

CARE International Safeguarding Transparency Report

1 January 2022 – 30 June 2023

At CARE, we believe that all people have the right to safety and to live their lives free from harm and any form of sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse. The promotion of human dignity and social justice is central to our work, in over 109 countries, reaching 166,647,108 people through direct implementation and working in partnership¹. We recognise that there is unequal power between the people we work and partner with throughout our programmes, and CARE employees and related personnel. Therefore, we champion the importance of accountability and a safe organisational culture, creating and maintaining a safe and supportive environment for our staff, partners, and the communities with whom we work, and we take seriously our responsibility to keep children safe from all forms of harm and abuse.

CARE has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse. Detailed within our [Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#) are the standards, behaviours, and attitudes that CARE employees and related personnel must uphold to ensure that we are all fulfilling our responsibility to keep our staff, partners, programme participants, and community members, safe from exploitation and abuse. All staff and related personnel are obligated to always abide by our global [Safeguarding Policy](#) and Safeguarding Code of Conduct, both in-person and online. We make clear that any form of abuse, perpetrated by our employees, related personnel, or partners, towards anyone, during or outside working hours, in-person or online, will not be tolerated.

Our ongoing focus on building a positive safeguarding culture throughout CARE includes providing safeguarding training to our staff and partners; having safe, accessible, and trusted reporting mechanisms; including safeguarding in our internal accountability mechanisms; and strengthening the safety of our programmes through thorough risk assessments for both the context (country) and individual programmes. These activities allow us to better prevent and respond to sexual misconduct and ensure that we hold ourselves accountable to our policies and safeguarding standards.

All our safeguarding activities are guided by a survivor-centred approach. Our intention is for the needs and wishes of victim/survivors² to inform the way we handle reports of misconduct, and for victim/survivors to be treated with dignity and respect. Their privacy and the support we can provide them, are our priorities. Every report of misconduct that we receive is carefully examined and, when required, investigated in ways that take into consideration the rights and interests of the survivor. We take swift and appropriate disciplinary action where needed.

We are continuously striving to improve our prevention and response actions, recognising that the nature of our work could increase the risk of harm, exploitation, and abuse towards affected populations, and our staff, partners, and related personnel. CARE is also a participant in the [Misconduct Disclosure Scheme](#), wherever legally feasible. The scheme works on preventing known perpetrators of sexual misconduct from moving about the sector and allows us to make increasingly informed decisions on our recruitments.

Since 2017, CARE has published annual data, on allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse, on a calendar year cycle. The information shared within this report is somewhat different – it covers a period of 18-months from 1st January 2022 – 30th June 2023 to align with other accountability initiatives that

¹ These figures are taken from CARE's FY23 (July 1st 2022 – June 30th 2023) Project and Program Information and Impact Reporting System (PIIRS)

² At CARE we use the language of victim/survivor to recognise that people who have experienced abuse may consider themselves as victim and/or survivor, and that this might also be fluid depending on where they are at in processing and living with their experience.

are reported per fiscal year. This means our future reports will reflect the annual fiscal year cycle of 1st July to the following 30th June.

Between January 1st 2022 – June 30th 2023, over 12,000 people worked for CARE across 109 countries.³ During this period, CARE received 136 allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, and child abuse, by CARE staff and related personnel.

The following summary of these allegations is provided in two categories:

1) Sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse, towards programme participants and community members:

65 of the 136 complaints received were allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, or child abuse, towards programme participants and community members. 64 complaints were investigated and closed in the reporting period. One concern remained under investigation at the end of June 2023. 18 of the complaints were substantiated. Disciplinary action included 12 staff members dismissed, 3 warnings given and (re)training for 2 staff members. One complaint was investigated and managed by our partner.

2) Sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, towards CARE employees, or related personnel:

71 of the overall 136 complaints received were allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse towards CARE employees or related personnel. 71 complaints were investigated and closed in the reporting period. 31 of the complaints were substantiated. Disciplinary action included 18 staff members dismissed, 3 warnings given, and 2 partnerships terminated. Two complaints were managed by our partners. Of the remaining 6 substantiated complaints, outcomes included reporting the concerns to authorities, and halting recruitment prior to signing a contract.

Conducting investigations into SHEA-CA allegations may be extremely challenging and complex. Our procedures are robust, and our investigations are carried out by trained staff only. We only investigate following the completion of a thorough risk assessment, in partnership with our safety and security experts, to ascertain the impact to the victim/survivor, witnesses and alleged perpetrator. The safety and wellbeing of all those involved in our investigation is always our priority. There can be occasions when we must hand over an investigation to the police and/or local authorities – their investigation will always take precedence over ours.

In 2023, we reviewed our CI Safeguarding Policy, producing the fourth iteration of this policy since its commencement in 2006. Our policy is periodically reviewed, as part of our good governance and accountability, and to ensure that the policy reflects our lessons learned, sector-wide best practices, recognised standards and conventions, and meets current donor requirements. Our latest policy is expanded to now encompass all forms of abuse - sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse, physical and emotional abuse, and neglect. This is to recognise that adults and children can be victims/survivors to a continuum of abuse, involving multiple forms of abuse. CARE, and the wider sector, recognise that our programmes may increase the risk of harm to participants to *all* forms of abuse, be it intentional and unintentional, and therefore we must now include these as part of our prevention and response approaches. Within the CI Safeguarding Policy, emotional abuse is clearly defined as abuse perpetrated by CARE staff or Related Personnel towards programme participants.

We also strengthened our child safeguarding provisions. Our revised policy and Safeguarding Code of Conduct now fully address child abuse and child safeguarding, recognising CARE's responsibility towards safeguarding children where and when we are working directly or indirectly with children. We understand that even when our programs are not specifically designed for children, they may still be present alongside adults and therefore we need to integrate child-focused prevention and response measures. The policy now includes specific commitments to child safeguarding in our programme design, risk assessment, and feedback and accountability mechanisms. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is explicitly acknowledged in the Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.

³ These figures are taken from CARE's FY23 (July 1st 2022 – June 30th 2023) PIIRS process.

Lastly, we make clear in our policy that staff and related personnel are obligated to always uphold the policy, both in-person and online.

Throughout CARE, we will continue to enhance our commitment to do no harm by ensuring our safeguarding measures are robust and accessible to all those whom we work with and for. We are focusing on implementing the latest elements to our policy and further promoting the use of our confidential reporting mechanism, [CARE Line](#), which we've recently invested in upgrading and is available to anyone to report misconduct, whether internal or external to CARE. We are improving our work on safer programming, working together with our partners to strengthen our capacities and understanding of safeguarding in our operating contexts so as to improve the safety of our programmes and manage safeguarding risks effectively. CARE will continue to prioritise improving safe and accessible reporting mechanisms for programme participants and in the communities where we work.

If anyone has a concern about sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, or child abuse, physical and emotional abuse, and neglect, or any other type of wrongdoing, by CARE staff or related personnel, please report this to us through our confidential hotline, [CARE Line](#). Reports through CARE Line can be made anonymously and will be immediately received and acted upon by trained staff.