Safeguarding in the International Context Webinar Transcript

[Introduction]

Hello, and welcome to our webinar on Safeguarding in an International Context. This webinar will be two sessions, and both are two and a half hours long and we'll have a five-minute break around halfway through the session. You should have received a link to the slides and the handbook for this course, you will need these throughout the discussion so please have them ready. There are accessible formats available, so please let the host or the co-host know if you would like those and don't have them already. Ideally, we would like your webcams enabled, but we ask that you keep your sound muted until you want to speak. We do this because we want to minimise the distractions that background noise could create for people, but we also want to be able to see that everyone is there and engaged and be visible to anyone lipreading. We understand there might be occasions when you would prefer to have the webcam off. For example, if you're having problems with your

internet speed, or you've got children who need your attention. If possible, please just let the co-host know if this is the case. Just to say that information shared can be of a sensitive nature, and some of the content is not appropriate for children, so if children are in the room, we ask that you use earphones so that they can't hear the content. Also, if you're happy to share any of your own experiences, please bear in mind confidentiality. We ask that you anonymise any examples, experiences or stories that you share. The chat facility can be used throughout for questions and for participation in activities. The co-host might answer the question, signpost you to further sources or hold on to that question for the next pause and share it with the host. If a question is not answered, or a question is about a very specific issue, please do call our safeguarding helpline.

It is important to keep yourselves emotionally safe during the training and if you need to take a breather from the webinar, that's okay and you can rejoin whenever you feel able to. It might be good to think about somebody you could reach out to if uncomfortable feelings or memories come to the surface. You

might need to find support for yourself, or it might be that you're concerned about someone else or another situation after the session. If that's the case, please do call our helpline as soon as you can because the trainer is not equipped to give specific advice on the webinar platform.

Thirtyone:Eight is the UK's largest independent Christian safeguarding organisation. Our mission is threefold - to equip, to empower and to encourage churches, charities, and faith-based groups in their safeguarding responsibilities. We do that in a lot of ways including training, consultancy, background checks, our research and our helpline. Our helpline number is 0303 003 1111 and is there to support with any questions you may have with regards to safeguarding. It might be about your policy, or a live situation, or there might be a concern that you have which you would value talking over with somebody. We operate from 7am until midnight, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Finally, our name Thirtyone:Eight is taken from a book in the Bible, Proverbs. It's chapter 38 verse 1 and it says, 'speak out on behalf of the voiceless and for the rights of all who are vulnerable.' We passionately believe that there's a biblical mandate for safeguarding and when we fulfill our responsibilities in safeguarding, we're taking work on that is very close to the heart of God. If you belong to another faith group, I know many of you have sacred scripts that have a very similar mandate, so we are very much working together in this vision of safeguarding vulnerable people.

Safeguarding in an international context - why is this something that's getting more attention now? In the last couple of years, Thirtyone:eight has had an increasing number of enquiries from faith-based organisations and charities seeking advice about - and wanting support for - international safeguarding. That's been coupled with a growing understanding of social issues such as 'white privilege' and 'abuse or power' as well as some high-profile news reports of when safeguarding in the international sphere has gone wrong.

The questions we've received on our helpline have ranged from individual enquiries through to large international charities asking for safeguarding audits and advice on how to improve their practice when working in a range of international settings. We have developed several international tools in response to this, i.e., the international audit tool, which you should have received as part of your pre-reading. We also have the International Safeguarding Policy Template which is available to Thirtyone:eight members – but there are other similar and equally helpful alternatives available online and the links to these resources are available in your handbook.

The feedback from the organisations we've worked with alongside the finding of International Christian work research which was undertaken by Dr. Lisa Oakley, in conjunction with Chester University (published in 2021), evidence the need for appropriate training on this topic, you should also find a link to the full research report in your handbook.

At the outset of this training, we want to acknowledge that there are limitations around the word 'safeguarding' when used in relation to international contexts. It's a word that doesn't translate directly, easily, or comfortably for many languages and cultures. Because of this, many organisations use different terminology which is more compatible with the cultures they're operating in. Phrases or terms that work well in your local areas may spring to mind: It might be things like 'international child protection', or 'protection from harm', 'child safety', 'responding to abuse', or 'abuse avoidance'. It's important to be aware of the terminology and the differences in translations/meanings as we consider this topic, and to be intentional about the most appropriate terminology to use in your contexts.

We're also aware that our target audience for this course is diverse. It typically ranges from international nongovernmental organisations [NGOs] who work in a number of different nations at one time, to a local church sending individuals or teams occasionally to support a partner project overseas, and there'll be many contexts in-between those two ends of the spectrum.

Individual delegates will also have different expectations for what this course might give them. Our aim is to highlight the current principles, challenges, and best practice in international safeguarding. But each delegate will need to do a certain amount of contextualising for their context to ensure that this learning benefits their organisation.

Not all content will be relevant for all contexts. To get the most of our time, the question that we should be asking as we go through this course, is not 'is this relevant for our context or our work?', but 'how is this relevant for our context/work?'. You won't leave this training knowing all the answers, but hopefully you'll know what questions to ask going forward, and where you might be able to find answers to some of those questions. If that's not the case, please do let us know in the feedback survey and we'll integrate that learning into our training offering. We want to be an organisation who live out the things we teach, and you'll hear later that we believe that inviting feedback and responding well to it is a key feature of a healthy safeguarding culture.

Five hours cannot equip everyone working in every possible international context with every possible scenario. The goal here is to guide you along the safeguarding journey and equip you for your next stage of that journey. Therefore, the course structure is separated into four modules and each module addresses one of the following course outcomes:

1) Understand the current international context,

2) Understand policies and procedure,

3) Know how to respond to concerns, and how to refer concerns on to relevant parties,

4) Gain the tools needed to build safeguarding capacity.

Module One - International safeguarding: The context and challenges

Consider the international context you currently work in. How long have you worked in this context? How would you describe your current knowledge of international safeguarding? And finally, see if you can think of your biggest area of uncertainty around safeguarding in an international context. What is it?

What would you like to learn or be able to resolve because of this training?

In module one, we're going to be looking at some legal frameworks that inform international safeguarding. We're going to look at some charity regulator guidance, and to consider some inherent challenges in this work.

Before we jump in, I want to make a comment on the terminology we use throughout this course. We've chosen to use the phrase Global North to represent what has previously been described as first world countries or developed countries, and Global South to describe countries who've more recently developed, have lower GDP or are collective cultures. This phrasing is typically preferred because it's felt that it's more valuing than third world or developing world. And it's more current than east west divisions. But Global North and Global South isn't without issue either, as many nations dislike this term as much as they do the others, and all the options present a poor fit for one or more countries. If you think for instance, of

Australia. It's a developed Western or first world, capitalist country which is geographically located in the Southern hemisphere, and yet would be described as part of the Global North. The United Nations Human Development Index, which uses health education and living standards, is another method that can be used.

It's been said that typically, the Global North perspective is 'I have rights' whereas the stronger perspective in the Global South is 'I have obligations' or 'I have responsibilities'. We can see that, as well as economic definitions, we can also adopt cultural ones and discuss the differences between collectivist and individualistic cultures.

Let's start looking at the international context of safeguarding with a quote from Bond. Bond is the UK network for organisations working in international development. Their website offers several useful resources, and we recommend that our delegates use their website for ongoing support and learning. The quote says this: "Safeguarding is the

responsibility of organisations to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children and adults at-risk nor expose them to abuse or exploitation. It is becoming good practice to think about how we always safeguard everyone in our organisations, including protecting staff from harm and inappropriate behaviour such as bullying and harassment." The phrase in the quote, 'do no harm' is something we want to emphasise. This is a guiding principle for all our safeguarding efforts in an international sphere. The word 'everyone' is also something we should take note of. This relates to who we're safeguarding. We're not just talking about project participants, but also our trustees, and anyone who is a stakeholder in our project.

Let's have a look at that in a bit more detail. We have an organisational duty to protect our beneficiaries, whether they are children or adults. That includes beneficiaries who have both direct and indirect contact with our organisational projects. Direct contact includes anyone who is physically in the presence of our workers and interacts with them. It also

includes talking directly to somebody on the phone or online, which might feel like indirect contact, but is still considered direct contact. Indirect contact is having access to an individual's personal data, for example, their images, stories, or quotes. It includes communicating through a third party as well as speaking on behalf of an individual beneficiary. People can still be harmed when their personal information and images are used. So, when we use the phrase 'beneficiary' throughout this training, we want to make sure we understand the many different forms that can take.

We're using the definition of a child as described in the almost universally ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which is any person under the age of 18. The definition of a vulnerable adult or, as we more commonly now use in the UK, an adult at risk of harm is any person 18 or over who is or maybe in need of care and support because of their age, gender, disability, sexuality, economic or political status, and as a result of these things, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk or experience of neglect or abuse.

But it's not just our beneficiaries that we need to protect. We also need to ensure that our workers; paid staff, trustees and volunteers are kept safe from harm, as well as all who come into contact with the charity. That could include our donors, those who visit the field, our partner projects, and our consultants.

What's understood by safeguarding in the UK and in the international context can be two very different things. In the UK, we generally mean child protection and the welfare of adults at risk of harm. We have a duty to protect people accessing our services and to respond appropriately if we become aware of abuse or neglect happening to them. In the international context, however, historically the focus been much more on the risks that the organisation poses to its beneficiaries rather than taking a broader view that our safeguarding responsibilities apply to everyone who's in and around our organisation. The reason international safeguarding has a sharper focus on risk posed by organisations to beneficiaries is related to two phrases commonly referred to in international work. We can't

talk about safeguarding in an international context without understanding the following acronyms.

