

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Secretary of State for International Development
Department for International Development
22 Whitehall
London, SW1A 2EG

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16th October 2018

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Dear Secretary of State,

Following our letter in February and in advance of next week's Safeguarding Summit, we wanted to share with you the joint commitments that our organisations have made to: **listen** to survivors, communities and staff; **prevent** abuse from taking place; **respond** rapidly to all concerns; and **learn** from past mistakes and keep getting better. These are attached as a statement below this letter. We have also sent a version of this letter to the Permanent Secretary and will be publishing the statement on Thursday.

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All our organisations are already embedding these practices and have made significant progress on them since February – particularly in: increasing resource for safeguarding; strengthening our systems, reporting, and training; boosting dedicated support for survivors; improving workplace culture; and working collaboratively to strengthen referencing and information sharing. We are looking forward to discussing this progress alongside Bond at the Summit.

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Thank you for the enormous personal leadership you have shown on this agenda. We are very much looking forward to Thursday and are committed to ensuring it delivers a global step-change.


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We are also grateful for the leadership of Bond in both convening the INGO sector around an impressive set of commitments, and in driving a range of new initiatives that will strengthen our collective ability to root out perpetrators of abuse and prevent them from entering our sector in the first place. All our organisations fully endorse the Bond commitments; the statement below sets out how we will both implement these commitments and ensure we are held accountable to them.


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The vulnerability of the people we serve places a special duty of protection on us. Honouring the trust and expectation of the communities we serve is the single biggest priority for each of us. As we made clear back in February, we will not rest until we can ensure that no one in our care is ever let down.


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To deliver truly transformational change, it is incumbent on all of us to recognise the power imbalances that sit at the heart of global poverty and injustice. To overcome these, we must confront the behaviours within our organisations that entrench them, and we must put the voices of women, children, marginalised social and economic groups, differently abled, LGBTQ and the aged first. We welcome your focus on survivor voices and hope to work with you to drive not just reform of our systems but also global, cultural change.


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Finally, ahead of the summit we wanted to raise two issues with you:

1. We welcome ongoing conversations around a new Centre for Excellence and reiterate our earlier request that this centre focuses on providing meaningful and tailored support to smaller INGOS and delivers ground-breaking research to fill critical knowledge gaps in both our understanding of those who harm vulnerable people and in how we embed new standards in different cultural contexts and challenging operating environments.
2. We urge faster progress towards making employment in a humanitarian or development organisation a 'regulated activity' – putting all our staff members on the same footing as teachers and other professionals. Our organisations are all implementing robust background checks and are committed to sharing information on persons of concern, but this straightforward regulatory change would dramatically enhance our collective ability to prevent perpetrators of abuse entering our organisations. It would also simplify the process and reduce the cost-burden for smaller organisations. While the broader global changes likely to be announced at the summit are tremendous, this simple domestic change would demonstrate that the UK is collectively committed to getting our own house in order.

We would like to thank you again for your leadership. You have rightly demanded bold and transformative action – and taken this message to global leaders. We are grateful for your commitment to protect the vulnerable people we serve and stand shoulder to shoulder with you to make this a reality.

Best wishes,



Girish Menon,
Chief Executive,
ActionAidUK



Chris Bain,
Director, CAFOD



Laurie Lee
Chief Executive,
CARE
International UK



Amanda Mukwashi, Chief
Executive,
Christian Aid



Sanj Srikanthan,
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Mark Goldring,
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Kevin Watkins
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Our safeguarding promises

The vulnerability of the people we serve places a special duty of protection on us. This vulnerability is driven by the **power imbalances** that sit at the heart of global poverty and injustice. To address these power imbalances, we must confront the behaviours that entrench them, and which exist across all our organisations. This includes naming and surfacing any cultures or practices that negatively impact our most vulnerable staff and partners, and the people and communities we work with. And it means **putting the voices of women, children, marginalised social and economic groups, differently abled, LGBTQ and the aged first**. We know that real change requires all of us to not only enhance our systems, but to work together, in partnership with local people and governments, to achieve lasting **cultural change**.

We have outlined below the steps that all our organisations will take to **listen** to survivors, communities and staff; **prevent** abuse from taking place; **respond** rapidly to all concerns; and **learn** from past mistakes and keep getting better. Our organisations have centuries of combined experience of working in development, and collectively reach millions of people around the world. It is imperative that we lead from the front – setting standards and providing support that will benefit the whole sector and drive change for the world's most vulnerable people. This is **our contribution to the commitments made at the Safeguarding Summit**.

