



Mapping of Global Listening Channels for SEAH

Naomi Clugston and Erika Fraser

Query: Please conduct a mapping of the global listening channels¹ for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) in the aid sector. Please identify any new and emerging best practices as well as any gaps?



1. Overview

The Safeguarding Unit is beginning to think about what the international safeguarding system should look like by 2030 and how to get there. A fundamental part of this is to ensure that the voices of victims, survivors

“A failure to listen to and consider the needs of victims and survivors of SEA will engender a response that is not only ineffective, but potentially harmful”

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, 2018

and whistleblowers are heard. Indeed, the International Development Committee observed in its report on SEAH in the aid sector that “a failure to listen to and consider the needs of victims and survivors of SEA, will engender a response that is not only ineffective, but potentially harmful.”² However, repeated consultations by multiple agencies risks being extractive, or even potentially re-traumatising people who have experienced sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment (SEAH). It is therefore important to understand different channels for sharing feedback and inputting into policy and programmes to think how the FCDO can best engage across the sector.³

This query provides a mapping of global listening channels across the aid sector for victims, survivors, whistleblowers of SEAH and their representatives to share their experiences. It includes active, ad hoc, or closed channels. This report is based on rapid desk-based research (see Annex 1 for methodology) and framed around four ways for victims, survivors, whistleblowers and their representatives to be heard and engage with global efforts to tackle SEAH: (1) through NGOs and networks; (2) multi-country participatory research with beneficiaries of aid; (3) government consultations; and (4) surveys and listening exercises with aid workers / staff. In total, 20 channels are mapped in Section 2 and below.

Channels	Examples	Status	Focus
NGOs and networks representing victims, survivors and whistleblowers in the aid sector	NGO Safe Space	Not active	UK INGOs
	Code Blue campaign	Ongoing	UN personnel and individuals living in host communities
	changingaid	Not active	International aid sector
	Humanitarian Women’s Network	Ongoing	Female aid workers working in the humanitarian sector
	Cassandra Complexity blog	Not active	Practitioners, advocates and researchers working in the GBV field in humanitarian settings
	The Headington Institute	Ongoing	Humanitarian aid workers, responders and caregivers
	NANSHE	Ongoing	Global South survivors and experts in development sector



Participatory research	Empowered Aid	Ongoing	Refugee women and girls in Lebanon and Uganda
	Listen Up! Barometer	Ongoing	Women and girls living in humanitarian contexts – focus on Uganda, El Salvador, Nigeria, Lebanon
Government consultations	DFID listening exercise (2018)	One-off	Organisations representing survivors of SEAH in the international aid sector.
	International Development Committee (2018-ongoing)	Ongoing	UK actors in the aid sector
	Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) Review of the UK's Approach to Safeguarding in the Humanitarian Sector (2022)	Ongoing (but one-off)	Humanitarian sector - global, with country case studies in Bangladesh, Uganda and Yemen
Surveys and listening exercises with aid workers/staff	Report the Abuse report (2017)	One-off	Humanitarian aid workers
	Stop the Sexual Assault against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers (2017)	One-off	Humanitarian and development aid workers
	Cowboys and Conquering Kings (2018)	One-off	Humanitarian aid workers
	Safe Space Survey Report (2019)	One-off	UN staff
	UNAIDS (2018)	One-off	UNAIDS staff
	World Bank (2019)	Ongoing	World Bank staff
	Insecurity Insight	Ongoing	Humanitarian / aid sector, with DRC focus
	Loop	Ongoing	Communities engaged with aid sector

A clear finding of this report is the lack of existing global listening channels to engage with victims, survivors and whistleblowers in a systematic and cross-sectoral way. Several channels have been mapped in this report, but none of these channels work across the sector. Safeguarding experts consulted during this query also highlighted that while different individual organisations have their own mechanisms to listen and respond to the people who work for them or with whom they work, there is a major gap in the aid sector for a global listening channel where victims, survivors, whistleblowers and their representative organisations can engage in efforts to prevent SEAH.

Examples of gaps that exist in the international aid sector include:

- **Few listening channels that are open across the aid sector** – most channels have a specific focus, for example Safe Space for UK-based international non-government organisations, Code Blue for UN staff, and surveys and consultations for donor staff.
- **Temporary networks of SEAH victims, survivors and whistleblowers which often dissolve quite soon**, making it challenging to engage over a longer period. This mapping has included networks that were active around 2018-2020 but are no longer active. The short-life spans of these networks can be contrasted with GBV networks which are more formalised and linked to women's rights organisations. Often SEAH networks are started by individuals as voluntary, ad-hoc initiatives around their other work and commitments.
- **Fewer channels for aid staff working in development contexts**, with a greater focus on listening channels for humanitarian workers.
- **Few listening channels or networks that are based in the Global South or actively engage national staff or survivors at the community level**, with most being Northern-based, anglophone channels focused on international staff. Examples of good practice are NANSHE, a global South-based women-led organisation for survivors, and the Humanitarian Women's Network which has hubs in Geneva, Bangkok, Juba, Boston and La Paz. This gap might be a limitation of this mapping exercise which has focused on searches in the English language, although experts consulted were not aware of other channels.
- **Lack of regular engagement, with many channels being one-off listening exercises or consultations** that risk being extractive. Some experts raised concerns about the sensitivities of involving survivors who are not already publicly engaged and suggested focusing on listening channels with survivor activists and those who actively receive cases and working with survivors.