- SEAH: sexual exploitation and harassment, and
- PSEA: protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Safeguarding internationally has been defined in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse because of the long-term, widespread sexual abuse of local children and vulnerable adults that has been perpetrated by foreign and local humanitarian workers. And that has tainted the entire sector. Sexual abuse by peacekeepers gained widespread notice in the 1990s. It prompted the UN Secretary General's bulletin in 2003, which talked of a zero-tolerance policy for aid workers and peacekeepers who perpetrated abuse. This is still a key piece of international guidance today.

SEAH, or sexual exploitation and abuse and harassment is still a huge issue for the sector. I'm sure we can all think of some recent high-profile scandals, one of which we're going to look at as a case study since it gives us a good example of things that

went wrong and how the organisation ultimately responded well to the findings of an investigation and sought to change its culture. Sexual exploitation and abuse aren't about attraction, but about perpetrators being able to misuse their positions of trust with impunity. The abuse often happens to those who do not have the ability to disclose it, or for whom disclosing the abuse would likely have significant negative effects.

Perpetrators in this context exploit the extreme vulnerabilities of the people they're supposed to be serving. Protecting beneficiaries from sexual exploitation and abuse - or PSEA - is a priority area of safeguarding for many international organisations. 'First tier partners' or organisations that receive funding from the foreign commonwealth and development office or the FCDO for example, will have to evidence compliance to certain standards in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse if they want to receive funding. They then go on to expect the same standards from their downstream partners.

We'll talk more about these downstream partners and what that looks like for the organisations you're representing here later in this session when we discuss the realities of partnership. Often there are complex supply chains involved, which is where standards can be overlooked, or where things might get missed. It is also important to note that while much of the abuse we consider in the international sphere focuses on sexual abuse, abuse isn't limited to sexual acts. We also want to make sure we're keeping everyone safe from other types of abuse. There are four main categories of abuse that apply both to children and adults that can be remembered by thinking about 'pens': Physical, emotional/psychological, neglect and sexual.

Legal frameworks

The 2018 'House of Commons International Development Committee on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in the Aid Sector' report highlighted several factors that have allowed sexual exploitation and abuse to persist. They found primarily that the lack of robust safeguarding cultures and responses to allegations of abuse were two of the main culprits. Regardless

of the size and scope of our organisation, we need robust safeguarding cultures and practices so that we respond well to concerns. Keeping people safe, or 'doing no harm' must be at the heart of all our international work.

The latest update to that report goes on to say that evidence has shown that in some parts of the aid sector, discriminatory attitudes can stifle progress rather than tackling the problem. The entrenched power imbalances make it almost impossible for aid beneficiaries to challenge aid providers, so aid beneficiaries need to be empowered and involved more directly in our safeguarding activities at every stage to help offset these power imbalances. We advocate for approaches to tackling sexual abuse and exploitation that engage local populations and prioritise support for victims and survivors.

Clearly, there is work for us to do – both in what we do and communicating that well. Knowing what organisations' commitments are enables beneficiaries to hold those organisations to account. We'll come back to this in more detail

later, but consider whether your beneficiaries or people that have contact with your projects and charities know the standards that you're supposed to be working to. If they don't, how can they make sure these standards are been outworked?

Many smaller churches sending teams or individuals infrequently, or those partnering with an overseas project, wouldn't necessarily identify themselves as working in the international development sector. But that's exactly what they are doing. When we overlook this distinction, we're potentially leaving those we're trying to help at far greater risk of harm. It's foolish to think that faith-based organisations operating internationally will be immune from any such issues. For example, you may have heard of Richard Huckle from Ashford in Kent, who was killed in his prison cell in 2020. He posed as a Christian missionary, a teacher and philanthropist in poor Christian communities in Kuala Lumpur in Asia. When arrested, he admitted an unprecedented 71 offenses, including rapes against young children aged between six months and 12 years old, between the years 2006 and 2014. He even wrote a

manual about how to gain access to the most vulnerable

children, which was made available to other abusers on the

dark web. It is extremely hard to hear an account like this. But it

can also hopefully serve to drive us forward to ensure that

we're doing all we can to keep people safe.

Let's turn to another recent issue that made the headlines in

2018/2019, and that's the situation with Oxfam. Reports of

sexual abuse by top staff working in Haiti and Chad became

known, there was an investigation. The Charity Commission

inquiry noted the following five issues:

1) Lack of transparency,

2) Lack of healthy culture,

3) That the workforce was not empowered or confident

enough to challenge poor behaviours.

4) The workforce didn't have the necessary confidence in

management and systems for reporting concerns,

5) The risk to and the impact on the victims appeared to take second place at times and was not taken seriously enough.

That leads us to ask the question, what was taking the first place? What was the priority for Oxfam? The report goes on to state: "The impression the inquiry has is that Oxfam GB's handling of the accusations was influenced by a desire to protect Oxfam GB's reputation, and to protect donor and stakeholders relationships."

The five key principles we can take away from this are, firstly, victims/survivors should come first. Secondly, that an intentional ongoing commitment to - and communication - about safeguarding is vital. Thirdly, organisational culture and behaviour is essential. Number four, empowering our workers and beneficiaries to speak out is vital. And finally, we must have a robust process for responding to concerns.

We're going to be looking at all of these five learning points throughout the course. One positive aspect to take away from

this is that Oxfam didn't shy away from the critical findings and worked hard to implement the suggested changes. While they were initially prevented from applying for UK aid funding, the statutory supervision of Oxfam by the Charity Commission was lifted in February 2021 after Oxfam implemented the large majority of the 100 recommendations prompted by the inquiry.

Unfortunately, there has since been another concern around Oxfam staff and their conduct in the Dominican Republic of Congo, with whistleblowers expressing frustration about the length of time the organisation has taken to respond to safeguarding concerns. Again, Oxfam GB's ability to apply for funding was suspended whilst the allegations were investigated, four workers were dismissed in this case for misconduct, sexual misconduct, bullying and intimidation. But this evidences just how hard it is for multinational organisations to create genuinely healthy safeguarding cultures in a consistent way across all our operations. It also tells us that safeguarding is something we'll always be seeking to review and improve. It's not a destination, it's a journey.

One of the victims/survivors said this: "We were tired of Oxfam not taking any action about our concerns and complaints that we've been raising for years." A whistleblower who worked for Oxfam in (the) Dominican Republic of Congo told The New Humanitarian why they were motivated to write the letter to the Oxfam chiefs: "...none of us wanted it to come to this. We believe in the organisation's work. And we're sad to say their reputation is at stake here and largely due to the organisational culture, and the people at the top." This was published online in 2021.

What are some of the challenges of safeguarding internationally?

One major challenge identified in our research was the cultural differences in the understanding of child protection and safeguarding, and practices in the international context.

Cultural differences.

Globally, there are different understandings of what constitutes abuse. To understand the weight and significance of these differences, we need to truly understand local beliefs, cultures

and practices. Regardless of our culture or origin or the 'rightness' of our motivations, we need to accept that we're not going to change a nation's culture in a short space of time. So, bear in mind that there will be different goals for people in long-term versus short-term roles. We need to be clear about acceptable or unacceptable standards for workers, both international workers and local workers. If we made it clear that we do not expect workers to hurt children, and we see a worker hitting their own child or a beneficiary, we can respond with more confidence than if that expectation hadn't been made clear in the first place. We can work with the individual around why the expectations weren't met. In practical terms, we want to keep a record of how we communicated the standards and what we consider a satisfactory outcome to be. In an ideal world, a satisfactory outcome takes into consideration the welfare of everyone involved, satisfies the local safeguarding requirements and satisfies UK requirements. It's not always possible to achieve all three, but the right preparation before events occur make it far more likely. In this scenario, if you're

registered as a UK charity, you would potentially want to file a serious incident report with the charity regulator if the child had been badly injured.

Safeguarding children's rights might be seen as a Global North concept, and there's often pushback when we teach children about their rights without teaching them about their responsibilities. This is something we want to be particularly sensitive towards. We also need to remember that the abuser may be the sole provider. An example of this is when an uncle is paying for his niece's education. Therefore, he feels the right to abuse her because she's effectively his property, and this goes unchallenged by the girl's family. Fundamentally, the needs of the family may be the higher priority to everyone involved than the abuse. So, meeting the basic need another way, may need to be our starting point rather than beginning by challenging the abuse.

There are also conflicting priorities of different rights, e.g., the interpretation of rights, for example, around child marriage. An

early marriage may guarantee security for the elderly family members. In this situation, while we may have strong feelings and be able to point to international conventions, we should also accept that the question for the culture we're working in may be 'who has the greater right - the child or the elder?'. In the instance of child marriage, the right to an education is often overlooked. It's also worth noting that it was only in March 2023, that child marriage, or the marriage of 16 and 17 year olds with parental consent became illegal within the UK. So we need to be careful about being judgmental.

Another cultural difference we need to be sensitive towards is that theological understanding can differ in different cultural contexts. For example, physical chastisement can be seen as being biblical and the degree and frequency will have different interpretations. There can be harmful practices, or child abuse linked to faith and belief that we need to be aware of. There's a lot of information on the national FGM Centre website, and they have some good resources about what this looks like and what the harmful practices are. This website is primarily geared

towards a UK audience, but it would be very applicable to the context many of you are working in. There's also the Stop Child Witchcraft Accusations [SCWA] website, which is a coalition of individuals and organisations working to end child abuse that happens at the hands of the church, or other faith leaders. These are very complex subjects.

