

# Australian Council for International Development

---

Learning Event Summary:  
'Safeguarding with Partners'



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

# Introduction

All ACFID members have in place a policy that prohibits sexual exploitation and abuse, describes behavioural standards, specifies reporting responsibilities and articulates the ways in which the policy will be implemented, including with partners in country.

The critical aspect of a prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) policy is how it works in practice. ACFID members work in complex places, each with its own culture, language and norms. These are places with many moving parts, changing staff, new and old relationships, and dynamic political landscapes.

It's clear to our organisations and our partners that simply inserting sentences into our agreements or seeking to devolve responsibilities through our relationships will be insufficient to address PSEA effectively.

The 'Safeguarding with Partners' learning event brought together individuals and organisations from across ACFID's diverse membership. It was an opportunity for frank and open discussion about the challenges we're facing, for sharing our successes and stories of good practice, and for productive dialogue on opportunities for collaboration.

## EVENT SUMMARY

Held on 3 March 2020 in Melbourne, the 'Safeguarding with Partners' learning event commenced with a [video presentation](#) from Le Thi Hong, Giang, the CARE Vietnam country office focal point for PSEAH.

In the [second presentation](#), Bronwyn Downes, Safeguarding Coordinator for CARE Australia, shared reflections, stories and examples on five key elements of embedding PSEAH policy with in-country partners.

The [third presentation](#) summarised key insights from Oxfam Australia's Safeguarding Peer Learning Event. Uma Komalan shared key learnings from Oxfam's work with partners on strengthening safeguarding practices.

In the [final presentation](#), Belinda Lauria from Anglican Overseas Aid presented a case study of good practice, detailing key moments through the journey, highlighting assets for success and reflecting on the impact of Anglican Overseas Aid's membership of the Church Agencies Network – Disaster Operations Network.

The panel concluded with a [Q&A session](#) and advice on resources to [learn more](#).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The 'Safeguarding with Partners' learning event would not have been possible without the valuable contributions of Le Thi Hong, Giang (CARE Vietnam), Bronwyn Downes (CARE Australia), Uma Komalan and Jody Kelly (Oxfam Australia), Belinda Lauria (Anglican Overseas Aid), Anne Fitzpatrick (Australian Lutheran World Service), Leocadio Dira (ActionAid Australia), and the in-person and online participants of the 'Safeguarding with Partners' learning event.

# Presentation 1

**Video presentation by Le Thi Hong, Giang,  
Vietnam Country Office, CARE Vietnam**

Giang became the CARE Vietnam country office focal point for PSEAH in 2019. She provides training to CARE staff and partners on PSEA policy.

Giang has worked with other focal points and the core team in the country office to develop community-based feedback mechanisms. She also works with project teams and local partners to complete risk assessments and mitigation planning.

[Watch Giang's video presentation](#), where she sets the scene with her insights on some of the challenges and opportunities of implementing PSEAH policies with in-country partners.



# Presentation 2

**Panel presentation by Bronwyn Downes,  
Safeguarding Coordinator, CARE Australia**

Bronwyn Downes is the Safeguarding Coordinator for CARE Australia. Bronwyn has been working in safeguarding for over 12 years, back before it was referred to as 'safeguarding'! Prior to starting with CARE, her work has taken her to Kenya, Cambodia and Nauru.

As Safeguarding Coordinator, Bronwyn works with seven country offices across the Pacific and Asia, supporting a network of focal points in PSEAH and child protection. With a view that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, Bronwyn aims to embed safeguarding in the organisation's culture.

In her presentation, Bronwyn shares her insights and learnings on working with partners in her Safeguarding Coordinator role with CARE Australia. She shares reflections, stories and examples around five key elements of embedding PSEAH policy with in-country partners: building relationships, finding the right person, starting conversations, working across cultures, working within cultures, and using experiential approaches.





### **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**

"For me, what I've noticed is the work of implementing PSEAH with partners is it's so much relationship-based work – it's about the building of relationships.

"Working with CARE Australia, I'm very fortunate that I have a great structure behind me that allows me to travel to each of our country offices generally once a year. Though a privilege, one visit a year is not a huge amount of time to build a relationship, but what I found is that in partnering with people in country, there's an absolute shift in my ability to work with people once I've gone in and spent time with them face-to-face in country. There's a change in the dynamic of that relationship."