Working together, our organisations will...

...**listen** to survivors, communities and staff

We will:

- **put survivors first**, ensuring dedicated teams are on hand to respond to their needs, ensure their accounts are built into decision-making, and to support them for as long as they need, including preventing community backlash and reporting back on outcomes and progress
- ensure that **perspectives from the Global South** shape both our practices and support for survivors, and that all our systems support the **individual agency of survivors** and encourage their ownership of the solutions
- design all our safeguarding processes **in partnership with the communities that we work in**, ensuring they are sensitive to the unique needs of vulnerable children and adults across multiple different contexts
- ensure **voices that can be marginalised by power imbalances – e.g. because of race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, or social and economic status – are elevated in planning and decision making**, creating a diverse and inclusive organisational culture and ensuring that their needs and additional vulnerabilities are reflected in our programme work.

...**prevent** abuse from taking place

We will:

- root out bullying, harassment and incivility and ensure **no abuse of power is tolerated**, addressing the gender, race and other inequalities that drive these behaviours
- ensure all the people we serve, our staff, and the organisations we work with are **aware of their safeguarding rights and obligations** through mandatory and regular training and a code of conduct that is championed by senior managers and linked to performance management
- work with communities, staff and survivors to build systems that are **well understood** and give people the **confidence to come forward and report concerns**
- take any necessary action to **prevent perpetrators entering our organisations**, ensuring that all staff members are subject to appropriate **background checks** that are regularly refreshed
- cooperate across all our organisations to **root out perpetrators of abuse from the sector**, implementing a **new approach to referencing** that allows us to share information and concerns

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- develop systems and approaches that **effectively detect abuse and exploitation**, so we do not wait for a child, vulnerable person or a member of our own staff to report
- ensure this agenda is **owned by Trustees and senior leadership** – guaranteeing: staff direct access to our leadership; that behaviours and zero-tolerance are modelled from the top-down; and that leaders are held accountable to strong performance on safeguarding.

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...respond rapidly to all concerns

We will:

- ensure **robust and transparent reporting mechanisms** are in place, and we will work with survivors and local communities to make these easy to use and responsive to their needs, including ensuring appropriate, accessible and independent whistleblowing procedures are available for all staff
- take **swift action** in response to *any* safeguarding breaches
- ensure that all cases involving children and any alleged crimes are **reported to the appropriate authorities**, where this will not expose victims to further harm
- ensure **dedicated investigations teams** follow up on all complaints or concerns and continue with our investigations even if a person under investigation departs our organisation; we will not always have the inhouse skills to appropriately and safely investigate some cases, so we will ensure sector-wide referral mechanisms, which deliver a *collective* survivor-centred response, are in place
- report any concerns directly, and in a timely manner, **to donors and regulators**, and **publish our reporting data**, so that survivors and communities are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and so that perpetrators know they will not get away with their actions.

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...learn from past mistakes and keep getting better

We will:

- continuously **review and improve our processes** and regularly open our systems up for tough independent scrutiny
- grow our in-house safeguarding teams and **commit more resource to this critical area**, ensuring our local staff are properly supported and able to adapt to changing needs and requirements
- invest in **research and good practice sharing**, so we can develop effective, culturally appropriate, solutions that reflect the gravity of risk of harm posed to children, vulnerable people and our staff
- support **other organisations to grow their capacity**, providing resource, training and access to centralised systems
- ensure we are **held accountable by tough, independent and global systems**
- **comply with all international standards**, best practice and scrutiny such as the Core Humanitarian Standard.


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Working with donors

We look forward to working alongside donors and other global institutions to ensure that **all new initiatives and requirements are survivor centric** – taking due account of the complexities of working in multiple challenging environments and ensuring that risk management is carefully balanced against the need to protect survivors' identities. We also ask that **donors work together** to apply shared standards, rather than introducing duplicated due diligence that undermines our collective efforts to drive transformative change. Finally, we are all committing substantial new resource to safeguarding and hope that **donors will also be prepared to fund new safeguarding requirements upfront** – ensuring that all development organisations can deliver the systems necessary to protect the people we serve.


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