Local legislation also might not offer adequate protection and there's a risk that the report may fall into the hands of corrupt officials. The key principle to consider when making decisions of this nature is 'do no harm', but you also have a duty to weigh up the risks to the alleged perpetrators. In some cultures, if an individual is accused of abusing a child, the community won't wait for legal processes to take place, but will seek swift retribution. We advised an organisation on our helpline recently. The alleged perpetrator of child sexual abuse was a missionary. After discussing all the facts, the sending organisation concluded that there was a significant risk of harm or death for the alleged perpetrator, who was therefore repatriated to his country of origin where the matter was fully

reported to both law enforcement and charity regulator. The organisation will continue to support the victim and their family long term.

The Charity Commission recognises that we might not be able to report things locally, but they do expect us to evidence why our actions were in the best interest of the victim, why they were reasonable and justified, and how we sought to minimise risks for all concerned.

We should also remember that UK policies do not always readily transfer to other international contexts. We need to be working in a culturally competent way and constantly reviewing the processes we have.

Another key challenge is power imbalances - the donor-recipient relationships and the compliance that's sometimes linked to funding. Often the beneficiaries of the organisation don't feel empowered to report abuse in case that triggers funds to be withdrawn and may even attempt to cover up abuses. It's a larger scale version of the uncle who pays for his

niece's education. This is where our due diligence and relationship with our partners are key. The Foreign and Commonwealth and Development Office, formerly the DFID, have produced guidance around due diligence with partners in relation to safeguarding. Again, these are signposted in your handbook.

It would be fantastic if we were able to offer a nice solution to each of these challenges. The reality is we don't have all the answers. No one does. We probably wouldn't be able to reach consensus on culturally based theological interpretations in the next 50 years, let alone in our session today. But what is important is that we're committed to conversation and to learning to work collaboratively.

Let's turn briefly to the legal frameworks that will inform all of the work that you're doing in an international context. We don't expect you to be experts in this field, but it's helpful to know that everything that we're talking about over this course is underpinned by legal requirements. We are going to draw your

attention to a couple of the key international conventions that you should be aware of and when talking about safeguarding our child protection policies with international partners, you might want to draw on these internationally recognized expectations. Examples can be seen in your handbook as well.

Firstly, there is the UDHR, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is from 1948 and was a milestone document in the history of human rights. It was drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world. As a common standard for all people in all nations, it sets out for the first time the fundamental human rights that should be universally protected, and so far this agreement or convention has been translated into 500 languages.

Another one you may have heard of is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All countries have ratified this, apart from the USA. Even though governments have mostly ratified this treaty, the concept of child rights is not necessarily accepted in all cultures. Some cultures have objected to this leading to

children being taught about their rights, and feel that children have become cheeky as a result. They suggest that children should learn about their responsibilities alongside learning about their rights. Even when countries have signed up to these international standards, the compliance and local practices vary widely. In some regions, there may even be specialist conventions. For example, in the Middle East, the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights is a convention based on Sharia law and therefore the definitions used may be very different to those that we recognise.

Another couple of conventions that you may want to look up are the Convention Against Torture, and the European Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, also known as the Istanbul Convention of 2011.

Turning to the UK, if your organisation is registered as a UK, charity, or receives funding from the UK then as well as operating under international conventions, there's also UK law that you need to be aware of. Again, you don't need to know all

of these details, it's enough to know that you are operating in a regulatory environment where these things do exist, and they provide the legal framework that we have to work within. It's also worth noting that these laws affect the culture of the UK, and people who work within them will also – to some degree - internalise them whether they're conscious or not. Our familiarity with them makes them 'normal'. In contexts where the legal frameworks are different, it's important to recognise that we are the product of our social, historical and legal framework as much as others are a product of theirs.

Let's look at some of the relevant UK laws:

- 1989 and 2004: Children's Act

- 2003: Sexual Offences Act

- 2005: we have the Mental Capacity Act for England (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have variations on this. But the essence is that if an adult has mental capacity, we must allow them choice. If they lack mental

capacity, then we have to make sure protect them and seek additional provisions on their behalf).

- 2006: Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups

There's also nation-specific advice. It's worth looking at the 2020 Disclosure Scotland Bill, the 2007 Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Northern Ireland Order, the 2014 Care Act [England and Wales], the 2007 Support and Protection Scotland Act and the 2015 Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership Act.

In a nutshell, you need to have a basic understanding of the laws in every context that you're operating in. That may be a regional difference within the UK, an international convention, a local or national law in the overseas context you're working with, and/or a combination of several of these.

Most sectors in the UK are highly regulated, and when we are working in an international context, often we're seeking to operate in jurisdictions with little regulation or laws that are inconsistently enforced. That automatically creates a

disconnect between our UK context and a non-UK one. In the Global North, our laws usually take a 'top down' approach to safeguarding. Legislation is passed and organisations then seek to implement it to comply with regulators and, to operate more safely. While we need to integrate international legislation and UK laws into the work we're doing, we might need to rethink our approach to safeguarding in cultures where a 'ground-up' safeguarding approach is more common and effective. It may be uncomfortable for us if our comfort zone is working in a top-down model. But whether we take a top-down approach or a ground up approach, we need to be self-reflective and challenge ourselves. If we identify any areas where we are imposing our way of working on other cultures, we want to confront and change that approach.

It's important to be aware that even among countries that are located in the Global North, there are some very different cultures and worldviews and this will influence the perspective of sending organisations from those nations. For example, the US has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

and different states within the US also have different laws – once again, these cultures and laws will change what is considered to be normal and acceptable behaviour for people from these regions.

UK Charity regulator guidance:

What is the governance structure in your organisation? It's an important question to ask in any of the different contexts that we may be working in. Answering this question will help us determine where accountability lies and for what we're responsible. You might know the phrase 'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility', which can be a great way to encourage ownership of safeguarding processes throughout an organisation. But the legal responsibility lies with the trustees. Safeguarding is a governance issue, and all board members can be held responsible for the actions of the workplace and associated personnel. Because of this, we do recommend that trustees get safeguarding training.

The UK charity regulators offer clear information and guidance around working in an international context. They expect charities operating in an overseas context to endeavour to uphold the same practices and standards as they would if working in the UK. They also expect charities to take reasonable steps to ensure all of their partners also uphold these practices and standards to the fullest extent possible. If you're working in partnership, it's up to you to carry out due diligence checks on your partner organisations, safeguarding processes, and ensure clear partnership agreements that detail the expectations are in place. If something goes wrong, the trustees will be held to account for how that relationship was set up, what due diligence was done, and how the partnership was supposed to serve the aims of the charity. Global Connections, which is the UK network for world missions have a code of best practice for international church partnership that you might find useful.

The UK charity regulators also say that charities should be able to evidence reasonable steps taken to safeguard those

impacted by the organisation. The riskier the activities of the organisation, the higher the effort to safeguard should be. This is an important distinction to make. The regulators recognise some of the amazing humanitarian work being undertaken by charities occurs in high-risk situations. Charity regulators are not risk averse, but they are risk alert and they expect us to be as well.

The guidance goes on to say that the regulators recognise it may not be possible in all contexts to uphold the same standards. For example, where there is police corruption and reports of abuse, reporting could increase the risk to the victim rather than minimise. It is possible to make a decision not in line with best practice in the UK, but you must be able to explain why taking that decision was a reasonable and justifiable course of action, and how it protected the beneficiary and was in the best interests of them and the charity. Such decisions need to be carefully documented so if that decision is challenged, the process can be evidenced. If you are taking such decisions, you should also evidence what additional steps

were considered and taken to ensure that risks were removed or minimised.

If a serious incident occurred in connection with your charity's work overseas, it would still need to be reported to all relevant authorities in the UK, even if you decide for whatever reason not to report it overseas. This includes submitting a serious incident report to your charity regulator, you may also need to inform your insurance company and it might be appropriate to inform social care or the police depending on who was involved. This would always be the case where a British national or a person with a claim to British residency has committed, or potentially committed, child sexual abuse or exploitation overseas. You should report this to the National Crime Agency in the UK, usually via the local police station.

Challenges to safeguarding in an international context.

The pandemic has caused the young and those with hidden vulnerabilities to become even more vulnerable, and at risk of harm or abuse on a vast scale. Many countries were ill

equipped for the challenges that came in 2020 and post-covid. Statistics tell us that the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on those our overseas charities are working alongside. In times of crisis, our safeguarding awareness policies and practices are even more important than usual. During the pandemic, there has been an estimated 85 million additional cases of child abuse, 1.5 billion children were out of school and there's been increased incidences of child marriage. There's evidence of a significant increase in gender-based violence and domestic abuse, as well as increased sexual exploitation and trafficking (the references for these statistics are in your handbook).

Within your organisation, there may be internal challenges as well. When the pandemic happened, many mission staff were furloughed, and there's been delays and a reduced number of workers going back into their overseas context as compared with before the pandemic. There's been a lack of field visits, which has reduced accountability, or 'eyes on', and a decrease in funding. In some cases, this funding drop has been dramatic.

We've developed our use of technology, meaning that online global meetings, conferences and training are now the norm. While technology brings many benefits to cross-border working, it also brings new safeguarding challenges. We need to be just as vigilant when operating online as we do when we're operating in physical spaces.

We recently heard from an organisation who used the lockdowns as an opportunity to re-evaluate and change the focus of one area of their ministry. Previously they had run afterschool outreach clubs for children and young people in the community. When the lockdown started, they were able to visit the children's homes, offering support and doing brief doorstep visits. This meant that they engaged with the wider family. They now work with whole families. Other organisations have reported greater opportunities for increased partnership working, with local law enforcement or statutory agencies now providing vital services to vulnerable beneficiaries. Before that communities were quite resistant to 'official' involvement.

The international context we're working with brings many challenges, but it also comes with significant opportunities. We want to make sure we embrace those opportunities in safe and collaborative ways.