### **FINDING THE RIGHT PERSON**

"One of the other things that my relational experience with the work has shown is that it's crucial to find the right person.

"There's a great phrase I learnt a few years ago: "volun-told". Quite often people are "volun-told" that they will take on additional responsibility on top of their substantive position. Maybe it's because they've got some interest, maybe it's the role they are in, or maybe they're a high achiever, and that's why they've been given that extra responsibility. But sometimes they don't necessarily have the time or the skills or the desire to do the work, and it's just put onto them anyway.

"I've learnt that we need to make sure that we have the right people in the country offices doing the work and working with the partners.

"This can often be difficult as it's quite a sensitive topic area. It's something that may not be comfortable for a lot of our staff, or they may experience backlash in the way of gossip and rumours in the office because of the kinds of conversations safeguarding involves. And so, it's about finding someone who will be comfortable with the content and can have those conversations, and it's also not always the most obvious person."

---

*"It's so much relationship-based work – it's about the building of relationships."*

---

### **STARTING CONVERSATIONS**

"In the countries where we work, a huge part of my work over the last year has been community-based feedback mechanisms – making sure that they're really strong with well-developed systems and structures in-country. There are two components to this: firstly, designing and implementing one for the organisation in country. But it's also a great opportunity to start the conversation with your partners.

"This is something that I talk about with all of the focal points that I'm working with, and all the people that are developing our community-based feedback mechanisms. It's a great conversation starter with partners to just be able to say "We're making a community-based feedback mechanism that's about our staff doing the right thing and people being able to give us feedback about our programs. But we're working together, and it could be that someone tells me something about your staff, so how could we manage that together?"



"That's been a really great tool for the staff in-country to be able to initiate some of those conversations with our partners about what *our* standards are, and a great conversation starter for them about standards and conduct.

"What has also been interesting is, after developing tools, I share them with staff in country offices; and most of the country offices had implemented the tools and have those conversations and build their mechanisms. But one country office hadn't until the tools somehow ended up with the MEAL team. That MEAL team has now developed one of our strongest community-based reporting mechanisms.

"Coming back to that theme of the relationship and having the right person in the organisation to progress the work. The team who have implemented the tool don't come from the usual places focal points are drawn from such as HR, Safety and Security or programming teams – they're from the monitoring and evaluation team. But they were like, "huh, this is kind of part of our work". And so, *they've* now taken that and run with that."

---

*"I know that when I go and visit a country office, I am going to be having conversations that are offensive. Not because I try to offend people, but because I'm talking about things which are not normally spoken about."*

---

## WORKING ACROSS CULTURES

"It's been really interesting working from as far east as Vanuatu and as far west as Myanmar, there's a big difference in the cultures of each of the countries and the relationships between the attitudes and the standards, and also in the physical presentation and appearance of the staff and the people that we're working with.

"When we think about doing things from CARE Australia's perspective, what of our activities can we scale up? If I do a poster, I want it to be able to be used across all our country offices, rather than having to get each country to develop their own visual resources so that staff and communities can identify with the images.

"It's been a fun challenge to find images that can be used across all of the countries and that speak to the issues that we're talking about. But I've had some great conversations back here with our head office about stick figures and, in terms of finding something that speaks of all of the cultures that we're working with, they actually worked really well, and they get a few giggles when you send these really cute stick figures that we've sourced."

## WORKING WITHIN CULTURES

"Working within a certain cultural context, we can find that these behaviours that we are talking about in-country are behaviours which might not be seen as inappropriate.

"This still happens here in Australia when people say, "you're the PC police" or "you're taking the fun out of things". We do work in contexts where you're helping people understand the impact that sexual harassment has in workplaces, and that things like small jokes are not appropriate, or that they have a damaging impact.



"But there's a second culture aspect: I know that when I go and visit a country office, I am going to be having conversations that are offensive. Not because I try to offend people, but because I'm talking about things which are not normally spoken about.

"In a sense, that's how I help my country office focal points and staff, because I can go in and talk about those things more openly, because I'm the outsider. I think having that outsider's ability to go in can be helpful. But the way that I try and do it really sensitively is – because I know I'm causing offence in that area – in all of my other conduct and behaviour, I try not to cause offence.

"What I'm wearing today is very strategically planned – these are my Vanuatu skirts that I wear when I go to the Vanuatu country office because I work in some of the south islands where women can't really wear pants. I wear these because I'm trying, in all my other behaviours, to blend into the culture as much as a red-headed, curly-haired white girl can!

