

Defining safeguarding

Introduction

The CLEAN Helpdesk defines safeguarding as preventing harm to people in the delivery of development and humanitarian assistance. In practice this means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm from occurring both to the recipients of CLEAN Helpdesk project services and to the people delivering these services, and responding appropriately when harm does unfortunately occur. The CLEAN Helpdesk recognises that while it cannot necessarily prevent all safeguarding misconduct from happening, it can take a ‘zero-tolerance to inaction’ stance to safeguarding reports, and it recognises that the best mitigation is prevention.

For the CLEAN Helpdesk, ‘harm’ includes the following broad categorisations, almost all of which can be perpetrated online as well as in-person:

- Sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH)
- Physical violence
- Discrimination
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Emotional abuse (also known as psychological abuse)

FCDO focuses on Safeguarding from SEAH (which is an umbrella term relating to different sexual harms) and other forms of safeguarding harm. The below definitions align with the Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment ([CAPSEAH](#)):

Sexual Exploitation: Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual Abuse: The actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

Sexual Harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances (without touching). It includes requests for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature, which may create a hostile or offensive environment.

Aside from SEAH, other forms of harm exist which - while damaging in and of themselves - can also be indicators of sexual or more violent forms of harm since violence exists on a continuum:

Physical Violence: The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.

Discrimination: Any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's identity or personal attributes. Discrimination may be an isolated event affecting one person or a group of persons similarly situated. The UK Equality Act recognises "protected characteristics" which are specific personal attributes that are protected from discrimination. These include age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Bullying: Rude, abusive, or threatening behaviour or misuse of power that intends to make a person feel humiliated or ashamed.

Harassment: When bullying is because of a person's identity or who they are, such as their age, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity, etc. Often harassment is covered by law.

Emotional abuse (also known as psychological abuse): Abuse that manipulates another to cause mental or emotional harm that undermines the victim-survivors' dignity and self-worth, and which diminishes their sense of control. Examples include threats of physical or sexual violence, coercion and control, intimidation, humiliation, forced isolation/social exclusion, stalking, verbal harassment, unwanted attention, remarks, gestures or written words of a sexual and/or menacing nature, destruction of cherished things, withdrawal of services and support etc.

While the CLEAN Helpdesk is unlikely to have direct contact with children since much of the work will be carried out online, the following safeguarding risks for children in the delivery of development assistance are included below to ensure that standards are understood should any direct or indirect engagement with children be required. (For example, at a one-off product launch where a youth delegation for climate change may be in attendance or when visiting a community as part of research endeavours.)

Child safeguarding: The responsibility of organisations to ensure they do no harm to children (all people under the age of 18 years, as per the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). This means doing all they can to prevent exploitation and abuse, and if abuse occurs, to respond appropriately. All actions on child safeguarding should be taken in the best interests of the child or children. Harm to children includes:

Physical abuse: When someone hurts or harms a child or young person on purpose. It also includes making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a child to become unwell.

Emotional abuse: This includes persistent emotional maltreatment that impacts a child's emotional development. Emotionally abusive acts include restriction of movement, degrading, humiliating, bullying (including cyber bullying), and threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.

Child sexual abuse and exploitation: Under UN regulations, all sexual activity with someone under the age of 18 is considered sexual abuse, regardless of the age of majority or consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence. Sexual abuse can be either in-person or in digital settings. Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse that involves children being engaged in any sexual activity in exchange

for money, gifts, food, accommodation, affection, status, or anything else that they or their family needs.

In the rare event that children may be interacted with under the CLEAN Helpdesk programme, FCDO's [Child Safeguarding Due Diligence](#) can be referred to.

All of the above forms of abuse and harm are strictly prohibited by any CLEAN Helpdesk staff and associated personnel and if experienced, witnessed or suspected, MUST be reported using any of the reporting channels listed on page 2 of this document.

Failure to report suspected or witnessed abuse is a breach of the standards set out in this guidance which apply to all CLEAN Helpdesk Staff and associated personnel for the duration of the project.

Victim-survivors of safeguarding misconduct are encouraged to disclose any harm they may have experienced while engaging with the CLEAN Helpdesk and to be assured that these reports will be handled with the greatest sensitivity, care, and confidentiality, with their needs and wishes prioritised.

Contact Information

For any questions or further information, please contact the CLEAN Helpdesk at info@clean-helpdesk.org.



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