Module Two preventative safeguarding.

This module broadly looks at three areas; 1) policies and procedures, 2) safer recruitment and 3) cultural competence.

When we're creating policies that work in a non-UK context or multiple locations, it can be helpful to have a framework. We also need to think about the specific context. Is this a partnership agreement between a UK organisation and 'downstream partner' or the UK organisation's international policy? Is it a head office policy that needs to be shared with different field offices and therefore needs to allow room for local contextualisation? How do we ensure appropriate local context while maintaining a consistent message across the whole organisation? These aren't easy questions to answer. Organisations that have multiple partners in different overseas

locations will need to consider an umbrella policy and then a policy template for each partner to complete. If you send workers and volunteers to an overseas partner or an umbrella organisation, you also need to know what their safeguarding policy is, how your people will be safeguarded, and how they should respond if they have a safeguarding concern or receive a disclosure or allegation. You also need to be clear how that organisation will respond if there is an allegation against anyone that you've sent, and then you need to be clear how you respond to that allegation.

The policy needs to accurately reflect the activities of the organisation or partnership. A significant way this is achieved is to spend time in dialogue, or we could call this 'spend time listening.' When developing a shared understanding with international partners, be prepared for a lengthy dialogue in order to build trust and avoid imposing western norms into non-western contexts.

Take time to listen, we need to be mindful that some organisations will agree with what we're saying simply because they're reliant on funding or support. We need to that we start the dialogue open to hearing what that say, rather than with a preconceived idea with of what they need, or what we intend to offer.

Find and agree the appropriate terminology. For example, 'protection from harm' might be something your partners are more comfortable with than 'safeguarding'. If you're working in a context where 'safeguarding' is a meaningless term, and if appropriate and you're working in Christian context, explain your biblical convictions with others and listen to their faith and belief systems agreeing what to do with the differences. Where are the red lines that the organisation is not willing to cross? Thirtyone:eight has a document about the theology of safeguarding which can be helpful, because many of the same faith principles are shared even when the cultural outworking may look different.

It can also be helpful to draw from international conventions and local instruments. For example, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. Make sure you consider what influences the community you work with, for example, a tribe in the Amazon won't necessarily be concerned what's been said in Brasilia, the local laws will be the determining factor. But you might need to work within both the local laws and the national ones. It can be tricky to navigate this but do look for local connections and the people that have already started this journey in some ways. It might be that that's a medical organisation or an educational organisation that's previously done a lot of this work. Explain your responsibilities as a UK charity to your 'downstream partners', i.e., that you have responsibilities in the UK as well as locally where the work takes place. Clarify the expectations of everyone concern. And remember that partners are the experts in their context.

The policies and procedures provide a framework for good safe practice, but it must be underpinned by a healthy culture. Think back to the Oxfam situation - the policy was good, but it didn't

translate to practice. It is helpful to examine this link between policy and practice: Is the policy fit for purpose? Does it actually achieve what it should i.e., keeping people safe and 'doing no harm'?

On a practical level, your policy should include the leaders' and the trustees' commitment to safeguarding. This might be your safeguarding statement, and it will include your zero-tolerance policy for harassment, bullying, and sexual exploitation and abuse, including what the consequences for breaching these is.

Safeguarding policy.

This document should include the details of the organisation and its activities, international laws and the standards that underpin the policies. It should include the local context and laws, the procedures for reporting concerns and allegations. For example, how reports can be raised and who they should be raised to, as well as details about how the organisation will respond to concerns, a clearer safer recruitment process for all, and a commitment to training workers and volunteers. There

should also be the date of this policy plus the date of the next review - the Charity Commission guidance is that safeguarding policies are reviewed and agreed by trustees annually.

Depending on your context, the policy will need to be translated, and also consider accessibility. Do any of your beneficiaries struggle with literacy? Do you need pictorial or easy read versions? Do we need other languages or formats, such as Braille or minority dialects?

Your policy should not be pages and pages long, approximately four pages should do it. But then you can have supplementary procedures that outline how the things in the policy get done in practice. For example, how you intend to do your safer recruitment, and the annexes with related forms and templates. If the policy itself is too long, people won't read it.

Once the policy is written, it doesn't mean everything will be perfect. Consider adding an implementation plan to ensure that the policy does not just stay on a shelf - who will do what and when to ensure that the policy has been implemented in

practice? This might include a safeguarding working group or a task force and a training plan.

Also build in your monitoring mechanisms as you go forward. Ask yourself whether the policy works. Is it fit for purpose? Does it keep people safe? And how do you know? If you need a springboard to start you on this process, the Bond website have a safeguarding policy template you can adapt.

What other policies might you need alongside your safeguarding policy? Here are some that we would suggest:

1) Whistle-blowing policy. These are particularly important in an international context. There needs to be a clear commitment to whistle-blowers to ensure that there are no repercussions because of their genuine reporting. Remember, we are coming from a jurisdiction where there are protections for whistle-blowers, where we are working is much more likely that whistle-blowers may face losing their jobs or other serious life implications.

2) Human Resource policy,

3) Gifts and bribes policy,

4) Bullying and harassment policy, a complaints policy,

5) Code of conduct,

6) Anti-fraud and corruption policy,

7) Anti bullying and harassment policy,

8) Safety and security policy,

9) Use of IT policy,

10) Media guideline, data protection, or the use of images or personal data, etc. policy,

11) Conflicts of interest policy.

There are others that will be specific to your tasks or organisations, for example, it may be that you need to consider safe programming policy.

Ensure that all these policies are in line with the safeguarding policy – often, the safeguarding policy will be newer or more regularly reviewed than the other policies, but there needs to coherence across them all. The safeguarding policy is of paramount importance. This will reduce risk of harm to

beneficiaries. The benefit of making sure your policies are consistent is that when people refer to any of the policies, they will see that consistent approach that always prioritises safeguarding, and 'doing no harm'.

Safeguarding measures should span all organisational activity when there is a direct or indirect contact with people. Remember, we talked about if you're managing somebody's images or stories, which is considered indirect contact as is any activity which includes fundraising, communication, and recruitment. We really need to get into the mindset that safeguarding should be factored in at every stage of our organisation's work and informs all elements of what we do.

A small piece of research was done with people prior to going overseas. Of those who took part in this study, under half had been through a formal recruitment process, or signed a code of conduct, or receive safeguarding training specific to the field they were going to be working in. These findings suggest that there is a need for enhanced awareness of safer recruitment

processes for sending organisations who are engaging in overseas work. One individual said there was no application process as "we're independent missionaries." Smaller organisations were identified as being a potential risk because of these informal ways of working. And that feeling is normal – there is the sense that as smaller organisations we do not have the resource to invest into safer recruitment, or safeguarding policies and procedures. But consider a church who partners with project overseas and takes teams out regularly. Does anyone know if the host organisation allows the worker to spend time with children unsupervised? Consider this scenario: A visiting team member, who is a senior paediatrician offers to help a local clinic and suggests seeing the children one-to-one. The local clinic will likely be thrilled to have an experienced medic on the team. But how have we actively safeguarded either the beneficiaries in that scenario, or the doctor who could now find themselves accused of inappropriate behaviour. Similarly, think about a builder on a team who offers to go and repair a leak in one of the children's bedroom where they are

alone with the child. Can you see how quickly and easily exceptions can be made. When we aren't clear about what the rules are governing our behaviours in the international context. It's very easy for power, or perceived power to be manipulated.

Growing our awareness is a good place to start – knowing where the risks lie, what cultural or legal parameters we're working within and an accurate knowledge of the lived realities of our beneficiaries will help us identify where the 'gaps' are. Once we have that, we can both allocate the resources we already have more intentionally and be aware of what additional resources we might need to source. This is a helpful exercise for any organisation - regardless of size or scope. Before we send workers overseas, or starts to work in partnership internationally, is key that we're considering the voice and perspective of the receiving organisation. We must work together to clarify and manage expectations, to understand our host's aims and support them.

Key principle number five of the International Audit tool that we mentioned earlier will help smaller organisations who send workers for short-term visits to weigh up how these trips benefit the receiving or host organisation. Some of us will have experienced how powerfully short-term missions can impact us as the ones 'visiting', but it is worth remembering that this perspective is based on our power, our privilege, and our choice. Have we considered the benefits or burden that our visit may have been to the host or the beneficiaries of the project?

We need to risk assess all trips and activities. It is a responsibility for organisations – regardless of size – to risk assess appropriately. Most charities will have a risk register that outlines all manner of risks. Safeguarding is a significant one of those. A risk can be described as something that exposes someone to danger or harm. And a risk assessment is a process of evaluating the dangers that may occur when undertaking an activity. Risks are identified, then measured. To identify how we can reduce the risk, we've included a risk assessment template table in the handbook.

Safer recruitment.

When UK organisations, large or small, send workers and volunteers to the field for short- or long-term visits, including for sponsorship or donor visits, UK safer recruitment practices should be followed. It's also important when recruiting local workers that safer recruitment practices are followed – this is key principle three in the international audit tool. We have a safer recruitment webinar that goes into much greater detail, but let's cover the essential steps you should follow if you're sending workers overseas:

If you're partnering with local organisations overseas, part of your due diligence should be to understand how you/they recruit people safely.

You should also consider the power imbalances when you're in-country recruiting local workers. For example, a local woman applied for a job during the Ebola outbreak in the Dominican Republic of Congo. Desperate to feed her family, she was told to meet a doctor for an interview at the local hotel. When she

arrived, it was clear that she would need to have sex with him and stay silent if she wanted the job. There may well have been problems with the organisation's recruitment processes that need addressing, but how also could the applicant had been empowered to know what to expect to interview, and how to complain when things were not as she'd been led to believe? Another survivor in a similar situation made the comment that 'they hired you with their eyeballs'. Rapid recruitment, which takes place in emergency response situations has heightened risks, which need mitigation strategies. The misconduct disclosure scheme was set up in January 2019 to attempt to stop aid workers switching between agencies after findings of misconduct.