"When I'm talking about these things that do cause cultural offence, I'm doing it in a way where everything else is, hopefully, not causing offence. Just to ease that relationship and to not be – as Giang was saying earlier – the Westerner imposing standards; but to really try and bridge some of those other gaps."

### USING EXPERIENTIAL APPROACHES

"The last thing I wanted to mention in terms of the tools and how we work with our partners is that part of being part of that big, beautiful confederation means we do share things well across all of our lead member organisations, and we were really fortunate that one of our other international colleagues has developed a really fantastic training package all about experiential learning.

"Instead of going in with PowerPoint slides of theoretical components to the training that we do with our partners, we actually do it through workshops that are incredibly experiential and giving people different perspectives and lenses in how they look at sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. Getting them to participate in activities like power walks, where people take on the role of somebody else and step forward if they have access to resources and remain where they are when they don't have access to resources.

"Activities like that actually make people think about these concepts away from just the theory of 'you can't do this, and you can do that' has been really, really productive in the promotion of that messaging, having people think about situations from different framings."

---

# Presentation 3

**Panel presentation by Uma Komalan,  
Program Policy and Standards Coordinator,  
Oxfam Australia**

Uma Komalan is a strengths-based practitioner with over 16 years of experience in the international development sector.

Uma is currently the Program Policy and Standards Coordinator at Oxfam Australia and the technical lead for Safeguarding within Programs since 2013. In this capacity, Uma has led and actively contributed to the development of safeguarding policies, trainings and other knowledge resources. She is a co-author of the Oxfam Australia Child Safeguarding Toolkit and is currently a member of the Oxfam International Safeguarding Core Group.

As a program quality specialist, Uma has also developed a comprehensive performance analysis system for Oxfam Australia's safeguarding work across country teams.

Uma brings deep expertise in developing and embedding safeguarding systems across diverse development and humanitarian programs and has more than eight years of experience working with country teams and implementing partners for strengthening safeguarding within complex program settings.

Uma's presentation shares key learnings from Oxfam's work with partners on strengthening safeguarding practices across four broad areas: drawing on past experience, striking the right balance between good partnership and compliance, providing cross-functional support to partners, and fostering sectoral collaboration.





### **HOW CAN WE DRAW ON WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM PAST EXPERIENCE?**

#### **We learn from past experience by using our expertise in gender-informed programming**

"Most ANGOs have significant experience in gender-informed approaches to development and humanitarian programming, and some of us bring a wealth of experience in areas like gender-based violence and violence against women. These are areas where we can harness learning and apply it to prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and engaging our partners on PSEAH.

"Similar to gender and development work, unpacking and understanding the concepts of power and vulnerability and how they manifest within the different contexts that we work in is central to setting up survivor-centred approaches to PSEAH and also initiating and sustaining conversations with our partners around PSEAH."

#### **We learn from past experience by building on our child safeguarding work**

"As ANGOs, we also have a wealth of experience in child safeguarding because of our decade-long engagement with partners around developing child safeguarding policies and procedures, setting up systems for community-based feedback mechanisms, etc.

"Globally, there has been a lot of momentum in the past couple of years in the area of safeguarding. When you assess the global efforts on safeguarding that NGOs and their implementing partners are collectively undertaking, Australian NGOs are in a position of comparative advantage because we've had this long history of working with partners around child safeguarding.

"If you look at the new PSEAH policies from DFAT, the changes to the ACFID Code of Conduct around PSEAH, and PSEAH standards across the globe, they all come from the same underlying principles as child safeguarding (for example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA). This means we've been working with that set of principles for a while now.

"The approach we've taken in Oxfam is one of building on existing systems. For example, in the area of child safeguarding we require every country team to develop an annual implementation plan and report against it on a six-monthly basis. We have a system like all other ANGOs to develop project-level child safeguarding risk assessments. There is also an expectation that all our offices and partners would have effective community-based feedback mechanisms on the ground.

"As we begin to roll out our PSEA Policy, our approach has been key messaging to partners and country colleagues around building on the existing systems. That whatever systems you have built for child safeguarding can be broadened to cater to PSEAH. That's not to say they're identical areas of practice, but there are similarities to leverage."

