certain that we will find ourselves in the same position months or even years down the road. This is inevitable unless we change how we approach the safeguarding of aid workers, particularly by including it as a natural and necessary aspect of safety and security work.

We need to consider how work on, and attention to, safeguarding continues after the spotlight fades and attention has been diverted to the next problem. The role of safety and security professionals in embracing and heralding the safeguarding agenda is paramount for its integration and failing to do so would actively place aid workers at risk.

If in doubt, there are experts across the globe that can be consulted about how to approach safeguarding, whether it is for response services[26] or examining the duty of care owed to our staff.[27] Asking for help or more information is encouraged – this is an important and sensitive issue and must be handled appropriately to protect aid workers.

Recommendations:

1. **Consider safeguarding from different perspectives.** Speak with staff about the risks they face. No one is expected to know all of the risks that any given individual might experience, but we do have an obligation to find out what risks our staff are exposed to and adequately prepare for them.

2. **Deliver better training on safeguarding.** Training should focus on creating behavioural change and directing prevention at would-be perpetrators rather than survivors.

3. **Encourage staff to raise security risks or their concerns, particularly those around safeguarding.** This requires creating trust with staff by demonstrating an openness to their experiences, and by responding appropriately to concerns and complaints when they come in.[28] This is part of creating organisational change.

4. **Establish clear procedures and action plans before a safeguarding incident occurs.** The last thing workers want to think about when a report has come in 38 hours after an incident of rape is where to get an HIV PEP kit. Being prepared will ensure safer and less traumatising responses for survivors and will take the pressure off those supporting and responding to the incident. When we know what to do, we are less likely to make mistakes or inadvertently cause further harm.

5. **Focus on prevention.** Knowing how to respond to safeguarding violations is clearly important, but the greater focus must be on preventing incidents from occurring in the first place. We must make safeguarding prevention as integral a part of our approach to mitigating risk as we would for robberies, carjackings and kidnappings.

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26 See https://headington-institute.org and https://www.thrive-worldwide.org

27 See http://dutyofcareinternational.co.uk

28 BOND. (2018). Eight principles for building trust through feedback. BOND. Available from: https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource-documents/eight_principles_for_building_trust_through_feedback.pdf. [Accessed 17 March 2019].

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European Interagency Security Forum (EISF)

EISF is an independent network of Security Focal Points who currently represent over 100 aid organisations operating internationally. EISF is committed to improving the security of relief operations and staff. It aims to increase safe access by humanitarian agencies to people affected by emergencies.

EISF was created to establish a more prominent role for security risk management in international humanitarian operations. It facilitates exchange between member organisations and other bodies such as the UN, institutional donors, academic and research institutions, the private sector, and a broad range of international NGOs. EISF's vision is to be a global reference point for applied practice and collective knowledge, and key to its work is the development of practical research for security risk management in the humanitarian sector.

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