The features of a robust safer recruitment process are:

1) Job descriptions, role descriptions or person specification. Let people know what traits you're looking for and what they can reasonably expect to be doing.

2) Application forms. You want to understand a person's motivation for wanting to go. Include information about the importance of safeguarding at this stage.

3) References: Do you have a clear criterion for selection references? These can only be meaningful if the role is clearly outlined to the referee so they can assess suitability.

4) Interviews. Again, be clear what kind of person and skill sets you're looking for and communicate the realities of what they'll be doing and the boundaries that will be in place.

5) Background checks. This is part of the process that works in conjunction with all others, it's not a standalone. Ensure that the right level of check is applied. If the background check is being done in the UK, be aware that eligibility is complex. You can call our helpline for disclosure advice.

Don't allow the applicant to start until the checks and the references are received back. And if workers are coming from different nations, you should check the resources around

obtaining overseas criminal records, contract or volunteer agreement. Again, these principles should be outworked at all levels, including for donors and sponsors visits. Sending organisations may also want to consider the mental fitness of an individual to go and serve. If a psychological assessment is to be part of the recruitment process, that should be clearly stated upfront. It should also be considered as a question that you asked the referees and interview.

What other aspects of safer recruitment should we been considering? First, the code of conduct; this should consider your international safeguarding standards and expectations. It should outline very specifically the behavioural standards and expectations of the sending organisation. But it should also be written in partnership with all your stakeholders, especially those from the context the work is going to take place in, and take account of their expectations in the cultural norms. For example, let's consider dress codes. When I worked in Thailand, as a sign of respect local people had for the then king, on Mondays most of the nation would wear yellow. So,

one of the things that was developed in partnership with the locals that we worked with was that we would wear a different pale-yellow version of the uniform every Monday. It still identified us as workers for the charity, but it also showed a level of cultural awareness and respect. Another aspect that we had to take into consideration was it was okay to show legs, but in Thai culture, it's rude to show your shoulders. So, the dress code included that we expected our staff and volunteers to wear clothes that covered the shoulders at any time they were working or in formal settings. Your dress code should be informed by your context and feature in your code of conduct. The organisation's activities will also dictate what's covered in your code of conduct.

Bond also have an excellent example of a code of conduct which can be found with their other safeguarding policy templates. The parameters for taking and sharing photos and videos on social media should be clearly stated. In some instances, for example, if you're working with an underground church, it is critical that images are not shared. It might be

entirely appropriate to insist that images are only taken on an organisation's device and not a personal once. GPS might need to be manually switched off to protect vulnerable people and their location from being identified.

We should also be clear about our boundaries for communication with beneficiaries, including, are our workers allowed to interact with them on social media? We should also be clear with our workers – paid or unpaid – that sharing personal information with beneficiaries such as phone numbers is not okay.

We should understand that the requirement to constantly 'retell' can retraumatise people. When we ask people who've confided the experience of harm or abuse to us to retell their stories multiple times, we can increase the trauma to them. This is another aspect that we might want to represent in our code of conduct – how do you manage and communicate concerns internally?

Consider the following example for the code of conduct. We undertook a safeguarding audit for a large international charity, who had been sending groups of volunteers overseas to visit projects with children. Volunteers would often come back and feedback to their church and other groups. A whistle-blower alerted the charity to the fact that one particular volunteer was taking multiple trips to one particular project and sharing information and images with churches completely independently. On looking back at the records, the organisation could see that their expectations had never been clearly articulated to the team. The volunteer's social media pages also featured a number of concerning images. The charity acted quickly to speak with the volunteer to try to get a written agreement in place. And when this didn't happen, the charity their overseas partner to explain the individual was no longer operating under the umbrella of their organisation and encouraged them to ensure measures were put in place so that all independent visitors weren't allowed to work alone with their beneficiaries. They were also able to improve their pre-trip

preparation for workers to ensure that anyone going into their overseas context was clear about the boundaries that had been agreed. This situation serves to highlight important issue of accountability.

Volunteer handbooks and a pre-trip briefing should contain information about safeguarding, and who to report concerns to – both on the field and within the sending organisation. This should include reporting any concerns about the behaviour of anybody involved in the work.

So that's the code of conduct. What about other elements of the workers' experience, this can easily be overlooked. Workers from the Global North to the Global South or vice versa may expect culture shock and differences, but they often underestimate another aspect that you will often come across in diverse teams. How do we respond when those we share similar characteristics with behave in ways we feel aren't acceptable? We need to be clear about what to workers should

do when they observe concerning behaviours between or from another member of the team.

Personal versus organisational responses.

Remember, the onus is not just on the organisation that's sending the individual, but both the charity and the individual have a responsibility to prepare adequately. The receiving or host organisation has a significant role to play in this preparation work and should be fully included in the process. Proper preparation and setting of expectations can prevent harm ever occurring.

Ongoing support and supervision.

Those involved in both short- and long-term international work should know how to access support in the field and at home and be clear about arrangements for supervision and accountability.

Safer recruitment images and data.

The UK fundraising code states the organisation shouldn't use emotive language or bombard the public with distressing

images when raising funds. Think back to fundraising campaigns in the 80s and 90s – you may remember those heart-wrenching images that did communicate the weight of the situation but wasn't overly dignifying or empowering. Thankfully, we see charities using those kinds of images to raise funds less and less. In Ireland, some organisations have signed up to the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages which outlines good practice in this area. They state that children and adults should be fully informed of the reasons their data and images are being collected, where they're going to be used, who will have access to them. Those three areas are called informed consent. We really want to make sure we adopt informed consent in our practices.

Consider the respect and dignity of the individuals concerned.

Save the Children did some research in this area and asked the children their views. One respondent said "I don't feel safe when foreigners approach me and take photographs of me."

Consider as well, that consent can be withdrawn at any time.

How would they do that? Agree time limits with the participant ahead of time and let them know how to reach out if they want their images to stop being used sooner. You need to include the individuals involved throughout the process. What do they want their outcome to be? What power imbalances or cultural context do we need to consider? For example, the villagers want to be polite to the visitors. So they say yes to photos, even if they're not comfortable. Parents force the child to smile for the international NGO photographer in fear that they won't receive their support if they don't agree. Even when we have consent, posting images and information means photos can be manipulated, shared or used without consent for the purposes that they weren't originally intended for, and beyond our organisation's control. If there are any risks involved in taking or using the images, then a risk assessment should be undertaken. We have an organisational duty to put in place measures to reduce any risk of harm.

Let's consider the signs of cultural competence or the training that we need for cultural competence if we're safeguarding in

international contexts. Cultural competence does necessarily mean moving from one culture or geographical context into another one. We need to be aware of some of the multiple barriers that we're crossing in this type of work. Training on different cultures is a part of this. Consider how we recognise the signs and indicators of abuse. Any additional safeguarding considerations relevant to the culture we'll be working in should be highlighted. For example, things that wouldn't be covered as standard in the UK training, that might be prevalent locally. That might be the commercial exploitation of child labour, or traditional harmful practices of early or forced marriage. There needs to be a training program for all workers. And that means that all roles within the organisations, including the trustees who have legal responsibilities for safeguarding.

It includes safeguarding our workers, not just our beneficiaries. Do we send whole families? If so, we need to consider how do we prepare the entire family? On the receiving side - how do we best safeguard our workers' children, also known as

missionary or third culture kids? What about the project staff's kids?

We need to carefully identify what level of training is needed for what role and how frequently training should be refreshed. Usually, we recommend this as once every three years unless there's a change of role requiring a higher level of knowledge. And records, of course, should be kept of all the training that's been undertaken.

It can be difficult to find providers of cultural competence training for specific localities. In many organisations, both the sending and the host must take this on themselves. And the goal of it is to make sure that cross-border workers are made aware of the local etiquette, the cultural practices and values, then having some understanding of their own worldview may be the single most effective thing you can teach them.

Preparation for the field

This can be in document form or in conversation form. In additional to the code of conduct and pre-trip, we need to make sure that all workers know how to record and report concerns.

Make sure it's clear who the person they report to is. Is it somebody at the project base, or in the UK? Or is it on field in another context? Do they report to the sending organisation or the receiving organisation or both? And how should any concerns be recorded? And finally, if they're not happy with the response, do they know how can they escalate those concerns?

A final aspect of cultural competence is making sure that there's a debrief. A debrief reduces any sense of isolation, it helps to reintegrate workers to their local culture – their culture of origin – and it provides reassurance about normal difficulties, such as reverse culture shock, but it also gives you opportunity to identify and explore more serious difficulties. It shouldn't matter who you are in the organisation or how often you're

visiting the field, debrief is part of the process. We never outgrow the need for a debriefing, and different life circumstances can drastically impact our ability to deal with things that we previously took in our stride. So, think about who will undertake the debriefs; what experience and skills do they bring to this role? Good debriefs will have an operational and pastoral element.

The operational debrief is not confidential, and it looks to assess things like did our policies and procedures work in practice? Was the pre-trip preparation, training and field-support enough? These discussions and findings should feed back into organisational practices in the cycle of continued review, learning and improvement. The other side of the debrief is the pastoral aspect. This concerns individuals' experiences, and it operates within the normal confines of confidentiality. It is completely confidential unless something shared causes the person leading the debrief concern about the worker's safety, or the safety of someone else. It's not uncommon for missionaries to go out to the mission field with a subconscious

or conscious idea that they want change the world only to return to disillusioned and burned out as they've been unable to process and frame their experiences. When harm or abuse is identified, or for those working in particularly challenging contexts, it would be appropriate to make ongoing pastoral support or specialist counselling available.