There are also challenges and sensitivities involved in engaging with some of the spaces where survivors discuss experiences and ideas about tackling SEAH. Some experts suggested that it may be less about being a 'listener' or teller', but rather about communities of practice on gender or GBV whereby people share things more informally, for example in the GBV Area of Responsibility Community of Practice, the Gender and Development network or even more informally through messaging on social media. Due to this query being based on a rapid

mapping, it was not possible to engage with these spaces to uncover discussions around SEAH in the aid sector. It would likely require a longer period to build up the trust to ask these questions.

One suggestion was to engage with the growing field of PSEAH/safeguarding specialists who can speak to what they observe within the sector and their structures. One expert commented that ‘the general rule of thumb seems to be that “trusted”, frontline workers tend to gather what starts off as anecdotal feedback and often turns into trends and patterns that they will feed through their organisations systems about how people are experiencing violence carried out by aid workers’. She suggested that PSEAH and safeguarding specialists are well placed to share learning, for example on how survivors/victims and whistleblowers are treated by organisations, and where the bottlenecks are between feedback and senior management. Benefits of this option are avoiding the pitfalls of building expectations of communities, duplicating other people’s work, as well being more objective than others in the sector when it comes to these issues.

Another potential listening channel is through media listening channels, although there are considerable ethical challenges here. This query has not mapped media listening channels, due to the various media involved. However, it is worth highlighting the example of the role that investigative journalists at The New Humanitarian and Thomas Reuters Foundation played in uncovering the case of over 50 women accusing Ebola aid workers of sexual exploitation and abuse in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Media has played an influential role in providing a channel for survivors, victims and whistleblowers’ voices to be heard and triggering change in the aid sector. However, it is a sensitive option, with one safeguarding expert expressing concerns about how the media engages with survivors in an ethical way.

As well as mapping *where* to listen to voices of survivors, this query has also identified some lessons on *how* to do so. New and emerging best practice of how to listen to victims, survivors, whistleblowers and their representatives includes:

- **Taking a trauma-informed⁴ and survivor-centred approach,** for example survivors should be able to avoid questions they don’t feel comfortable answering and should not be asked to describe their experiences of SEAH. The forthcoming ICAI review⁵, which involves country case studies in Bangladesh, Uganda and Yemen, has explicitly taken a trauma-informed approach and not asked individuals for their testimony or accounts of their experience of SEAH.
- **Providing access to trained mental health professionals** should any participant feel distressed or re-traumatised while participating in a listening channel. An example of good practice is Code Blue, which does this during community forums on SEAH. Listening channels can contribute to the healing process for some survivors and may encourage them to report incidents or continue with investigations.
- **Using listening approaches which are informed by feminist principles.** Several of the networks mentioned in Section 2.1 are founded by feminists and/or rooted in feminist perspectives. The Listen Up! Barometer is guided by feminist principles, which include

accountability to a core group of women's rights organisations, networks, representatives and experts who form the Project Advisory Group.

- **Engaging organisations that represent a diverse range of survivors**, many of whom are at the highest risk of SEAH. These include groups representing women and girls with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, displaced women and girls, as was the case with the DFID listening exercise and ICAI review.
- **Including channels for people who receive (as well as deliver) aid services to be heard and engage**. Promising practice is emerging from multi-country research projects such as Empowered Aid (Lebanon and Uganda) and Listen Up! Barometer (El Salvador, Uganda, Nigeria and Lebanon) which use innovative participatory methods to hear the voices of victims, survivors, whistleblowers and their representatives with the aim of identifying ways to reduce the risks of SEAH in aid delivery.
- **Using innovative digital tools to listen to people who cannot engage in-person** – particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Code Blue is testing and documenting an innovative app, CAVIA, to listen and engage with individuals about SEAH in host communities using 'audio narratives'. The app has been co-designed and tested through community forums with women and girls to reduce risks of SEAH by humanitarian actors. NANSHE is currently developing a mobile App which will create a safe space for survivors to connect, share experiences and access support.
- **Ensuring that listening channels are independent** of the organisations being discussed. This could include having an independent email address through a secure link to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Building trust with respondents is also key so in some cases may be important for those conducting consultations to limit contact with the organisation in question. Deloitte used this approach when the United Nations (UN) commissioned a report on sexual harassment within the UN workplace.
- **Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity** of people participating in listening channels. For example, as part of the UN commissioned report by Deloitte on sexual harassment within the UN workplace, various safeguards were put in place to ensure confidentiality. In the recent ICAI report, it notes the importance of including people's voices to help inform policy on SEAH, but only if informed consent can be guaranteed.
- **Providing accessible options for people to engage**, for example surveys and consultations should be available in local languages and via various channels (SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, online, community forums). Loop uses interactive voice technology on phones to enable people to provide feedback orally so that literacy is not required when sharing experiences.

