

UK sends tough message to abusers in the aid sector and launches new programme of support for survivors

The UK has today launched a new programme which will help bring perpetrators of sexual abuse, exploitation or sexual harassment in the aid sector to justice and provide vital support for survivors.

The programme will build on the extensive work the UK has done to stamp out abuse in the aid sector. It will strengthen the support available to survivors and make it easier for them to report abuse.

This will include developing a new way of reporting abuse anonymously through an online platform which will be piloted in Zambia. It will connect survivors with organisations who can help them access further support, including taking their case to the police or the perpetrator's employer, if they wish.

New UK aid will also fund investments for local and community based organisations so that they can give a range of direct support to survivors including counselling and psychosocial support, financial help and access to justice.

A new training scheme will also be introduced to improve the quality of safeguarding investigations carried out by NGOs and international bodies like the UN.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The UK is taking action to ensure the aid sector cannot be a safe haven for the perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation of the vulnerable. We have led in driving up safeguarding standards across the aid sector. Our new support will help survivors get the assistance they need and report their abusers without fear.

Since the Safeguarding Summit in October 2018, the UK has taken a number of concerted steps to drive up standards in the delivery of aid around the world. The focus has been led by the need to support survivors, prevent further abuse and bring perpetrators to justice.

Steps taken include a new tougher screening system for aid workers to allow charities and other organisations to share data on staff misconduct and prevent perpetrators from moving job-to-job. This has seen at least 75 people rejected for jobs because of negative or absent data.

The UK Government and ACRO Criminal Record Office has worked with Interpol to improve criminal records checks and promote information sharing between aid and law enforcement agencies. We have launched a Resource and Support hub

which is actively supporting aid organisations operating on the ground to improve safeguarding standards and support provided to victims.

The UK is clear all organisations bidding for UK aid must meet the high standards of safeguarding required and do everything in their power to keep the people they work with safe. Today, the Government confirmed that Oxfam GB can once again bid for funding, after the Charity Commission found last month that its approach to safeguarding had been “significantly strengthened” and that the charity should return to standard regulatory oversight.

The report found that the people Oxfam GB helps are now better protected against abuse, exploitation, and other forms of harm, in line with the high standards required of UK aid partners.