Giving the receiving organisation the opportunity to share their experiences and suggest improvements should also be built into the debrief processes. The host organisation needs to be empowered and equipped to hold sending organisations to account. That's done through safeguarding, feedback and accountability, and the three of them are intrinsically linked. If you're part of a larger denomination or an umbrella organisation, then resources might be available centrally. There's more support and guidance in the signposting page of your handbook.

All these elements – the policies, the risk assessment, safer recruitment, preparation, debrief or codes of conduct are part of

our preventative safeguarding, minimising the risk of harm occurring in the first place.

Cultural competence in the wider sense isn't just how we unpack safeguarding, or how we debrief, but it's also more than language skills and awareness of cultural differences. It has four separate elements.

1) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview.

2) Developing a positive attitude toward cultural differences.

3) Gaining knowledge and understanding of different cultural practices and worldviews.

4) Cross-cultural skills.

The big question we can ask is how do we become culturally competent? Like the development of any skill, it's a process and it takes time, but cultural competence starts with humility, and being reflective about our own biases, privileges and cultural worldviews – the things we accept as normal and take for granted both positive and negative. For example, some worldviews highlight the rights of the individual, and others

focus much more on the importance of community over the individual. Seeking to genuinely understand the rationale and thought processes that sit behind the actions of others is an important part of culturally competent practice, particularly from a safeguarding point of view. We can't effectively tackle abuses if we don't see and understand the drivers behind the practices.

We may seek to impose our worldview on those we want to serve if we're not able to see things from their perspective. For example, it's easy to say FGM [female genital mutilation] is barbaric without seeing that for many it represents an important social construct and that parents feel like they are protecting their daughters. The ability to understand this perspective can genuinely empower and support grass roots community-led safeguarding initiatives rather than impose our standards. Does that change our ultimate approach to FGM? No, but does it change the tone of conversation we have with local communities.

That brings us to the end of session one. We look forward to seeing you again for session two.

Module Three - Responsive Safeguarding.

In this module, we're going to be looking at some barriers to responding.

If we are looking to build genuine partnerships, we must actively listen to what people are saying about the services that we're providing. Safeguarding concerns are sensitive and confidential, and therefore they need to be handled by those who have specialist training. However, when less serious concerns are raised and those things are dealt with well and in a timely manner, we increase the trust and confidence that people have that we will deal with the more serious matters appropriately.

In the same way, if suggestions and general feedback are shared with us and we don't respond well, it decreases trust in our system.

You may or may not heard of the website 'Everyone's Invited' campaign. It was started by a survivor of sexual abuse in school who wanted to create a platform for people to share their stories of abuse. Thousands of young people who hadn't previously reported their abuse came forward. Whilst this caused considerable issues, the availability of an anonymous system outside of the organisation the abuse occurred in gave people the freedom to share abuse that they otherwise wouldn't share.

We want to keep that in mind as we consider what barriers there are to reporting harm and abuse. We also need to acknowledge that the voice of the child is often undervalued or completely missing in the context of gathering feedback. Are we considering all of the beneficiaries or participants in our work? Are we unintentionally privileging people with status, or age or different social characteristic, and neglecting others who are perhaps more marginalised or considered to be more vulnerable? Think about how you can increase the opportunities for feedback from *all* partners in your context.

It's also helpful to be aware of where the harm may occur before we look at a framework for reporting, because our processes might differ depending on where the harm has occurred and our level of responsibility and oversight. For example, we wouldn't ignore an allegation of a child being hit in their family context, but we would definitely approach it very differently to how we'd respond if one of our employees had a child beneficiary of our organisation, for example. So, identifying harm in unfamiliar settings means that we consider whether the abuse is occurring within a family, within the wider community, or directly related to our organisation and the work that we're doing.

It's also worth considering what we have been given permission to do in the context we're operating in - we need to be respectful of the privilege we've been granted. And while we want to create safe environments across the board, we also need to consider what spheres of life we've actually been allowed to speak into.

In the UK, we usually use the terminology 'barrier to disclosing abuse' rather than reporting. But in an international context, it's easier to talk about reporting and inappropriate behaviour and abuse rather than disclosures. It's simply a more well-known term, which makes sense when you consider the history of abuse perpetrated by some workers of development agencies.

I want to draw your attention to the fact that barriers to reporting will be different for every individual. Think about children – perhaps they're in a culture where children are seen as lower on the social scale and have less of a voice. What's the difference between men and women in the local context? We need to acknowledge that the rates of abuse boys and men in general are much lower than for women and girls. But that in and of itself might be a barrier to men reporting. There might be a level of shame, or sense of 'unnaturalness' about a man experiencing abuse. Also, be aware that if you're working in a conflict zone, there is a much higher incidence of men and boys being victims of sexual abuse, where sexual violence is used as a weapon of war. People with disabilities who might not be

able to physically access the reporting mechanisms that you have in place if it's a physical location. Refugees may not want to discuss their experiences because of their precarious social standing in the geographical location, or feel they can't come forward because the risk of repercussions for them is far more significant than if you're in your home nation. Consider other marginalised groups. Maybe there's LGBTQ+ individual? Or if you're working in a country where there's a caste system in place, consider how that will impact the lived experience of sharing abuse or harm? And finally, for workers, some may fear reprisals or negative outcomes if they speak out, especially if the abuse is coming from somebody more senior than them within the organisation.

The barriers to reporting can also be divided into physical barriers and social barriers. This is not an exhaustive list and many of these things can co-occur and exacerbate one another. Let's start with physical barriers. This could be related to having a disability, perhaps you physically can't get to the main office where you can live to report the behaviour, perhaps

there's steps, or physical access is restricted because you can't leave the institution you're being cared for. It might be a language barrier. If, for example, like the refugees we mentioned earlier, you're not able to speak in the dominant language of the organisation.

Some barriers will be social, for example, if you are in a culture where victims are blamed, or there's impunity for perpetrators. That's a significant social barrier to reporting. Fear of not being believed is a major one in any context. A lack of safeguarding knowledge by trusted adults can lead them to dismiss abuse allegations. For example, if the child at the clinic we talked about before had made an allegation against a doctor visiting from the UK, would they have been believed? It's important that we teach safeguarding at every level, so that we know that children are aware of what's okay and what's not. We also need to make sure the adults that they disclose to are aware of the distinctions. Another social barrier to reporting is that there may beno proof that the abuse occurred.

Another one is a fear that confidentiality won't be honoured, or that lack of confidence in the systems. Local authorities or police may have issues with corruption, or the individual may have had negative experiences with them in the past. We already mentioned that for workers there may be a fear of reprisals – a loss of work, or perhaps increased violence, or the fear that something bad may happen to the perpetrator or their family.

Many countries have a culture of victim shaming – the UK is no exception to this. We want to create a culture that is intentional about our words and responses to avoid placing the blame on the person has experienced the abuse. The victim or survivor might assume that the organisation won't be receptive to the report. And finally, the social barrier might simply be that they don't know how to report or who to report to. Sometimes it can be as simple as they don't know what words to use to express what has happened to them.

The Department for International Development ran a research exercise that sought to listen to the voices of survivor/victims whose abuse and harassment had taken place in the international aid sector. One of the participants said this: "We were tired of Oxfam not taking any action about our concerns."

We acknowledge that the barriers to reporting are there, and they might be physical or social. We now need to identify ways we can overcome these barriers.

The first, and arguably most beneficial, way to raise awareness of what barrier to reporting abuses are most significant for your specific situation might be by running community focus groups, discussing societal norms that can be an obstacle for reporting. Think about gender-based violence that might be widely accepted as being normal behaviour. How can we encourage people to challenge that social norm? In facilitating these conversations, we are of course highlighting our own standards and that none of our workers should be engaging in those kinds of behaviour towards our beneficiaries as well.

We want to increase beneficiaries' awareness of their right to be safe and what to expect from the organisation. Make sure the code of conduct is displayed publicly and in a culturally appropriate format. An NGO in Afghanistan found that people were laughing at their code of conduct posters because, in that context, valuable information is shared verbally, not visually. Some organisations choose to use radio or street drama to raise awareness, beneficiary engagement and participation. We can invite beneficiaries to share what they think is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, who they would like to report to and how they would like to make that report. Ask them how they believe the organisation should respond. Ensure your mechanism for reporting maintains confidential and is developed in partnership with the beneficiaries, engage your community leaders as well.

Make sure you identify and train male and female community peer educators who can become safeguarding champions, or SFPs, safeguarding focal points. Resource the abuse prevention and response activities adequately. That means if

you're saying safeguarding is important to you, then you should build it into your budget. Make sure it is getting the financial and time input needed to build a robust safeguarding structure.

Encourage joint work in between agencies in the area. Joint codes of conduct or reporting mechanisms, for example, will make accessibility even easier. More experienced organisations can mentor less experienced organisations and help them build their own safeguarding capacity. So have a look around - who else is working in the same context as you? Do they have more or less experience? How can you pool your resources together to achieve more with the same amount of work.

