Terms of Reference: Independent Reference Group (IRG) on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

Purpose

1. To provide technical support and guidance to inform DFID’s approach to work on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH).

Background

2. Since February 2018 there have been accelerated and deepened efforts to prevent and respond better to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the international aid sector. The international summit, hosted by DFID on 18 October 2018, was a pivotal moment in galvanising the whole sector and providing a framework to drive further progress. Families of organisations presented commitments structured around four long-term fundamental objectives that will change the way the aid sector operates:

   • Ensure support for survivors, victims and whistle-blowers; enhance accountability and transparency; strengthen reporting; and tackle impunity;
   • Incentivise cultural change through strong leadership, organisational accountability and better human resource processes;
   • Adopt global standards and ensure they are met or exceeded; and
   • Strengthen organisational capacity and capability across the international aid sector to meet these standards.

3. But the summit was a moment in time and we need to maintain this momentum and continue to work collaboratively. Our starting point remains that all forms of violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse, are deeply rooted in disparities of power and are often caused by gender inequality. The inequality and disempowerment of at-risk groups – including children (girls and boys), people with disabilities, and people who identify themselves as LGBTQI – drive SEAH and lead to significant barriers in being able to report. To challenge unequal power dynamics, victims and survivors – who are most often women and girls – must be placed at the heart of our work. We must listen and learn from root to tip to ensure we meet the summit commitments to respond and prevent SEAH and tackle underlying power imbalances.

Objective

4. Provide independent constructive challenge and critique to inform DFID’s approaches to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, which draws on the latest thinking, evidence and front-line experiences, including those of survivors and the most vulnerable groups. This will inform DFID’s policy and programme
work. But given DFID is active in domestic and international discussions on SEAH there is scope to shape the work of wider groups. And we hope members will benefit from sharing and hearing ideas and views among each other.

Composition

5. The IRG will be made up of no more than 20 individuals with technical and practitioner expertise in sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment across multiple disciplines. We hope to include (recognising that one person may meet more than one of these criteria):

a. Academics and/or practitioners working as a technical specialist on preventing and responding to SEAH.

b. At least four individuals from developing country contexts/southern hemisphere organisations/networks, preferably those representing survivors

c. Around two women’s rights activists and/or human rights defenders

d. At least one specialist in disability and one individual from a Disabled Peoples Organisation (DPO)

e. Individuals with expertise in one or more of the following disciplines: education, health, law enforcement, child safeguarding, LGBTQI issues

f. Around two heads of Safeguarding from INGOs

Ways of working

6. Members will be invited to participate in pre-scheduled quarterly roundtables.

7. Individuals can travel to DFID to attend round table discussions, but remote conferencing options will also be available. DFID will consider covering expenses on a case by case basis where appropriate. This may include, skype calls, local transport, phone credit, internet connection. It won’t include long-haul travel, accommodation or other related expenses.

8. Members may also be offered the chance by DFID’s Safeguarding Unit (SGU) to provide discrete input on specific issues/products where their experience and expertise can be drawn on, in the form of e.g. focused working groups, commenting on drafts of formal outputs, phone calls, small ad-hoc group meetings.

Chairing, secretariat and products

9. The IRG will be chaired by a senior member of DFID’s SGU. SGU will provide the secretariat function and aim to circulate an agenda, the minutes of the previous meeting, any relevant discussion and guidance papers at least a week in advance. Minutes won’t be published. All discussions will be under ‘Chatham House’ rules and comments won’t be attributed. Members will not be held accountable for any decisions made by DFID which may be informed by the work of the IRG. Members are welcome to include their involvement in the group on their CV/biography. DFID does not plan to disclose the names of those involved, but we will inform members if we are asked.
Timings

10. The group will convene quarterly from mid 2019. The group will be reviewed after four meetings to consider whether it should continue and/or be reconfigured. The timeline for establishing the IRG is as follows:

1. **Early April:** Expression of Interest issued with **1 May deadline (see annex 1 for template)**
2. **Mid May:** Membership confirmed. Members of DFID’s Safeguarding Unit will sift the expressions of interest and choose candidates. All applicants will be contacted about the outcome, but no detailed feedback will be provided to individuals not chosen. The names of unsuccessful applicants won’t be shared outside of the sifting team.
3. **Early June:** First IRG meeting scheduled for 7th June at **12:00 – 14:00 (UK time)**
4. **Quarterly thereafter:** The IRG meets. The group will review the ToRs after four meetings to consider whether it should continue and if so in what form.

11. We will use the first meeting to agree the terms of reference and discuss future topics for discussion and ways of working. An indicative list of themes for discussion by the IRG includes:

   i. Survivor-centred approaches/engagement
   ii. How best to support groups most at risk such as people with disabilities
   iii. What more can donors do to drive and support change
   iv. How to support and verify adherence with international standards (Interagency Standing Committee Minimum Operating Standards; and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability)

Members will be able to propose themes.

09 April 2019
Annex 1

Independent Reference Group (IRG) on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment: Expression of Interest (Confidential)

Please complete this form if you are interested in joining the DFID’s Independent Reference Group as an individual with technical and practitioner expertise in sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and return to: **Amy Grindle (a-grindle@dfid.gov.uk) by 12:00 (UK time), 1st May 2019**

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Relevant criteria met (see paragraph 5 of ToR)

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- [delete/add more bullets as required]

Please state why you are interested in applying, your suitability to be a member and what you would bring to the role over the next 12 months. Please include relevant experience and skills factoring in the detail in the Terms of Reference (no more than 400 words). You can attach a CV if you wish but it is not required.