



Working with donors to strengthen safeguarding in Nigeria

In Nigeria, civil society organisations (CSOs) and donors (e.g. government or UN donors) or funding partners (e.g. International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) or the private sector) primarily work together to design and deliver aid sector programmes (including advocacy or communications).

Generally, CSOs in Nigeria find it harder to secure support from donors and funding partners to put in place or strengthen initiatives which do not directly contribute to a particular programme, such as safeguarding measures that need to be taken at an organisational level as well as for a programme.

The [DAC recommendation](#) on *Ending sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH)* sets a framework to guide OECD Member States (foreign governmental) donors on safeguarding.

Donors and funding partners take different approaches to safeguarding. For example, some may understand and prioritise it but may not sufficiently resource it, or they may expect their grantees to have safeguarding measures in place already. Others may not understand, prioritise or resource it.

This tip sheet shares some key tips for CSOs in Nigeria on how to approach different funders to discuss CSO safeguarding resource and capacity needs and improve their safeguarding management, prevention and response.

Who is accountable to whom?

All actors in the programme delivery chain have safeguarding responsibilities.

- Donors and funding partners have an obligation to ensure that they achieve the highest possible impact with the available funding. A positive impact can only be achieved when services and programmes are safely delivered.
- CSOs focus on delivering efficient and effective programmes.
- For a programme to be high quality, efficient and effective, it must include ways to identify, prevent and respond to the risks of SEAH and other harms and abuses. Donors and funding partners, and the CSOs delivering programmes, all have significant responsibility for this.
- On safeguarding issues, donors and funding partners, and the CSOs they are funding, are accountable to:
 - Each other
 - Their own staff
 - Victims and survivors of SEAH and other harms and abuses in the funding chain
 - The populations they are reaching with the programmes they are funding
 - All other actors working in the humanitarian and international development sector as failures in safeguarding can damage the reputation and trust in the sector as a whole.

Why should a donor or funding partner prioritise safeguarding?

Providing funding for safeguarding:

- Is the right thing to do. Achieving effective safeguarding requires donor support and it is the donor / funding partner's responsibility to appropriately fund safeguarding. Also, donors need to put safeguards in place within their own organisations.
- Is a key part of delivering effective and efficient programmes. A programme cannot be considered effective if beneficiaries, staff or others are harmed as a result of its intervention.
- Can help improve the credibility and trust in donor or funding partner, and in turn contribute to greater transparency and collaboration when tackling safeguarding concerns and challenges.
- Can contribute to building public approval.
- Can contribute to improving sector-wide performance on safeguarding and develop trust that the sector can deliver aid and development with the relevant safeguards in place.

Helping donors and funding partners understand safeguarding in practice

When interacting with donors and funding partners, CSOs can suggest and highlight:

Who

- Who are they funding? Donor expectations should be proportional to the level of contact and risk to communities and programme participants or service users.
- What safeguarding capacity and resources does the CSO have? CSOs will be at different stages of their safeguarding 'journey', additional support and resources may be needed.
- Are the contractual safeguarding requests practical? Requirements need to take into account the other pressures and demands on the organisation's time and resources. CSOs may want to talk to their key contact if the timelines or demands feel unrealistic and negotiate how to address the demands while also ensuring that safeguarding risks are managed.

What

- Are they funding programme-related measures only? Programme-related safeguards (safe programming) are supported by organisational wide safeguarding and it is important that donors provide support for both. For more information read the RSH how-to notes on [safe programming](#) and [community feedback mechanisms](#).
- Is there flexibility in the contract to respond to changes in the context or to adapt measures that are not working, or cannot be delivered safely? Safeguarding should involve continual learning and adaptation. Donors and CSOs should discuss how safeguarding measures may need to change as a programme progresses, a situation evolves or as staff change.
- Is the donor aware of how safeguarding risks might be exacerbated by the programme? For example, where the programme intends to 'challenge' social norms by encouraging people to speak out this may create the risk of backlash. Such programmes will require an initial risk assessment and risk assessment/monitoring throughout the programme/funding.

Where

- Do they know the safeguarding risks in the locations where they are funding? Safeguarding risks will depend on the context in which programmes are being delivered. CSOs can share knowledge about context specific risks. The funder needs to be open to listening and learning. Funders can also understand the local context by having local staff or through project visits.
- Do they consider the resources and support available in the local context? If donors want to support partners, this is best done by local experts who understand the local legal, cultural and political context.

When

- When will the funding begin and end? It is important that organisations are given enough time to do proper risk assessments, particularly when promoting community consultations and engagement as this requires time to be done in a meaningful way.
- Close out the programme and funding safely and put in place the mitigating actions. It is important for funders to consider the potential risks when funding ends and that mitigating these risks are considered in the programme closure or exit strategy.

