



# Our commitment to change in safeguarding



Our approach to tackling sexual exploitation,  
abuse and sexual harassment in the aid sector



# Introducing our approach to putting people first

The mission of civil society organisations undertaking international development and humanitarian work is to build a fairer world, free from poverty, inequality and injustice. This defines who we are and makes our sector unique.

Central to that mission is respect for the safety, wellbeing and rights of the communities we seek to serve – wherever they are in the world and whatever the humanitarian or development challenges. Respect means that we will not tolerate sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment in any form, and that we are committed to putting the voices, rights and support of victims and survivors at the heart of our approach.

Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment are fundamentally about gender inequality and power imbalance, and a profound effort will be needed if we are to ensure systemic and lasting cultural change. This change will be rooted in respecting and upholding the rights of the people we aim to serve, our partners, our staff, volunteers and trustees.

In doing so, civil society organisations will ensure that they implement the highest standards on safeguarding, built around a survivor-centred approach and an organisational culture that aims to prevent abuse in the first place, but which responds quickly and thoroughly when it does happen. The additional risks associated with humanitarian interventions in conflict-afflicted, fragile states need particular recognition and distinctive approaches.

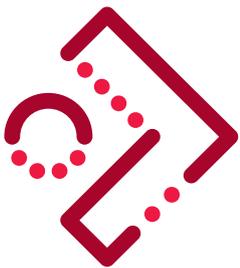
Many organisations have well-developed safeguarding approaches in place and our work over the last few months builds on that established good practice. However, driving up the consistency and quality of our practice across the board requires collective action and sector-wide solutions. This is what the commitments and related actions set out below aim to achieve.

We welcome the leadership the UK government has shown on this issue and hope to see continued support as the civil society sector drives this agenda forwards. We are committed to working with colleagues in the domestic charity sectors, governments, donors, academics, multilaterals, the private sector and communities to combat sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment in all its forms.

Every link in the chain of international development and humanitarian assistance must be strong and consistent when it comes to safeguarding and we will play an integral part in ensuring that happens. This can only be achieved in collaboration with our local partners, whose knowledge and expertise is vital to understanding the different contexts and norms in the countries where we work, and to developing relevant safeguarding responses which protect individuals from harm.

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# We are driving change in four key areas of safeguarding\*:



## Survivor support and enhanced accountability

We will support survivors, victims and whistleblowers, enhance accountability and transparency, strengthen reporting and tackle impunity.



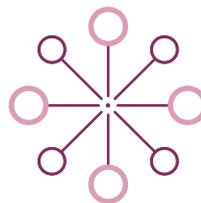
## Minimum standards

We will agree minimum standards and ensure we and our partners meet them.



## Cultural change

We will incentivise cultural change through strong leadership, organisational accountability and better human resource processes.



## Organisational capacity and capability

We will strengthen organisational capacity and capability, including building the capability of implementing partners to meet the minimum standards.

\* Aligned to the Department for International Development's (DFID) four strategic shifts



# Our commitments to change



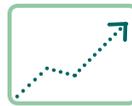
## Survivor support and enhanced accountability



**1.** We protect the dignity and safety of the people our work serves, respecting their voice, agency and choices, while upholding the universal right to be protected from harm.



**2.** We ensure victims and survivors of safeguarding breaches are at the heart of our safeguarding response.



**3.** We are transparent about our activities; we will monitor progress and will publicly demonstrate our ongoing efforts to improve safeguarding practice.



**4.** We work towards consistent, rigorous reporting and complaints processes that are gender-sensitive and survivor-centred, so that the people we serve, our partners, staff, volunteers and trustees have confidence that we deal with alleged incidents swiftly and comprehensively.



## Cultural change



**5.** Our boards and senior leaders drive behaviours and attitudes throughout our organisations, leading by example to nurture a strong safeguarding culture that addresses structural inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality and age.



**6.** We collaborate within and beyond our sector to improve employment practice, including background checking, to minimise opportunities for perpetrators' access to our sector and to reduce their ability to move between organisations.