#### **We learn from past experience by taking opportunities to reflect and learn**

"One initiative we have recently undertaken is to bring people together for a peer-learning event on safeguarding. We brought in colleagues from across 13 country teams to jointly reflect on what has been working well in our practice in relation to safeguarding – mainly child safeguarding – and to ask how can we consolidate that learning and apply it in our work on PSEAH moving forward?

"In fact, most of the insights that I'm sharing with you today, are insights that colleagues



have shared based on their work with their local community partners during the Learning Event.”

### **HOW CAN WE STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN GOOD PARTNERSHIP AND THE COMPLIANCE AGENDA?**

#### **We strike a balance by shifting the narrative**

“In Oxfam’s very early work with partners on child safeguarding – when we started opening up conversations with partners around child safeguarding – when we did this as a donor compliance issue, it tended to elicit more of a tick-box response from partners. As development practitioners, that’s definitely not what we want; that’s definitely not what our partners want.

“What we have consistently heard from our country teams is that using compliance language sometimes creates unproductive dynamics, especially when you’re working with women’s rights movements and people’s movements, youth groups, etc.

“Recognising the sensitivities in embracing those subjects, what we are trying to do is to shift that narrative – more to jointly creating safe environments with our partners. We’re trying to bring the conversations back to program quality and accountability. That’s accountability to partners and *from* partners; and more importantly, talking more about the joint accountability that Oxfam and partners have to the communities that we work with.

“We are trying to bring it back to the importance of duty of care, and the duty of care that Oxfam and partners share to the communities that we work with. And in, various contexts we are seeing that that sort of an approach resonates better with the partners that we are working with.”

#### **We strike a balance by catering to partner diversity**

“The next point I want to touch on is the importance of catering to partner diversity, and how the one-size-fits-all approach can sometimes set people up to fail.

“In Oxfam, we’ve made small beginnings at the organisational level by having very clear guidelines around safeguarding requirements for different types of partners. That then gives our country team colleagues a good enough conversation starter when they are working with partners.

---

*“We are trying to bring the conversations back to program quality and accountability...trying to bring it back to the importance of duty of care.”*

---

“We are being flexible in terms of our standard business processes when it comes to partner capacities and systems.

“For example, our colleagues in the Pacific have recently done a lot of work in contextualising a partner capacity assessment approach that is tailored to a Pacific island context. They have very recently done a lot of work developing a tool that they can use with small community-based partners. As a successor for that piece of work, they are planning on working with churches, community leaders, and women’s groups to develop an organisational safeguarding assessment guide.”



**We strike a balance by working locally to contextualise**

"Initiatives to cater and adapt your systems and processes to fit the diverse range of partners that we work with tend to elicit positive outcomes and positive experiences.

"As development practitioners, we all accept that context is everything. And in all the contexts where we are working, we don't hold the expertise. It's crucial to recognise that and to work with local experts to contextualise safeguarding messages, especially when it comes to working with partners.

"An example I wanted to share with you is an example from Oxfam in Pakistan, where they partnered with two organisations. One was a child-focused organisation, Rozaan, who work with their staff and partners in awareness generation around child safeguarding both as a policy and as a mechanism. Oxfam in Pakistan also brought in a gender-specialist organisation, Mehargarh, to do awareness-raising programs with staff and the 23 partner organisations that they worked with. These specialist organisations also jointly provided support to the partners for developing their own internal policies.

"In Timor-Leste we've adopted a similar model, where we brought in a local specialist organisation to provide training, mentoring and monitoring support to the entire partner portfolio that we work with.

"The feedback we have had from the country team is that working with this local provider has been positive for understanding the local context, issues and language. In a Timor-Leste context, 'safeguarding' didn't really translate into Tetum, so bringing in a local organisation who could unpack the concept for our partners has been really helpful."

**HOW CAN WE PROVIDE PARTNERS WITH THE CROSS-FUNCTIONAL SUPPORT THEY NEED?**

**By breaking down silos within our own teams and ways of working**

"The third area I wanted to focus on is the importance of cross-functional support to partners.

"Many times, when you're talking about partner engagement, it's usually as a program issue or a program responsibility or it sits within HR. It's taken as either-or; but really, it's important to break that mindset and look at this as a cross-functional area of practice across the continuum of prevention-detection and response.

"We all know, creating safe environments can only be achieved by making changes to various domains of our work and the same applies to the partners that we work with.

"They might need program support for undertaking safeguarding risk assessments at the program level; they may need HR support for developing safe recruitment and screening practices; they may need MEL support in setting up effective community feedback mechanisms on the ground; they may need media and communication support for establishing protocols around storage and use of images, stories and personal information.