Working through some safeguarding challenges shared by CSOs in Nigeria

Read the examples below and consider how you would approach these situations. Can you help expand our suggestions below or do you have any other scenarios that you want to work through? Feel free to share your thoughts with the RSH team in Nigeria: askanexpertnigeria@rshub.org.uk

1. Is your donor/funding partner's only safeguarding request to sign a safeguarding policy?

- Use the [Principles of Partnership](#) (Equality, Transparency, Results-Oriented Approach, Responsibility and Complementarity) when working with donors and funding partners. Aim to create opportunities for two-way dialogue on safeguarding in practice.
- To build a shared commitment to safeguarding, discuss with your donor/funding partner about the importance of safeguarding practices rather than relying on policies in isolation. By focusing on practice, you can encourage donors to provide funding beyond policies to include costs associated with implementation, setting up safeguarding systems and managing incidents.
- Highlight to the donor/funding partner how involving staff in discussion on safeguarding as part of policy development or review can deepen understanding, help build ownership and reduce the perception that safeguarding is one person's responsibility. This means that sufficient time needs to be allocated to setting up safeguarding systems and managing safeguarding issues.

2. Would you like to improve your safeguarding practices but the donor / funding partner says they have no time, money and / or expertise?

- Safeguarding is a critical component of programme delivery and lack of knowledge is particularly problematic when responding to cases in humanitarian or development settings. Donors/funders may not fully understand potential risks or the challenges that exist in accessing services for survivors and handling cases. CSOs can use the RSH Nigeria [safeguarding risk management guidance](#) to clarify concerns.
- Be creative when looking for time and resources e.g. include additional funding for capacity-building in proposals to donors; find other organisations who run workshops you could attend; include safeguarding programme costs, and a contribution to organisational wide safeguarding measures, in every proposal development (read this RSH [proposal development note](#) for more).
- Ensure that donors understand the consequences of either failing or neglecting to take safeguarding seriously. This could include, for example, significant harm to the victim/survivor, loss of public trust in the partner as well as its donor, poor quality programmes etc.
- Embedding safeguarding is best achieved through incremental improvements over time. Providing funding for the costs of implementation is essential to ensuring that improvements are sustainable and realistic.

3. Does your donor or funding partner ask you to report safeguarding incidents and at the same time does not support you to manage safeguarding concerns that arise?

- CSOs reporting safeguarding incidents should ask that donors/funding partners confirm their protocols and procedures for managing sensitive data, ensuring confidentiality and how they will manage the information as this is critical to do no harm and ensure a survivor-centred approach.
- Considering providing donors/funding partners with anonymised case studies to share successes and ensure they understand the types of risk the CSO has to manage.
- Be honest with donors/funding partners about the resources needed to cover the cost of responding to cases, including investigation costs and ensuring access to services for survivors.
- Integrating safeguarding into monitoring reports, calls with donors/funding partners and visits means that progress can be acknowledged, and difficulties (but not case details) can be discussed as they arise. It may also help to frame safeguarding as a critical part of programme delivery rather than an add-on.
- Ask donors/funding partners about the knowledge and experience of the donor/funding partner teams who are responding to reports. To contribute to effective, survivor-centred responses, it is important that donors have appropriate knowledge and experience and having a designated individual to respond to concerns is helpful. As a minimum, staff who are required to respond to concerns should receive adequate training and have access to advice and support.

4. Are you unsure of your donor/funding partner safeguarding requirements?

- Some donors/funding partners have their own safeguarding requirements and may use different terms for safeguarding. For example, some previously categorised safeguarding under 'Do No Harm'; other donors might refer to safeguarding as 'Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse' (PSEA) or put it under a broader 'Accountability' term.
- If you are unsure about any terminology that the donor/funding partner is using, it is important to ask for clarification – this is helpful for the donor as well as it ensures a shared understanding and helps ensure they receive the information they need from you.
- Ensure you use and explain the language and terminology you use in relation to safeguarding as they may also have a different understanding. For more information, read this RSH [proposal development note](#).

Further reading

The below resources informed this tip sheet.

- Funder Safeguarding Collaborative (2021), Funder Approaches to Safeguarding, [Challenges, positive practices, and opportunities for collaboration, Elevate Children Funders Group](#)
- Bond (2019), Safeguarding in successful partnerships, [Change statement](#)
- Williams A. (2019), [Collaborating with NGO partners to prevent and challenge SEAH](#)
- Egeland J. (2021), *Accountability to People Affected in Crisis and greater Inclusion*, Global CHS Exchange 2021, Webinar, 30 September 2021
- Maher R., (2021), *A collective responsibility: working better together to create change*, Global CHS Exchange 2021, Webinar, 30 September 2021