2. Mapping

2.1 NGOs and networks representing victims, survivors and whistleblowers in the aid sector

NGO Safe Space	
Description	Founded in 2018, NGO Safe Space is a platform for intersectional feminists in response to #AidToo to gather testimonies on SEAH in the humanitarian aid and international development sector. The NGO seeks to “disrupt patriarchy and racialised power imbalances and structures in the international aid and charity sector and in public policy”. ⁶
Activities	<p>Advocacy - Safe Space offers advocacy for individuals in the aid sector who want their voice to be heard when decisions are being made about diversity, sexual assault and other issues. The website includes a page for people to contact the NGO for an advocate to listen and help them.</p> <p>Research – in 2018, Safe Space conducted an anonymous online survey through which 81 people provided testimonies – see report on Experiences of sexual harassment and violence towards staff in the international development and humanitarian aid sector</p>
Geographic scope	UK-based
Focus	INGOs founded in the UK
Status	Appears not to be active recently. Safe Space submitted written evidence to the UK Government in April 2020. The last web posts and videos on YouTube were in 2018.
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	It is not clear from the information online (or from comments shared anonymously) whether they are trained to receive survivors’ testimonies and whether there are processes in place to prioritise confidentiality and ethics when listening to survivors.
Further information	Website (no longer working): https://ngosafespace.org/ Wordpress webpage: https://ngosafespace.wordpress.com/

Code Blue Campaign	
Description	The Code Blue Campaign aims to end impunity for sexual abuse by UN personnel. The campaign was launched in 2015 by the international advocacy organisation Aids-Free World. The original focus was on SEAH in UN peacekeeping but has subsequently expanded. The approach is rooted in a feminist perspective, belief in multilateralism, and a commitment to the UN's founding principles. ⁷
Activities	<p>Advocacy and campaigning – the campaign is lobbying for Member States to appoint a Temporary Independent Oversight Panel to oversee the response to SEAH from across the UN, as well as a Special Court Mechanism, an independent legal body to remove any conflicts of interest.</p> <p>CAVIA app – the app aims to prevent and address SEAH by listening and engaging with individuals in host communities as ‘untapped experts’ in UN peacekeeping. The app collects audio narratives with the insights and proposed solutions of the people most affected by SEAH. These audio narratives will then be presented directly to UN policymakers, allowing them to hear directly from the people most affected and design solutions based on these comprehensive insights.</p> <p>Community Forums were held by local implementing partner organisations before the CAVIA pilot was introduced. For example, in 2018, pilot community forums were held in Mile 91, a trading town in Sierra Leone, where over 100 local people shared their experiences, expertise and insights of how to develop lasting solutions to SEAH by UN personnel.⁸</p>
Geographic scope	International, based in New York
Focus	UN personnel and individuals living in host communities
Status	Active – latest news on website is October 2021.
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	Using multiple channels (from apps to community forums) gives victims, survivors, whistleblowers and their representatives an opportunity to engage in the way they feel most comfortable with. Code Blue provides mental health professionals to assist during community forums should any participants feel distressed or re-traumatised – an important consideration for any listening exercise. The CAVIA app is an innovative example of listening to and engaging with the solutions suggested by people living in host communities. The app has a series of pre-recorded, open-ended

	<p>questions so that participants can self-interview in the language of their choice. In this way, it is designed to enable people to conduct the interviews in privacy, at their own pace and without fear of judgement from an interviewer.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to develop alternative solutions for listening to victims, survivors and whistleblowers. The CAVIA approach is “well-suited to the complex realities of conducting interviews” when face-to-face approaches are not suitable.⁹</p>
Further information	Website: http://www.codebluecampaign.com/

changingaid	
Description	This women in ODA initiative focused on SEAH. It was organised on a voluntary basis by an independent group of women who work or have worked in the international development and humanitarian sectors. In March 2018, it mobilised over a thousand women aid workers to sign an open letter in the Guardian newspaper calling for fundamental reforms to shift the patriarchal bias in aid.
Activities	<p>Online surveys of women working in the international development and humanitarian sectors, including on progress in the sector from their perspective. The survey findings can be downloaded on the website, as well as in the report Cowboys and Conquering Kings (see Section 2.4)</p> <p>Provided evidence on the scale of the problem and recommendations from women working in the aid sector for the 2018 UK Government’s Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector.</p> <p>Advocacy including the open letter signed by over a thousand aid workers.</p> <p>Provision of advice to survivors and researchers who contact changingaid asking for help and support.</p>
Geographic scope	International
Focus	Aid sector
Status	Not currently active – latest activities around 2019
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with	The open letter called for three fundamental reforms across the international aid sector: (1) to trust women and act as soon as women report SEAH; (2) to listen and foster a culture where

victims, survivors and whistleblowers	whistleblowing is welcomed and safe; and (3) deeds not words, with effective leadership, commitment to action and access to resources.
Further information	Website: https://www.changingaid.org