"As ANGOs, when we are reflecting on working with partners, it's very important to think about that as a cross-functional response, as a shared responsibility across the organisation. Even where you have dedicated safeguarding personnel or a dedicated safeguarding team, there is a role for different teams to play in bringing out effective outcomes in relation to safeguarding with partners."



### HOW CAN WE CONTINUE TO FOSTER SECTORAL COLLABORATION?

#### We can foster sectoral collaboration by exploring ideas and opportunities

"The last point is the importance of fostering sectoral collaboration, and there are many examples and ideas of how we could do this:

- Foster partner participation in in-country PSEA coordination mechanisms
- Replicate something similar to a community of practice at the country level, bringing our partners together to reflect, share and learn on a regular basis
- Foster networking between partners for knowledge and resource sharing
- Coordinate partner trainings and engagement through collaboration among NGOs and INGOs to streamline partner trainings
- Explore initiatives like undertaking joint partner capacity assessments, etc.

"Of course, there are complexities on the ground – and there's a lot of ground to cover there – but these are all ideas worth considering by the sector."

#### We can foster sectoral collaboration by sharing our stories of good practice

"I just wanted to leave you with a good-practice story from our work in Vanuatu.

"In Vanuatu, we have worked with the Vanuatu Council of Churches to review their governance practices and develop new safeguarding policies, standards and practices. We worked with the Council to define a new and inclusive constitution covering issues relating to the LGBTI community, people with disabilities, domestic violence and child exploitation.

"We were able to jointly identify safeguarding principles in the Bible and use these to develop a new safeguarding policy for the Vanuatu Council of Churches that aligned with their core values and mandates, and Oxfam's own safeguarding mandates."

---

---

Interested in being part of sectoral collaboration? Join the ACFID Safeguarding Community of Practice by emailing [rlans@acfid.asn.au](mailto:rlans@acfid.asn.au)

---

# Presentation 4

**Panel presentation by Belinda Lauria,  
Program Manager – Quality and  
Compliance, Anglican Overseas Aid**

Belinda Lauria is the Program Manager – Quality and Compliance at Anglican Overseas Aid. Belinda is experienced in child protection and safeguarding, policy and programmatic development and the application of child protection in the international aid and development sector.

Belinda has worked in safeguarding roles within both secular and faith-based organisations; and she is currently Anglican Overseas Aid's Safeguarding Focal Point.

Belinda's experience spans development of organisational safeguarding frameworks, including PSEAH policy development; and partner capacity strengthening and facilitation of technical training with international partners.

In her presentation, Belinda shares a case study of good practice from Anglican Overseas Aid's work with partners in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. She details key moments through the journey, highlighting lessons learned and assets for success.





## THE VOICES OF THE CHURCH LEADERSHIP

"In July 2019, I was fortunate enough to be invited by our partners, the Anglican Church of Melanesia, to co-facilitate a 'Safe Churches' policy development workshop. The Church has had a presence in the Solomon Islands for over 150 years, it's a well-established Church and civil society organisation with a membership of some 200,000 (or 34% of the population in the Solomon Islands). It is the largest church in the Solomon Islands, in a nation where 96% of the population identify as Christian; and in Vanuatu the Church has 44,000 members (or 15% of the population).

"During this workshop in Honiara, there was a strong sentiment from the group that sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment was very real and very raw for them. That this is not just about developing policy; this is about addressing a prevalent issue affecting them and the community.

"The quotes here are from some of the Church leadership during that workshop:

---

*"We have detached from religion"*

*"People stay silent because they believe it is against their cultural belief and would disrespect the perpetrator"*

*"This is not a biblical perspective"*

*"Only once people start reporting and demonstrating to other people in the workplace and the community that such behaviour and treatment is unacceptable, will people be encouraged to speak out, this is the only way to reduce the harmful practices"*

"The quotes illustrate the emotion, the urgency, and the reality of abuse, harm and exploitation that was discussed that day.

"The group vocalised that as a Church they need to accept and acknowledge that abuses do happen, yet most people are remaining silent. Priests in the room reminded us that vulnerable people are experiencing harm and abuse, and not much is being done about it.

"It was quite an extraordinary experience for me to be in that room at that moment.