## Minimum standards



**7.** We apply established good practices and meet recognised international safeguarding standards, working with others to ensure they are inclusive and relevant.



**8.** We work with government, donors, businesses, global civil society networks, local partners and UK charities to advance consistent and high-quality safeguarding practice worldwide.



**9.** We ensure our safeguarding policies and practices address the needs of vulnerable groups, including the different approaches needed to protect those at risk by their identity or circumstances, including women, children and disabled people.

## Organisational capacity and capability



**10.** We improve safeguarding capabilities by building the awareness and skills of our staff, volunteers and trustees, while sharing solutions and expertise so the whole sector can do better.



**11.** We strive towards more equal relationships between organisations delivering and receiving aid, where the local expertise of in-country partners is respected, and we share responsibility for high-quality programme delivery and keeping people safe.



**12.** We will test and scale innovative technology solutions as a sector to strengthen safeguarding practice.



## Our approach to change

To meet these commitments, we as organisations will work individually and collectively through sector-wide solutions to deliver systemic change.

Our collective approach has been coordinated by Bond, the UK network for more than 420 international development and humanitarian organisations. Bond's members work in more than 200 countries worldwide towards the goal of eliminating poverty, inequality and injustice.

Civil society organisations have been reviewing their approach to safeguarding and improving their policies, procedures and practices. This individual action is essential to preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment and bullying. Each organisation must ensure that incidents are dealt with promptly and robustly as they arise.

The actions below set out our approaches to improve the quality and consistency of our collective safeguarding practices. Some of the examples below demonstrate practical short or medium-term actions already underway. Others are about transforming our ways of working and organisational culture over the long term and will take time. Some actions apply to the whole sector, while others provide examples of work by individual organisations.

Implementation of these commitments will differ within organisations, depending on context, scope and remit. The proposed solutions need to be adaptable to the diverse global contexts in which we work, including rapid response emergencies, and to acknowledge the realities of local resource and capacity constraints.

Comprehensively implementing and sustaining these approaches is a long-term task that requires continuous effort and also resources, which we look to donors to provide. We will share the good practice that has long existed in many charities, acknowledging that this needs to be embedded more consistently across the sector.

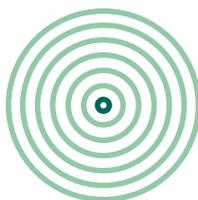
We note that increasing our efforts to protect people from harm and ensure people feel able to raise concerns is likely to lead to an increase in reporting in the short term. This is a sign that the system is being strengthened and we expect to see fewer incidents as a result in the longer term.

**The 34 actions that follow each fall under our 12 commitments to change. Further details of each action can be found in the next section of this document. These commitments will become part of the [Bond Charter](#), which forms the common vision, purpose, values and principles of the Bond network.**



## 1. Protecting the dignity and safety of the people our work serves

- Build contextually and culturally relevant feedback mechanisms into programme design and delivery, using the set of [principles on designing and running accountable feedback](#).<sup>1</sup>
- Share findings from a pilot on how community feedback can be used at different stages of decision-making.<sup>2</sup>
- Continue to explore developing a participation hub with DFID and other donors to ensure workable feedback mechanisms are used widely and effectively.<sup>3</sup>



## 2. Ensuring victims and survivors are central to our safeguarding response

- Explore options for joint support services in-country for survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse, including recognising the value of survivor advocates in organisations.<sup>4</sup>
- Collate and share resources on survivor support approaches and use learning from survivor experiences to continuously improve safeguarding support.<sup>5</sup>



## 3. Being transparent and sharing progress

- Disclose all safeguarding concerns and incidents to the appropriate regulatory bodies.<sup>6</sup>
- Track and report on changes to our policies and practices over time within organisations and explore a means of monitoring sector progress as a whole.<sup>7</sup>
- Carry out an annual survey with Bond members to analyse the investment and resources that Bond members put into safeguarding, and share findings.<sup>8</sup>