Humanitarian Women's Network	
Description	The Humanitarian Women's Network is a network of over 11,000 women in more than 100 UN/NGO agencies across over 70 countries. They work to build work environments where women in the humanitarian industry are free from discrimination, harassment and abuse.
Activities	<p>Conducted a survey conducted a survey of female aid workers to understand their experiences working in the humanitarian space. The survey collected information on the demography of the respondents and on their experiences of: a) discrimination and harassment; b) sexual aggression and assault; c) reporting; and d) impact on professional and personal wellbeing.</p> <p>Offer general advice on responding to experiences of sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse.</p> <p>Encourage members to use their network to find mentors Members are directed to their LinkedIn where upcoming jobs and advice on career advancement are posted and where members can connect with senior women for mentorship opportunities.</p>
Geographic scope	Global, with active hubs in Geneva, Bangkok, Juba, Boston and La Paz
Focus	Female aid workers working in the humanitarian field.
Status	Active
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	n/a – Emailed the Humanitarian Women's Network and waiting for a response (will share when receive it)
Further information	Humanitarian Women's Network: https://www.humanitarianwomensnetwork.org/

Cassandra Complexity	
Description	Global online forum for practitioners, advocates and researchers in the aid sector to have an 'open, honest and independent discussion' about issues of GBV and SEAH in humanitarian settings. The forum started in 2013 with three founding executive editors and various contributing editors, including anonymous contributions.
Activities	Open platform for people to share and discuss views, either under their own name or anonymously under the pseudonym, <i>Cassandra</i> . Twitter account with tweets from the independent blog
Geographic scope	Global
Focus	Practitioners, advocates and researchers working in the GBV field in humanitarian settings
Status	Not currently active – last web posting was May 2021
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	Important to offer options for people to be heard without fear of being censored or blacklisted. The forum recognises that the sector is relatively small, and people may be concerned about speaking up.
Further information	Cassandra Complexity blog: https://cassandracomplexblog.wordpress.com/

The Headington Institute	
Description	The Institute has been providing psychological support and listening to humanitarian aid workers since 2001, including those who have been a victim of SEAH. It partners with humanitarian relief and development organisations before, during and after deployment to support the well-being of global responders. Through its support to humanitarian workers, the Institute listens to victims, survivors and their representatives on SEAH and has been able to use the lessons to inform global efforts to tackle SEAH.
Activities	Developed guidelines with the European Interagency Security Forum for organisations to manage sexual violence against aid worker staff. It includes a full training document . Network of mental health professionals who provide a variety of services to humanitarian workers. Free online training resources on stress, resilience and humanitarian work.

Geographic scope	Global
Focus	Humanitarian aid workers, responders and caregivers
Status	Active
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	The Headington Institute is not a direct channel for organisations to listen to victims, survivors and whistleblowers; however, it does offer a useful indirect channel to hear about the long-term impact on mental health and wellbeing, as well as wider lessons learned about how best to support people who have experienced SEAH.
Further information	Headington Institute: https://www.headington-institute.org/

NANSHE	
Description	NANSHE is a women-led global social enterprise, with a diverse team of survivors and experts who have worked in the development sector. Based in the Global South, the organisation is a 'for-survivors by-survivors' community or support for women who have experienced harassment, abuse and discrimination in the development sector.
Activities	<p>Development of a Mobile App which aims to create a safe space for women survivors to share experiences and connect within a community. The App will also have a platform to access professional support services.</p> <p>Support to survivors including access to counselling, virtual legal clinic, employee rights education, career coaching and user-to-user networking experience</p> <p>Advocacy with governments, media, civil societies, private sector and general public.</p> <p>Research-informed tools and resources, including surveys and studies on the discourse of harassment, abuse and discrimination.</p>
Geographic scope	Global South
Focus	Women survivors in aid sector
Status	Active
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors	Not applicable – just started. Currently designing the app.
Further information	NANSHE: https://www.nanshe.org

2.2 Participatory research

Empowered Aid	
Description	Empowered Aid is an innovative participatory action research project where refugee women and girls play an active role in designing solutions for better addressing SEA risks in humanitarian aid. Led by the Global Women's Institute, it is a multi-country study in Uganda (with partners CARE and URDA) and Lebanon (with partners IRC and World Vision). Empowered Aid is funded by the US Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.
Activities	<p>Ethnographic fieldwork with refugee women and girls (Phase 1) to better understand how aid distributions create or reinforce SEAH</p> <p>Implementation science and pilot tests (Phase 2) to test and adapt safeguarding approaches for aid distributions. During this phase, Empowered Aid will develop M&E tools, as well as an evidence-based toolkit which can be adapted by other humanitarian actors.</p> <p>Research uptake, dissemination and network-building (Phase 2) to share, validate and replicate findings in a third country, including through peer research and training with women and girl researchers.</p>
Geographic scope	Lebanon and Uganda (first phase)
Focus	Humanitarian contexts, with a focus on food, fuel & firewood, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) aid delivery
Status	Active
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>The participatory research was grounded in formative ethnographic approaches so that women and girls can take an active role in ensuring their voices are heard about SEAH and aid delivery.</p> <p>Action Analysis Workshops were a useful way for women and girls to reflect on the data they collected on how to prevent SEAH through aid distributions and prioritising recommendations. For recommendations see the Lebanon and Uganda results reports.</p> <p>Ethics and safety were prioritised throughout the participatory research, including specialised training for researchers, participatory risk-benefit analysis with stakeholders, clear referral pathways and a SEA focal point. The research put in place an ongoing reflection process for participants to raise concerns.</p>
Further information	<p>Website: https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/empowered-aid</p> <p>Resources from the first phase in Lebanon and Uganda: https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/empowered-aid-resources</p>