"If I had co-facilitated in Australia, I don't know that people would have been so open. Which comes back to what Bronwyn said earlier, that being the outsider coming in sometimes does put us in the position of, hopefully not offending, but at the same time touching on a very sensitive topic. Because we are detached from that community it can allow us to encourage the group to open up a bit more. And I don't know if that would be the same here in Australia.

"People in that room – the members of that Church – were committing to publicly naming and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. The initial step taken was mobilising key Church figures to start to develop a safeguarding framework and specifically looking at then developing a PSEAH policy."

## A DESIRE TO 'BREAK THE SILENCE'

"Shortly after that workshop, once I had returned to Australia, the church adopted a whole-of-church approach and started the Safe Churches working group.

"The working group facilitated a *talanoa*, which is Tongan for a meeting where all sit together in the same room, on the same level and talk to a topic.



“The aim there was to capture voices and feedback from across the church – both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – from their staff, clergy and management.

“It also aimed to ensure that the working group aligned this particular policy with broader church work, particularly processes in the different ministries of the church who, because of coalitions they are part of, were developing other safeguarding frameworks and practices in their own departments. It aimed to make sure they were all working towards the same goal with one another and not duplicating processes.

“Some religious leaders have spread discourse condemning family violence and promoting gender justices by identifying and condemning harmful practices based on religion and reaffirmed the religious imperative to protect all people based on biblical scripture.”

#### **FAR-REACHING AND INFLUENTIAL: INSTITUTION-LEVEL CHANGE**

“In 2019 Anglican Overseas Aid and our partners in Vanuatu collaborated to design and conduct a baseline. Data was collected from approximately 200 individuals comprised of committee members, traditional and faith leaders. It gathered data on gender and GBV attitudes, beliefs, practices and knowledge.

“The study found that interventions that had been welcomed into communities and that had created change are those that had been developed in a culturally appropriate, holistic framework. This included listening to community voices and advice; and seeking solutions not only on the physical needs of the GBV survivor, but the underlying causes including the social and spiritual systems that reinforce and perpetuate harmful beliefs and

behaviour that diminish females relationships with each other, themselves, their environment and their spirituality.

“Data including testimonies from community leaders detail several transformational changes in priests and chiefs that are now actively working alongside contemporary interventions and community support services such as counselling services.

“At Anglican Overseas Aid, we have applied the same approach with PSEAH at the organisational level with our partners.”

---

*“The group vocalised that as a Church they need to accept and acknowledge that abuses do happen, yet most people are remaining silent... People in that room – members of that Church – were committing to publicly naming and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.”*

---

#### **ASSETS FOR SUCCESS**

“I will briefly describe some of the key and pre-existing assets of our partners in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu that were mobilised and that enabled the safeguarding process to commence. These resources will aid in their implementation of the policy throughout their very large church staff and then their communities.”



**Asset for success: ecumenical affiliations**

"Our partners are generally members of national, regional and global ecumenical coalitions. Many of our partners have been positively influenced and motivated through these connections and opportunities to engage and participate in the discourse on church safeguarding practices."

**Asset for success: language and religious discourse**

"Often, it's the language that we use that is key. We talk about 'Safe Churches' rather than the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. That doesn't mean to say we don't need that term – of course we do, and in all formal documentation it's there. But that's not how we frame or commence the conversations."

**Asset for success: the power of Faith in communities**

"The Church is deeply embedded and influential across every facet of life in the communities in which we program. Therefore, a biblical approach is highly appropriate and contextual for our partners in those communities.

"Local faith actors can be critical to sustaining systemic changes because they are omnipresent in communities. Church denominations themselves have a unique network that place of them in an influential position in the policy space as well.

"A safe whole-of-church approach engaging the local faith community is key to sustaining systemic changes and widening influence and impact."

**Asset for success: faith leaders as agents of change**

"Developing this policy with our partners is not just a policy for a small group of staff members. This is a policy for an entire church.

"The equivalent of CEOs and COOs as well as theologians, bishops and archbishops have been consulted and involved in the policy development and the general safeguarding strengthening of their systems and practices.

"Many of the communities in which your agencies program will be affected by PSEAH policies that churches develop. There are some of you here today that partner with branches of the church. One example is IWDA with the Christian Care Centre – the Centre's safehouses in the Solomon Islands is one project of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, run by an order of Anglican sisters."

**WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS: INDIVIDUAL AND CONTEXTUALISED, LONG-TERM AND CONVERSATIONAL**

"Our work with partners has been a long-term approach, starting with a very soft entry with conversations both remotely and out in the field. The dialogue became more familiar over time, and we started working it into project and process documentation (for example, risk registers, agreements, etc.).

"The catalyst for the whole-of-organisation approach began with a survey, designed by the Church Agencies Network – Disaster Operations (CANDO), of which Anglican Overseas Aid is a member.

"The survey that was emailed out to partners was after about a year of conversations with partners on the topic. The survey provided Anglican Overseas Aid with consolidated data about partners' current practices that relate to



the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

"Baseline data lets Anglican Overseas Aid see how things change for our partners over time, and whether their experiences have been positive or negative.

"The survey also aimed to support partners by identifying existing processes and practices that partner organisations have in place to address things like harm, abuse, exploitation, and child protection, ensuring that as their partner Anglican Overseas Aid can be more effective and efficient in how we work with our partners and support them in their strengthening of their safeguarding frameworks and the development of their policies."

### **THE VALUE OF EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION**

"The Church Agencies Network – Disaster Operations (CANDO) is one Australian Humanitarian Partnership consortium comprised of eight Australian church agencies.

"Through this collaboration, we have established a core CANDO safeguarding working group to progress recommendations of an external review and establish a CANDO safeguarding focal point.

"We have aligned PSEAH definitions and standards across all eight CANDO agencies; and finalised a standard operating procedure. The objective of the SOP is to provide consortium-wide clarity on procedures for agencies to cooperate in the prevention of and response to SEAH, and child protection. It

articulates how CAN DO member agencies, and partner policies and processes, interface within a CAN DO consortium program.

"We have reviewed and developed safeguarding and protection modules on a disaster-ready training program; ensured the mutual terminology/definitions across CAN DO members' policies; and we held a two-day workshop at the end of last year where all the member agencies' safeguarding focal points came together to share learning, work on projects and develop our 2020 workplan.

"The next steps for us are to develop a joint approach to partner training and socialisation of our individual safeguarding policies and procedures; engaging with local communities on safeguarding; and developing guidance questions for humanitarian designs and proposals to effectively embed safeguarding systems throughout project design.

The formation of the Working Group and my participation within it has directly impacted and enhanced my ability to strengthen Anglican Overseas Aid's safeguarding framework, as well as the methods and approaches I and Anglican Overseas Aid have adopted when working with partners to enhance their safeguarding culture and practices. I know this is the collective opinion of my CAN DO Safeguarding Working Group counterparts.

"The development of a PSEAH policy, is not merely a plan adopted by us or our partners, but it is hoped that what is developed may be an effective and a sustainable implementation of plans and a concerted investment by partners and us through policy-enabling factors."

# Audience Q&A

## **Question 1: Do you have separate focal points for child safeguarding and PSEAH?**

*Bronwyn Downes, CARE Australia:*

"Some of our country offices split the role – one person will focus on child protection and another person will focus on PSEAH – and other country offices will have someone who does both together. I try not to tell people how they have to do it and let them decide in their country offices what's going to work for them.

"That fits in well with avoiding that "voluntold" approach where people can do a bit more of what they're actually interested in."

## **Question 2: I'm from a tiny organisation and resourcing can be a challenge – what would you say are the biggest learnings for smaller organisations?**

*Belinda Lauria, Anglican Overseas Aid:*

"We're tiny too! There's only six or seven of us at Anglican Overseas Aid so it's very much about looking at what already exists for us and for our partner organisations. That was part of our policy and process mapping: to look at what assets are already there and then build from the existing infrastructure and strengthen that rather than starting from scratch.

"The other thing has been inter-agency collaboration – we're very fortunate that we're a member of CANDO and we've got seven other church agency networks here in Australia to learn from and share policies and resources with. We've been able to implement an incredible amount through that kind of collaboration."

*Uma Komalan, Oxfam Australia:*

"We work with a lot of small partner organisations and you don't often see a consistent approach taken by any two country offices.

"In terms of developing policies and procedures, our staff work with partners to develop their policies, and in a lot of cases they make tiny tweaks and adaptations to an existing body of policies and procedures to make them more effective to their organisational requirements.

"In some cases, where we've worked with informal youth groups, etc. we go down the track of getting people involved in the work to sign the code of conduct as our only safeguarding mechanism.