Responding, reporting and referring

We need a basic framework for responding and reporting that is clear for all to follow. It might be helpful to consider 'thresholds for reporting' as dynamic and multifaceted rather than fixed and unchangeable. What we mean here is in the UK, we would consider a threshold for reporting as a certain level that the

abuse or the behaviour has to reach before it can be investigated by the police or social services. Even in the UK, thresholds can be tricky to understand, that's even more true in international contexts. So instead of simply looking to 'meet thresholds', we want to adopt a more flexible and curious approach in our international contexts. Consider the thresholds that might legally apply if you're registered in the UK and how these sit alongside lived realities on the ground in your international context. Can you identify any tensions? Once again, your organisation's code of conduct could be a good starting point for you. Add into your thought process whether or not you've got any charity regulators (or similar) in your overseas areas as well. Who expects you to report back to them and how or when do they expect you to do it? It might be that you need to involve the local police in the context that you're working in. Or it might be that their thresholds for reporting are even higher than we have here in the UK. But remember, the expectation of UK charity regulators is that we

uphold the same standards whenever we are working in international context as far as possible.

We need to be clear with everyone involved about what are mandatory situations to report in the jurisdictions you're working with (including the UK) and communicate that there will also be the need to weigh up all the factors in any specific situation. You will also need to manage the tension between compulsory reporting and taking into account the wishes of the survivors. If you're finding this difficult to unpick and you need to get some advice, we encourage you to ring our helpline, or email the International Charities Engagement team - the contact details can be found in the handbook.

Reporting to an umbrella or sending organisation

It is likely that you will need to share the information and concerns with others within your organisation. You shouldn't share too much detail, specifically avoid giving names and identifying information. We call this a 'need to know' basis but you can share the broad strokes to get the correct guidance on

what your umbrella organisation wants you to do. If the response is to ignore or downplay the concern, we encourage you to question the response. Many organisations who've worked in international contexts for a long time may believe that choosing to ignore issues since that's 'the way it's always been done' are unintentionally working against establishing a healthy safeguarding culture.

Non-recent allegations

Even if the reported abuse happened several years before, we need to make sure that we're treating all disclosures as sensitively as we treat current concerns. Often these non-recent allegations will come up when others have come forward to disclose things that may not even be related. It's important to ascertain if the alleged perpetrator is still working with children or vulnerable adults. If so, we can assume that he or she may still pose a risk. It's also worth mentioning that criminal prosecutions could still take place, even though the allegations are non-recent. So be sensitive and respond in the same way as you do to allegations of recent abuse. Maintain your records,

write up reports and make sure that you're passing on any information to the relevant statutory organisations.

There needs to be a clear process for recording concerns and allegations that is understood by everyone. People must feel safe enough to share concerns in the first place, confident that they know how the reports will be handled. Is there a form for recording or the standardisation of what information should be captured? Does it provide space to record clearly what actions are going to be taken? Who's going to take them? What is the process for storing these records securely? And who has access to the records? Is our timescale for responding to concerns clear to everyone? Clear processes for escalating concerns should be there as well.

What about reporting? The process should always encourage openness and be understood and agreed by everyone. We want all information to be made available in good quality translations and to keep the complainant informed about the progress of their case.

We need to make sure our staff (paid and unpaid) have training on what the organisation's standards are and how they're expected to respond to concerns and allegations. That means they need local context training and regular updates. Some field leaders reported that they wanted to make a stronger safeguarding culture, but they needed support and resources from the wider organisation in order to achieve that.

When receiving disclosures or concerns, workers need to be impartial as much as possible. We can't make assumptions about what's happened or dismiss what we're being told because of the person making the report. It's so easy to inadvertently dismiss what's being said because of our views of the person saying it. There needs to be consistency in our approach.

Support for the alleged victims/survivors and the alleged perpetrators and their families

This is a critical element of our framework for reporting and needs to reflect the local context. Think about the risks that have been taken by the person making their disclosure - who

else could be implicated or involved in how can you support them? Wherever possible, we want to work with statutory agencies on a local level, and perhaps even religious leaders. The reality is we are much more effective when we can work collaboratively, and a ground-up, community-led approach might take longer but will likely be much more effective and sustainable in the long term.

Community awareness and advocacy to counter harmful traditional practices that hinder justice for survivors

In situations where safeguarding practices few and far between, it can be helpful to start at a grass-roots level and begin with conversation. Grassroots safeguarding is a long-term project, we can't expect mindsets to shift in one training session. But effective examples of community awareness raising exist. Through advocacy work, the often-positive motivations behind harmful practices can be rechannelled in healthier ways. For example, a child with a fever might be seen by the witch doctor as a child with a demon possession and the witch doctor may prescribe a harmful practice to exorcise the

child. When the witch doctor's position in the community is still respected rather than denounced by those seeking to reduce child abuse, the results can be more effective when the witch doctor is trained to become a local health representative. In this role they can now prescribe paracetamol for a child with fever. The harmful practices diminish and as the community sees the results, their confidence will also increase.

In a nutshell, those going on overseas trips should know how to receive a concern or an allegation. They should know how to reassure the person without promising confidentiality, how to record who to report concern during the field, who to report to you back home within their sending organisation, whether that's their church, a charity or a separate organisation.

Organisations working with overseas partners should include in their policies and MOU's (memorandums of understanding) how to report to the umbrella organisation, their local setting, how to offer pastoral support to the alleged victims and alleged

perpetrators and their families, and the importance of debrief for those affected.

In 2021, the Charity Commission issued two alerts to international aid organisations, urging improvements in safeguarding. The regulators received an increase in serious incident reports and safeguarding matters by charities. On the positive side, this means more reports are being made and passed on. But we need to make sure that our safeguarding practices are robust throughout and seek to prevent as much harm occurring as possible. For comparison, the Commission received 5730 reports of serious incidents in 2021, of which 3400 related to safeguarding, an almost 40% increase on the previous year.

There are various helpful mechanisms for reporting abuse. Helpful mechanisms for reporting can be varied and we can be quite creative in our approach. Diverse groups within the beneficiaries we serve may want different mechanisms for

reporting. In your context, is there a one size fits all model or do you need to be more varied in your approach?

Reporting can include a phone line or a text service and/or an online form. This might even allow people to report anonymously and then be given a further opportunity to share later. Many organisations use a suggestions box which can be helpful, it's really important that we don't make this a complaints box as there might be stigma around putting a complaint in. Consider where we place this box - if it's outside the community leader's house, it might not be all that successful. But if it's somewhere that's accessible, with heavy foot traffic going past, it might be more effective.

We can also visually signal trusted safeguarding people. Perhaps our community safeguarding focal points or champions wear t-shirts with a hotline number or contact email. We can also use various instant messaging systems. That

might be WhatsApp in some contexts, or the most commonly used messaging service in the context we're working in.

Another aspect we need to consider when responding, reporting and referring concerns or disclosures is the additional services a survivor/victim of abuse or even a witness may need. This isn't an exhaustive list and of course, not all these services will be readily available. We also need to bear in mind that not all survivors will want or need all these services. Fear of confidentiality breaches in smaller communities, and the long waiting lists for services might be additional barriers to survivors accessing support. It may be that we can support them to access services in another area where confidentiality is more likely to be maintained. Consider proactively adding budget provisions for such services.

You can undertake a mapping exercise with your partners identifying what local services are already in place. Maybe take a physical map and use different colours to indicate the nearest law enforcement, especially those with officers trained in sexual

violence or child protection responses. You might know of local Victim Support Services, the nearest hospital with sexual reproductive health facilities, and other NGOs who are already providing support. It might also be helpful to map out consulates or embassies for expat workers. Make sure that your information is kept up to date and located where other people can access it. Familiarity with local services is important but we need to make sure these services we signpost to are safe and don't expose our victims and survivors to further harm. Building relationships before you need to refer is good practice so you're confident in the services that you're recommending.

Let's summarise this with some key principles around responding, reporting and referring.

1) Safety. Providing access, or referring someone for support should not put the survivor, yourself or others at greater risk.

2) Informed consent. The survivor victim must understand and agree who will be informed and what will happen next.

3) Confidentiality. Whether or not the survivor chooses to access support, it is not appropriate for you to share details of the incidents or personal identifiers unless the survivor gives permission.

4) Respect. Respect the survivor's choices. It is the survivor's right to refuse support and to decide what support they want to access. When your local legal context has is mandatory reporting law, it might be difficult to manage the challenge of confidentiality and mandatory reporting. This challenge can be lessened by risk assessing the situation and taking account of the wishes of the survivor.

5) Support. If you don't know what to do, seek support for yourself. It's helpful if you can identify local support, local sources of legal and other expert advice, and support in relation to safeguarding. But remember, even if you can't access that in the local context, there are resources globally that can help you - see the signposting section at

the end of the handbook for some lists and contact details of these.

These principles for reporting lead nicely into considering what a survivor-centred approach looks like. What will it take for survivors to feel safe? Survivors themselves are experts based on their experience and we need their input to become truly survivor-centred. Integrating their voice and experiences into our policy can be empowering and may assist their recovery if it's done well. Let's remember if we're calling on their expertise, we should be financially reimbursing them for travel and expenses in the same way we would any expert consultant.

The Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office said this, "putting the victims or survivors' needs at the centre of thinking based on the principles of safety, confidentiality, respect and non-discrimination is a survivor-centred approach to safeguarding."

We should be plan for survivor support right at the conception stage of any project or activity and we need to communicate to

beneficiaries what support will be available and how they will access it if needed. It's helpful for people to know we intend to respond quickly to any allegations to make sure we minimise further harm.

Let's have a think about the survivor-centred approach a little more. There is a healthy safeguarding cultures toolkit that has been produced by Bond and we're using it here with their permission. It looks at three different types of organisations and the traits that they possess in terms of how they respond to survivors/victims.