Listen Up! Barometer	
Description	The Listen Up! Barometer is a user-friendly tool to listen directly to the voices of women and girls living and working in humanitarian contexts to tackle SEAH. The barometer was developed by IRC, VOICE and women's rights organisations to improve women and girls' safe and equitable access to humanitarian aid. Listen Up! Barometer was funded by a grant awarded by the US Department of State in 2018.
Activities	<p>Design and piloting of an assessment tool of the lived experiences of refugee and host community women and girls to determine whether the environment of a humanitarian emergency response can prevent, mitigate and respond to SEAH.</p> <p>Production of the Listen Up! Barometer operational guide which summarises the data collection tools, including a focus group discussion guide, key informant interview guide, observational checklist, and staff perception survey for use with humanitarian workers.</p> <p>Advocacy – the barometer provides an advocacy tool for women's rights actors, groups, organisations and networks to hold humanitarian actors accountable to women and girls.</p>
Geographic scope	Uganda, El Salvador, Nigeria, Lebanon
Focus	Women and girls living and working in humanitarian contexts
Status	Active
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>The barometer is an innovative, user-friendly tool for women's rights organisations to hear the voices of victims, survivors, whistleblowers and their representatives. It translates experiences into 'scores' and helps to identify ways to reduce the risks of SEAH.</p> <p>The project is guided by a theory of change and feminist principles, which include accountability to a core group of women's rights organisations, networks, representatives and experts who form the Project Advisory Group.</p>
Further information	Listen Up: https://gbvresponders.org/womens-movement-building/listen-up/

2.3 Government consultations

2018 DFID Listening Exercise	
Description	In 2018, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) conducted a listening exercise with organisations representing survivors of SEAH in the aid sector. The listening exercise aimed to inform DFID's preparations for the international summit in October 2018, as well as shape policy on SEAH in the aid sector. It focused on reporting mechanisms and systems, and support for survivors.
Activities	<p>Engaging through 24 DFID Country offices with local partners with direct experience of supporting survivors of SEAH, including mostly grassroots civil society organisations as well as multilateral organisations and national governments. Findings from the consultations were analysed thematically by DFID's Safeguarding Unit.</p> <p>Targeted listening exercise in the UK with representatives of victims and survivors on how best to address SEAH in the aid sector.</p>
Geographic scope	UK-based and 24 DFID country offices ¹⁰
Focus	Southern and International organisations representing survivors of SEAH in the international aid sector. It included organisations representing women, children, people with disabilities, the LGBT community, international NGOs, think tanks, research institutions, academics and independent experts.
Status	Closed (one-off consultation)
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>The listening exercise engaged groups that represent survivors rather than survivors themselves to minimise the risk of doing further harm and re-traumatising survivors.</p> <p>It is important to engage organisations that represent a diverse range of survivors, many of whom are at the highest risk of SEAH, including groups representing people with disabilities, LGBTQI persons, children, and young people.</p> <p>The DFID-led listening exercise involved survivors and their representatives in developing findings and recommendations for the final report, which was important in ensuring their voices were heard and influenced policy.</p> <p>Due to the organisational sensitivity of the information being gathered, some participants were reluctant to pass judgement on issues such as reporting mechanisms within specific organisations.</p>

	There was a scarcity of secondary written evidence on this topic, understood to be due to the remote environments in which these incidents occur.
Further information	DFID (2018) Victim and Survivor Voices: Main Findings from a DFID-led Listening Exercise DFID Safeguarding Unit, October 2018

International Development Committee	
Description	Since 2018, the International Development Committee (IDC) has been engaging with actors in the aid sector to tackle SEAH and has produced several reports tracking progress on the issue. These inquiries form part of the IDC’s ongoing scrutiny of the spending, administration and policies of the UK Government on overseas development assistance.
Activities	Collecting oral and written evidence from victims, survivors, whistleblowers and their representatives across the sector. The inquiries have collected testimonies on the nature of SEAH in the aid sector as well as possible solutions. Survey of aid workers to measure whether there has been progress in tackling SEAH within their organisation and the broader aid sector. The survey was conducted in 2020 and had 64 responses.
Geographic scope	UK government committee
Focus	Focus on UK actors in the aid sector
Status	Active, but the committee is not currently considering oral and written evidence on this topic.
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	The committee has engaged many organisations working in the aid sector and those representing victims, survivors, whistleblowers since 2018 through its oral and written evidence. However the relatively low response (64) to the survey suggests a need to reach out more widely.
Further information	House of Commons International Development Committee (2021) Progress on tackling the sexual exploitation and abuse of aid beneficiaries.

Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) Review of the UK's Approach to Safeguarding in the Humanitarian Sector

Description	Since 2021, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact has been conducting a review of the extent to which the UK government's safeguarding efforts have been effective in preventing and responding to SEAH in humanitarian aid contexts. The review includes various activities to listen to and engage with representatives of survivors and affected populations. The final report will also consider the impact of the merger of DFID and FCO, the recent aid cuts, and the COVID-19 pandemic.
Activities	<p>Desk review of literature and government strategies</p> <p>Key informant interviews with UK government and external stakeholders including implementing partners</p> <p>Short survey of individuals or organisations with experience of the humanitarian aid sector</p> <p>Country case studies in Bangladesh, Uganda and Yemen, with interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders including implementing partners, telephone interviews and in-person consultations with affected populations</p>
Geographic scope	Global, with country case studies in Bangladesh, Uganda and Yemen
Focus	Humanitarian sector
Status	Active (report expected Spring 2022)
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>The review will consult with at-risk groups in Bangladesh, Uganda and Yemen including, but not limited to, youth and adolescents, people with disabilities, and people belonging to groups that are marginalised due to identity (e.g. LGBTI+), religion, or ethnicity.</p> <p>Consultations with affected populations will take a trauma-informed approach and will not ask individuals for their testimony or accounts of their experiences of SEA.</p> <p>The report will include people's voices as directly as possible, with quotations and stories that speak to the review questions and all having informed consent.</p> <p>Due to COVID-19, the review will also conduct remote interviews with around 600 people in Uganda and Yemen using computer-assisted telephone interviewing.</p>
Further information	ICAI (2021) The UK's Approach to Safeguarding in the Humanitarian Sector

2.4 Surveys and listening exercises with aid workers/staff

Report the Abuse (RTA) Report	
Description	Report the Abuse (RTA) was established in 2015 and established a public, confidential, non-judgemental and anonymous platform for humanitarian aid workers to highlight their experiences and knowledge about sexual violence incidences within the humanitarian community.
Activities	<p>Collection of over 200 testimonies, 50 of which have been presented as a diary across 50 days. This is to highlight that these testimonies could have happened to any aid worker in any location in the world. It speaks to the universality of sexual violence within the aid community.</p> <p>Longer testimonies including poems and essays written by survivors.</p>
Geographic scope	Global
Focus	Respondents included humanitarian aid workers, witnesses to sexual violence (especially against national staff), humanitarian aid workers who were survivors of sexual violence themselves.
Status	Closed
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>Respondents disclosed that the establishment of the platform helped them to heal and open up to people in their lives about what had happened. It also helped survivors report incidents and continue with investigations against their perpetrators. Some survivors said that it helped them seek psychosocial support and medical care.</p> <p>RTA was founded by a survivor of sexual violence, and built by the community of people deciding to speak out about their experiences as humanitarian aid workers. It takes a survivor centred approach to research.</p>
Further information	Nobert M (2017) Humanitarian Experiences with Sexual Violence: Compilation of Two Years of Report the Abuse Data Collection , Report the Abuse.

Stop the Sexual Assault against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers, Dyan Mazurana PHD and Phoebe Donnelley

Description	This study is one of the first scholarly studies of SEAH against humanitarian and development aid workers, including heterosexual women and men and members of the LGBT community.
Activities	<p>Collected primary data through semi-structured in-depth interviews with female, male, LGBT, international and national aid workers; security officers from aid agencies; portions of testimonies from women and men who were victims of sexual harassment and assault from interviews and the Report the Abuse study, and 30 in-depth interviews.</p> <p>Reviewed evidence, coded and analysed 78 scholarly works, grey literature and media reports.</p> <p>Reviewed findings from survey studies on this topic.</p> <p>Consulted databases that track incidents of violence against aid workers including the Aid Worker Security Database by Humanitarian Outcomes and the Aid in Danger Database by Insecurity Insights.</p>
Geographic scope	Global
Focus	Women and men from more than 70 international organisations including the UN, NGOs, governments, contractors, and those who have left the aid industry.
Status	Closed
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>This research was conducted with ethical approval from the Tufts University Internal Review Board.</p> <p>Names of interviewees, countries where assaults occurred, and humanitarian agencies were removed to ensure the confidentiality of interviewees.</p>
Further information	Mazurana, D. and Donnelly, P. (2017) STOP the Sexual Assault against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers , Somerville, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University 114 Curtis Street Somerville, MA

Cowboys and Conquering Kings	
Description	This self-published report is based on an academic piece of research which uses the real stories of 29 aid worker to explore the scale of SEAH in the aid sector. It also includes examples from the author's own personal experiences as a humanitarian aid worker for over ten years.
Activities	Collection of testimonies from 29 aid workers detailing over 50 incidents of SEA perpetrated by civilian humanitarian aid workers.
Geographic scope	Global
Focus	Humanitarian aid workers
Status	Closed
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	This qualitative research provides a deep-dive into aid workers' experiences of how power and privilege is abused within the sector. For example, most of the stories of SEAH that were shared with the author were perpetrated by expatriates, who were highly unlikely to face punitive action. Instead, national staff were most likely to be punished. This channel was able to listen to voices that might otherwise not be documented.
Further information	Spencer, D (2018) Cowboys and Conquering Kings