## 4. Rigorous and inclusive reporting and complaints processes

- Develop and use a toolkit on good practice in reporting and complaints mechanisms, based on the safety, protection and support of survivors and whistle-blowers.<sup>9</sup>
- Standardise sector practice on reporting safeguarding results to the Charity Commission and the public by implementing revised guidance on annual reports. Call for an increase in the capacity of the Commission to monitor incidents and support improvement.<sup>10</sup>



## 5. Driving cultural change and addressing structural inequalities from the top

- Commit our leaders and organisations to a shared and understood standard of behaviour, which challenges cultures conducive to abuses, and hold them to account against this standard.<sup>11</sup>
- Identify areas where further research on the drivers for sexual exploitation and abuse in different cultural contexts would be beneficial, and work with DFID and across the sector to commission and learn from this research.
- Develop diagnostic and benchmarking tools that support organisations to assess organisational culture against indicators of an effective safeguarding culture.<sup>12</sup>
- Share resources, toolkits and frameworks on working towards equitable, gender-just organisations, and implement good practice to change organisational culture and the inappropriate exercise of power.<sup>13</sup>
- Develop and act in accordance with good practice guidance on governance to improve and standardise practice across the sector.<sup>14</sup>



## 6. Collaborating to improve employment practice

- Develop a consistent approach to referencing across the sector, providing guidance on what recruiting organisations should ask for and what referees should disclose, including guidance and legal opinion on how to handle the range of jurisdictions and legal frameworks within which we work.<sup>15</sup>
- Review the scope and definitions of regulated activity under UK legislation and develop proposals to government on a wider definition of regulated activity for employees working in key humanitarian and development roles, to improve pre-employment background checking through the Disclosure and Barring Service.<sup>16</sup>
- Collaborate with government and key agencies to ensure that an appropriate level of background checking can be carried out globally.<sup>17</sup>



## 7. Applying internationally-recognised standards and practices

- Adopt and adhere to recognised safeguarding standards as relevant to our organisations.<sup>18</sup>
- Review and update our organisational safeguarding policies, including taking a risk management approach in-line with good practice, to minimise the likelihood of safeguarding breaches.<sup>19</sup>

- Through Bond, collaborate with peer civil society networks and global platforms to help strengthen local civil society organisations' safeguarding responses and capabilities.<sup>22</sup>
- Help our partners to meet minimum standards by sharing policies, training materials and supporting their implementation.

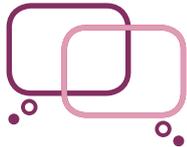


## 8. Collaborating with other sectors to advance global safeguarding practice

- Engage with and provide feedback to DFID and other donors, the UN and the private sector to align approaches and help ensure due diligence and other harmonisation efforts are fit for purpose in diverse contexts.<sup>20</sup>
- Continue to collaborate with UK voluntary sector bodies and the Charity Commission to ensure alignment where possible with UK charities and established good safeguarding practice from health, social care and child protection.<sup>21</sup>

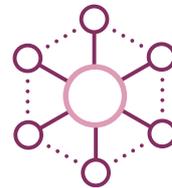
## 9. Ensuring policies and practices address vulnerable groups' needs

- Recognise and implement the different approaches needed to protect vulnerable groups such as children and people with disabilities.<sup>23</sup>



## 10. Improving and sharing expertise of staff, volunteers and trustees

- Convene four UK NGO working groups on safeguarding, who have analysed current challenges and proposed possible solutions in four thematic areas: accountability to the people we work with, organisational culture, the employment cycle and reporting.<sup>24</sup>
- Build on established good practice (including from the UK charity sector), ensuring resources, templates, policies and procedures are widely shared across organisations of all sizes, and regularly update guidance and signposting on Bond website.<sup>25</sup>
- Enable access to training on good safeguarding practice that responds sensitively to the specific power dynamics and legal frameworks of the places we are working in.<sup>26</sup>
- Develop a consortium of partners and secure resources for a universal, accredited, self-guided online course on safeguarding.<sup>27</sup>
- Come together as a sector at events and workshops to share learning and expertise, and establish an online community of practice to enable the ongoing exchange of ideas, case studies, experiences (positive and negative) and good practice.<sup>28</sup>