1) Non-compliance:

    a. Survivor-centred approach is not seen as an organisational priority.

    b. Reporting processes may be non-confidential and do not prioritise the welfare of the survivor.

    c. Response to cases does not consider needs of the survivor.

d. No funding is allocated to survivor care.

e. Confidential and sensitive data is not kept securely.

f. Organisation has not considered that there may be survivors in their work force.

g. Untrained staff may respond inappropriately.

2) Minimal compliance:

a. Senior leaders consider reputational impact before survivor welfare.

b. Reporting processes may be confidential but there is still low accessibility and uptake.

c. Limited funding may be available for survivor care but there is a lack of clarity about how to access it.

d. The need for confidential storage and access to sensitive information is known about, but not implemented consistently.

e. There is recognition that there may be survivors in the workforce but no actions are taken in response.

3) Survivor-centred approach:

a. Leaders consistently prioritise survivors above other organisational interests.

b. Reporting processes prioritise survivors' wellbeing.

c. Survivors are involved determining responses to their concerns.

d. Workers are trained to respond.

e. Financial and other resources are allocated to survivor care.

f. Confidential storage of and access to sensitive information is routinely actioned and monitored.

g. Survivors feedback that the organisation is a safe place for the employment of survivors.

It's helpful to consider which of these three best describes our organisation. If we don't already have a survivor-centred approach, how can we move towards one?

That brings us to the end of module three, we're now going to move on to module four, building capacity.

Module Four – Building Capacity.

In this module, we're going to look at building safeguarding capacity with our partners, the power imbalances that may inherently exist, healthy safeguarding culture, and continuous improvement.

Let's start by having a look into partnership. We can't stress enough that partnership should not be seen as a burdensome risk. If we are working in an international context, we need to make sure that we are giving voice to the people who are experts in their own culture. If you're concerned that the organisation you're partnering with doesn't have safeguarding policies and practices in place, it doesn't mean that you should automatically end the partnership. Use this as a starting point – assess where you're up to, and where you want to get to together and then devise an action plan detailing how you're going to get there. Bear in mind that you will likely need to factor in additional finances in the budget for supporting partners build their safeguarding capabilities. The charity regulators define a non-charity as any organisation not registered with them. So even if a partner is a registered charity

in their own country or location, it's won't be recognised as a charity by UK regulators. There is some helpful guidance around working with non-charities and reporting serious incidences (incidents involving partner organisations) for you to draw on.

Make sure that we have genuinely heard and understood our partners long-term aims so that we can get behind and support them. Let's keep the dialogue going to develop a shared understanding of safeguarding, it's appropriate outworking in that cultural context and work together towards building clarity around the safeguarding roles and responsibilities. This is going to be an ongoing dialogue and will include honest discussion about the barriers to reporting that exist within that local context, and how to overcome any patterns of non-reporting. Remember, this might relate to the fear that reporting incidents could result in a loss of funding. So, we need to continually address the power imbalances and seek to empower our international partners to bring about positive social change.

It's important not to downplay power imbalances. The beneficiaries might perceive that the aid worker or the UK office controls the aid and therefore if they want some of the aid, they can't say 'no'. This belief will be compounded, for example, if women's voices aren't respected in the culture, you're working in. Similarly, if you're brought up to expect domestic abuse, then you're unlikely to see this as an abuse to be reported. My Chinese administrator when we were working in China was shocked to recently learn that rape within marriage could be illegal in any context. It's important, once again, to educate, listen and encourage dialogue on all these sensitive issues.

A quote by Alice Walker, an American novelist and activist, says: "The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." We need to make sure that every one of our beneficiaries or stakeholders in our projects understand that they have a voice, and that we're intentional about empowering those voices, this allows them to they keep hold of the power that they do have.

That being said, we need to recognise that power imbalances inherently exist in our international work. There are many different kinds of powers we might hold. It might be physical gender, our education, our privilege, our age, our ethnicity, our position, our experience, or even the language that we speak.

In our international work, whatever our context, we typically have a greater power because we have access to resources the community we're working in needs. We have privilege because we have choices about what the outcomes will be, and how and when to share those resources. You might be oblivious to the power and privilege that you hold and that makes it more important to be self-reflective and identify where those power imbalances lie.

How can we authentically reduce the power differentials or the power imbalances? We must acknowledge that any position of trust must be treated with care and responsibility. Organisations need to have in place rules and standards of behaviour so

there is no room for the power we hold to cause harm. Transparency, accountability, and humility are all vital components.

We need to use our power to empower the communities we're working with. Knowledge about rights and expectations can bring a healthy awareness that can reduce this power differential. Genuine partnerships and co-production in creating programs are an essential part of that. In the past, international aid and development organisations saw themselves as accountable to their donors, their financial supporters, but this view is shifting, with a growing understanding that we're accountable to our beneficiaries as well. Safeguarding can be seen as a tool to help empower the disempowered, providing a safe place for voices to be heard.

Building a healthy safeguarding culture

Simply stated, an organisation's culture is 'the way things are done around here', it's the intangible, unwritten rules around how organisations work, the beliefs, the attitudes and

behaviour. It's underpinned by what happens, what is and what isn't tolerated. It's things like the culture around lunch breaks and what we feel about issues like punctuality.

As well as the direct and indirect risks to beneficiaries we've already considered, there are issues around how people contribute to the organisational culture. For example, if the finance team are behaving in a sexist way, this may desensitise the whole office to those behaviours and communicates to others that it's okay to be sexist – for that gender imbalance to exist within our culture. There's growing awareness that compliance alone, a 'ticking the boxes' for safeguarding, is not enough. Think back to the Oxfam example. They had adequate policies and procedures, but they weren't being put into practice every day by the workers. There were other beliefs attitudes and behaviours at play. Safeguarding compliance measures need a healthy culture in order to grow strong and to do what they're supposed to do, which is protect people.

The diagram shows the title compliance and six images showing plants at various stages of their development. The first is a seed being sown into soil. The second is a germinated seed, the third a green sprout from the soil. The fourth a young sapling with two leaves, the fifth a small plant and the final one an established plant. Above are the words policy, procedure and training. Written beneath are the word attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. These are the soil into which we're planting. And at the bottom of the full image is the caption 'healthy safeguarding culture'.

This diagram shows how compliance and culture works together. When we have our compliance, our seeds are sown into a culture where attitudes, beliefs and behaviours are good, you see a healthy safeguarding culture start to grow and flourish. This diagram is also helpful in showing how dialogue and engaging with the local people is important and is going to be an essential ingredient in creating a safeguarding process that can take root. It's important to know that this takes place over time, and it needs intention and investment.

Some of the vital components for creating or building healthy safeguarding cultures that go beyond the 'good enough' policy that many charities are shown to hold, are the following attributes:

1) Awareness. Is everyone aware what safeguarding is and how to report concerns? Also, when partners are aware of each other's objectives and obligations, they can hold each other to account more easily when necessary. With some grassroots safeguarding projects, we may be raising awareness to alternatives of harmful practices.

2) Accountability. It's vital that everyone is accountable to someone and that everyone knows who that person is. It's worth noting that not all cultures understand or even have a word for accountability. So again, finding appropriate terminology is key.

3) Training. We've already talked about the importance of training, supervision and support. Remember to keep reviewing your training and updating it.

4) Empowerment. The final element to consider is empowerment, which has been hinted at throughout this course. Healthy cultures have psychologically safe cultures, individuals feel safe to share their ideas and concerns. Mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning and growth. Within a healthy culture, individuals are encouraged to urge growth and improvement in an organisation and can express disagreement whilst operating within a framework for accountability. Empowerment increases the sense of shared ownership, which is particularly important internationally where power imbalances need to be challenged. Are we providing opportunities for people to feedback about what we're doing? And are we taking the feedback on board and developing our future services in line with that information?

All of the elements above; awareness, accountability, training, and empowerment are interlinked, and they will support and reinforce one another.

When the Charity Commission lifted the regulatory oversight measures on Oxfam in February 2021, the press release made these two significant points which provide a helpful summary of what we've been looking at. They said, "Effective safeguarding is never complete and systems and process however good must be underpinned by leaders and senior managers remaining vigilant and continuing to place the highest priority on keeping people safe." They also said, "All charities working with vulnerable people overseas or a home should ensure their approach to safeguarding is robust and effective. The right systems processes and recourses are vital. But even more important than the intangible factors, leadership, organisational culture, and the commitment and integrity of everyone involved in a charity."

We hope these thoughts and learning have been beneficial to highlight some of the key areas that need attention in your context. If we're going to build safer, healthier cultures in our overseas context, we need to be prepared to expand our safeguarding capabilities at every opportunity.

This constant improvement mechanism, 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' tool may help you do this.

1) Plan: Identify the needs in dialogue with your beneficiaries, based on their needs not your assumptions. Take time to risk assess, review your safer recruitment processes, prepare your team, etc. The time we invest at the planning stage will always reap benefits later.

2) Do: Implement what was planned as much as possible. Obviously, we need to be flexible, and we understand that often in our overseas context, things can change quickly and significantly. But make sure that the changes that we allow are in-line with the principles we identified in the planning stage.

3) Check: Monitor and measure success – was it successful or not? Why not? Reflect and seek the feedback that we've talked about.

4) Act: Add the learning from our recent lived experience before moving back into the planning stage, and then start the cycle again. And let's not forget that a key principle in all of this is to do no harm.

Consider what your organisation or your partnership could look like in terms of safeguarding in the next three years, or five, or ten. Is what we're currently building fit for purpose? Is it keeping people safe? How do we know? What can you be putting in place today that will enable you to get there in five years, or ten years? Do you have an action plan? Hopefully, you've been able to consider some things that should be near the top of your action plan over this time together.

That brings us to the end of safeguarding in an international context webinar. We hope this has been beneficial to you and thank you for the time that you invest into safeguarding.