Safe Space Survey Report, United Nations	
Description	In 2018 the United Nations commissioned a report by Deloitte on sexual harassment within the UN workplace. Deloitte ran a confidential online survey to gather information on sexual harassment across the UN and related entities globally. This survey yielded 27 key findings on a) prevalence, b) the target's experience, c) the witness' experience, d) work environment, e) organisational policies and processes.
Activities	Designed a survey collaboratively with the UN. Conducted regular consultations with the core UN project team and reviewed relevant documentation.
Geographic scope	Global
Focus	UN Staff
Status	Closed
Any lessons learned about listening to	The survey was designed with a strong focus on ensuring that the user experience was simple, streamlined and intuitive.

and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>The survey questions were designed to produce actionable insights, and identify practical next steps.</p> <p>The survey was delivered online and available in the six official UN languages. It was supported by a communications campaign. This involved reminders to staff based on regular updates on response rates to attract a valid and reliable sample of respondents.</p> <p>Deloitte established various safeguards to ensure confidentiality and provided access to support mechanisms and reporting channels.</p>
Further information	Deloitte (2019) UN Safe Space Survey Report .

UNAIDS	
Description	UNAIDS commissioned an Independent Expert Panel to a) review the leadership and culture of responding to harassment, bullying and abuse of power and retaliation within UNAIDS; b) assess why there is a significant difference between the number of reports of harassment through the anonymous staff surveys (high) and formal complaints made (low); d) evaluate the effectiveness of the policies and procedures to prevent and address harassment in UNAIDS; e) recommend a comprehensive set of measures on organisational culture and policies related to preventing and addressing SEAH.
Activities	Conducted a survey sent to all UNAIDS staff, to gain greater understanding of the SEAH risks faced and the barriers to preventing and addressing these.
Geographic scope	Global
Focus	UNAIDS staff
Status	Closed
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>The independence of the Independent Expert Panel (IEP) was crucial to this listening exercise. In order to achieve this, during the period of review, the panel operated with its own secretariat, which was selected via a competitive tendering process. The IEP's contact with UNAIDS was then limited to coordination of activities, reports of its work plan, request for information and requests for interviews. The IEP also set up an independent external email address through a secure link to ensure that individuals could respond to the survey anonymously.</p> <p>The survey had a response rate of 60%+ (an excellent rate for an online survey), suggesting that putting in place these mechanisms</p>

	are a successful way of reassuring people that it is safe to take part and their voice will be heard.
Further information	UNAIDS (2018) Report on the work of the Independent Expert Panel on prevention of and response to harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and abuse of power at UNAIDS Secretariat.

World Bank	
Description	The World Bank has conducted several surveys and internal consultations with staff to hear their experiences and suggestions of how to address sexual harassment within the organisation.
Activities	<p>Internal consultations One of the main drivers of the World Bank’s sexual harassment strategy is internal consultations. The WBG Action Plan commits to carrying out targeted focus groups and interviews in specific country offices or with specific groups, as required.</p> <p>Staff survey A survey of all staff about sexual harassment is conducted on an annual or biennial basis. The survey is anonymous to ensure unbiased information.</p>
Geographic scope	Global
Focus	World Bank staff, with a focus on sexual harassment
Status	Active
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>Surveys are conducted with all staff, including those on both temporary and permanent contracts. The 2018 World Bank survey was sent out to 24,000 staff, of which 5,056 completed it.¹</p> <p>In the World Bank 2018 survey, 25% of women and 4% of men reported experiencing sexual harassment, compared to 4% of staff in a UNAIDS survey and 1% in a DFID survey. An evidence review suggested the difference was due to the World Bank survey focusing explicitly on sexual harassment which may encourage selection bias with staff who have experienced harassment more likely to complete it. In contrast, the UNAIDS and DFID surveys included questions on sexual harassment within a more general staff survey.²</p>
Further information	World Bank (2019) WBG Action Plan for Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment.

¹ Faus, J (2018) ‘[One in four female workers at World Bank has felt sexually harassed](#)’, *El Pais*.

² Feather, J., Martin, R., & Neville, S. (2021) [Global Evidence Review of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment \(SEAH\) in the Aid Sector](#), London: Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub.



Insecurity Insight	
Description	Insecurity Insight monitors incidents of sexual violence in conflict contexts. It provides regular updates through monthly news briefs.
Activities	Developed two platforms , which enable survivors of SEAH working in public health crises in the DRC and in aid and humanitarian workplaces more generally to share their experiences of SEAH. This data can either be passed on to the relevant organisation the person worked for (anonymously or with details), and/or is kept on a confidential database and used in any reports on the scale of SEAH and effectiveness of the responses.
Geographic scope	DRC; global
Focus	SEAH in Public Health Crises, and aid and humanitarian workplaces
Status	Open
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>Insecurity Insight’s platform and the materials linked to this were designed with survivors of SEAH. It has been developed to ensure survivors only share the details of their experiences that they are comfortable with. They are able to leave any number of questions unanswered or blank.</p> <p>Trusted supporters of survivors of SEAH are also able to share an experience on a survivor’s behalf.</p> <p>Recording an experience of SEAH will not lead to an investigation-administrative or criminal. However, if a survivor wishes, they can opt for their details to be passed onto a partner organisation who can support them further. Unless they request their details be passed on, all identifying details they choose to provide will remain confidential.</p> <p>All data is securely stored on servers run by Amazon Web Services in the United States and the information is downloaded regularly.</p>
Further information	<p>Platform for sharing experiences of SEAH in public health crises within the DRC: http://insecurityinsight.org/projects/reporting-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-in-the-drc</p> <p>Platform for sharing experiences of SEAH in aid and humanitarian workplaces: https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/preview/owmdhcel</p>