"But it also depends a lot on the needs of the work that's being done, the duration of the partnership and the risks associated with the level of contact with children and other vulnerable people."

## **Question 3: What are your recommendations for handling the mixed purpose of putting PSEA policies in place – one being that we're focussing on our staff, workplace, safety and culture; and the other on how we implement PSEA with beneficiaries?**

*Bronwyn Downes, CARE Australia:*

"For us at CARE, as a gender-focussed organisation, it's very much not about compliance – it's not about ticking boxes. Our whole goal in all of our work is to empower and create equity for women and girls. This is the core of our work.

"Doing this with each other in our workplace is the first place where we start, and doing prevention of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse in our programs is where we start to demonstrate that work to the communities that we're working in. So, for us we embed it in the core of what we do."

*Uma Komalan, Oxfam Australia:*

"I think it's very similar for Oxfam as well. But I must also acknowledge – because this is a learning forum – that the tension between staff-on-staff versus embedding it within programs, that is a very real challenge for organisations, and we don't always have clear answers yet."

**Question 4: It's very easy for this sort of work to become so big that it's no longer manageable – how do you manage the scope and scale of the work?**

*Jody Kelly, Oxfam Australia*

"One thing to acknowledge is that it's very easy for it to become so big that it becomes unmanageable, and what we're doing at Oxfam at the moment is we're trying to be very, very clear about what the boundaries are for the things that we do work on.

"We have great security and HR practitioners, but all of a sudden it can seem like a lot of their work is getting filtered into our work of safeguarding.

"So, being very clear on what the boundaries are by focussing on protecting those that we work with and that we support; and recognising that we can't necessarily fix everything for everybody – which also isn't always clear!

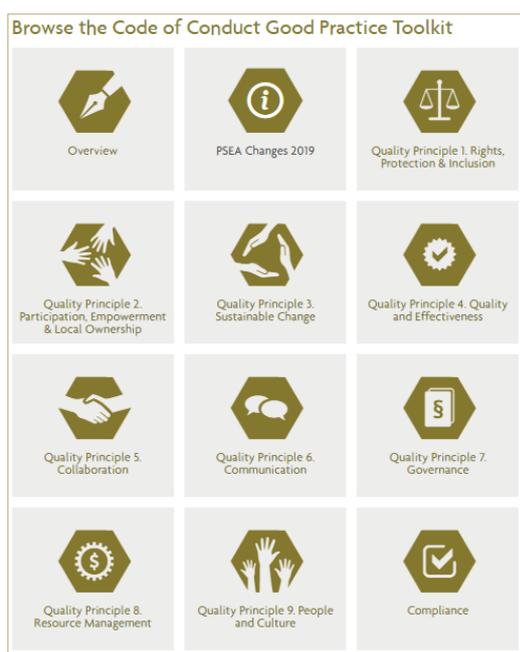
"But I think the new Safeguarding Community of Practice will be a place for these kinds of discussions, and we'll also be able to have these discussions with the HR Managers Community of Practice about what work sits where and so on."

---

# Learn More

## ACFID CODE OF CONDUCT GOOD PRACTICE TOOLKIT

Visit the [Good Practice Toolkit](#) to access good practice guidance and resources aligned to the ACFID Code of Conduct.



Helpful resources in the Good Practice Toolkit include:

- [Details on PSEA-related changes to the ACFID Code of Conduct](#)
- [Guidance for the Development of a PSEAH Policy](#)
- [Guidance for the Development of a Complaints Handling Policy](#)

## PSEAH RESOURCE HUB

The [PSEAH Resource Hub](#) is a free resource-sharing online platform. Visit the PSEAH Resource Hub to upload and share resources, search and download resources, and provide feedback and suggestions.



## PSEA NEWS FROM ACFID

[Keep up to date](#) with the latest work, news and resources from ACFID on PSEA, including:

- The [independent review](#) on the prevention of sexual misconduct
- ACFID's [implementation plan](#) to strengthen practice and culture
- Our [annual progress report](#) against the recommendations

 [acfid.asn.au/content/PSEA](https://acfid.asn.au/content/PSEA)

 [learning@acfid.asn.au](mailto:learning@acfid.asn.au)

 [/ACFID](https://www.facebook.com/ACFID)

 [/acfid](https://www.linkedin.com/company/acfid)

 [@acfid](https://twitter.com/acfid)

*Cover photo courtesy of the Department  
of Foreign Affairs and Trade / Flickr*