## 11. Equal relationships between organisations delivering and receiving aid

- Support improved local understanding of the dynamics surrounding gender, diversity and unequal power relations to reduce the risk of potential exploitation and abuse.<sup>29</sup>
- Support partner-led initiatives to strengthen their safeguarding practice.<sup>30</sup>



## 12. Testing and scaling innovative technology solutions

- Explore how passporting or aid worker registers could be developed to enhance vetting and rapid mobilisation of aid workers for humanitarian interventions, using blockchain or other innovative technologies.<sup>31</sup>
- Collaborate with innovators and technology providers to test and potentially scale applications which could enhance the efficiency, reliability or effectiveness of safeguarding in our sector.<sup>32</sup>



## Further details of actions

Below are further details and timescales for the actions outlined in our approach to change.

1. [Principles](#) published through Bond Feedback Accountability and Learning Group in September 2018.
2. DEC pilot in Bangladesh completed by October 2018.
3. Terms of Reference for participation hub has been drafted by NGO working group in July 2018.
4. For example, following Interagency gender-based violence case management guidelines.
5. Bond to collate resources and signpost on [website](#) (September 2018 onwards).
6. Initial assurances provided to DfID in February/ March 2018.
7. See footnote 10 on public disclosure.
8. First survey carried out in July and August 2018.
9. [Draft guidance produced through NGO working groups.](#)
10. [Draft guidance produced through NGO working groups.](#)

11. [Draft guidance produced through NGO working groups.](#)
12. Linked to shared and understood standards for leaders.
13. Bond to collate resources and signpost on website (September onwards). For example: [Oxfam gender framework](#) and [toolkit](#); [Gender at Work analytical framework](#), and others.
14. [Draft guidance produced through NGO working groups.](#)
15. Exploring and developing guidance for use of the draft Inter-agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, which was developed with support from NGO working groups.
16. Supported by DFID and NGO working group.
17. Supported by NGO working group.

18. Such as [Keeping Children Safe International Child Safeguarding Standards](#), the [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#) and [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#).

19. Individual organisations have reviewed and updated their policies and practice as shown in the Bond member survey carried out in July 2018.

20. Bond is convening the Funding and Commercial Contracts working groups to feed back on new code of conduct for grants/ contracts, due diligence approaches, etc.

21. Examples of collaboration include work on organisational culture, reporting and complaints mechanisms and governance.

22. Bond has run joint webinars with Concord and Forus in September 2018. Bond is collating and sharing resources with other civil society platforms. See Bond website for non-UK platforms' endorsement of these commitments.

23. Upholding the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).

24. [Cross-sector working groups were established in March 2018](#). Products and outputs from the groups are referenced throughout this statement.

25. Bond to regularly review and update [resources and guidance](#) on website.

26. Bond signposting to [specialist training providers](#) on website.

27. Massive Open Online Course consortium led by the Humanitarian Leadership Academy.

28. National and regional events held across UK by Bond (August-October 2018). New Bond safeguarding working group to oversee long-term actions and progress.

29. For example, 'Shaking Up' section of the [We Rise Toolkit](#).

30. Partner-led solutions are essential for improvements in safeguarding to be relevant to their context and sustained. This will require resources, time and local leadership.

31. Various experiments currently being explored; more information in due course.

32. Current options being explored include an app to verify DBS checks, and Radius, a safe platform for facilitated dialogue with vulnerable communities, developed by [On Our Radar](#).



Bond is the UK network for organisations working in international development.

We unite and support a diverse network of over 400 civil society organisations to help eradicate global poverty, inequality and injustice.

Find out more at [bond.org.uk](http://bond.org.uk)

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