Loop	
Description	Loop is a platform for people engaged in the aid sector to provide feedback on services and share stories of the impact of interventions on their lives. These can include sensitive stories about sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.
Activities	Developed a platform for individuals to share feedback on interventions including stories of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and their experience of the response that follows these incidents.
Geographic scope	Global
Focus	Communities engaged with the aid sector.
Status	Active
Any lessons learned about listening to and engaging with victims, survivors and whistleblowers	<p>Loop takes a survivor-centred approach to sensitive stories that are shared with them, which are not posted on the open platform. Survivors are also provided access to services through a safe referral pathway.</p> <p>Loop is compliant with the highest standards of data protection for all users of the site globally. The data they collect is stored and managed with the highest levels of data security.</p> <p>Feedback to Loop can be made online or via SMS. It will soon be available through WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger.</p> <p>Loop is accessible in local languages.</p> <p>Users can also share feedback using interactive voice technology on their phone, meaning the app service does not require literacy.</p>
Further information	https://www.talktoloop.org/sensitive-stories

Annex 1: Methodology

This rapid research query has been conducted as systematically as possible, under tight time constraints.

The methodology for this mapping began with an initial literature review using searches on Google and relevant electronic databases, as well as through Helpdesk consortium partners – Social Development Direct, International Rescue Committee, CARE and Raising Voices.

We also reached out to representatives from other organisations as part of this query, including Norwegian People's Aid, Child Hope, and Building Blocks for Development. At the time of submitting this query, we have not yet heard back from Concord Europe, Forus International, and Humanitarian Women's Network. We also spoke to safeguarding experts at Social Development Direct and the Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (RSH), as well as freelance experts in this field who were recommended to us through our consultations.

Search terms included: harassment*, abuse, exploitation, violence, SEA, SEAH, survivor*, victim*, engage, participation, listening channel, network, organisation, forum, platform, survey, consultation.

To be eligible for inclusion in this rapid mapping, reports had to fulfil the following criteria:

- Focus: Global listening channels for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) in the aid sector.
- Time period: From January 2010 to present.
- Language: English
- Status: Existing, recent, ad hoc, or closed channels for victims, survivors and whistleblowers to be heard and engage with the global efforts to tackle SEAH

In total, 20 global listening channels have been mapped in this report.

Limitations:

- Availability of evidence: There is limited documentation of listening channels, particularly the more informal and spontaneous channels.
- Limited time: This report is based on a rapid mapping and although the authors reached out to various safeguarding experts working in the sector, it has not been possible to organise consultations or gather more insights including through communities of practice within the timeframe.
- Geographical/language limitations: most listening channels are based in the global North and one of the limitations of this exercise is the lack of identified channels beyond anglophone channels.

References

¹ Channels across the aid sector for victims, survivors, whistleblowers of SEAH and their representatives to share their experiences. These could include existing, recent, ad hoc, or closed channels for victims, survivors and whistleblowers to be heard and engage with the global efforts to tackle SEAH

² Page 5 of International Development Committee (2018) [Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector Eighth Report of Session 2017–19](#), House of Commons International Development Committee.

³ Background to the query provided by the Safeguarding Unit (December 2021).

⁴ “An approach that recognises the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery. This includes recognising the signs and symptoms of trauma; fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices and actively aiming to prevent re-traumatization” RSH (2020) Best practice in engaging survivors of sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) Tip Sheet

⁵ ICAI (2021) [The UK’s Approach to Safeguarding in the Humanitarian Sector](#)

⁶ Written evidence submitted by NGO Safe Space (MRS0327)

<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/3345/pdf/>

⁷ AIDS-Free World (2018) [AIDS-Free World Code Blue Campaign Submission](#) to the UK House of Commons Select Committee on International Development’s Inquiry on sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector.

⁸ Code Blue (2018) ‘[Members of Former Peacekeeping Communities in Sierra Leone Speak Up](#)’.

⁹ <http://www.codebluecampaign.com/our-projects>

¹⁰ Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, North Sudan, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

About Helpdesk reports: The Ending Violence Helpdesk is funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), contracted through the Ending Violence Team. This helpdesk report is based on up to 9 days of desk-based research and is designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues and expert thinking.

For any further request or enquiry, contact enquiries@vawghelpdesk.org.

Suggested citation:

Clugston, N. and Fraser, E. (2022). *Mapping of Global Listening Channels on SEAH*, Ending Violence Helpdesk Research Report No. 9. London UK: Ending Violence Helpdesk