

CARE International: Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse Transparency Report (2020)

CARE International is a global confederation of 21 National organisations working together to end poverty. In 2020, together with our national and international partners, we implemented over 1300 poverty-fighting development and humanitarian aid projects in 104 countries around the world reaching more than 92.3 million people directly and over 433 million indirectly.

At the heart of CARE's efforts to impact poverty and social justice is our engagement with marginalised communities. We also recognize our responsibility to promote human dignity and social justice within our own organisation and maintain a safe and respectful workplace for our staff, our partners, and the communities with whom we work. At CARE, we believe all people have a right to live their lives free from sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, and that no one should be subjected to abuse of any form.

CARE International's standards and commitments are clearly set out in our [Safeguarding Policy on Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse, and Child Abuse \(PSHEA-CA\)](#), which we reviewed and improved in 2020. CARE's Safeguarding Code of Conduct is an integral part of our Safeguarding Policy and aims to guide our staff, partners and community members we work with, to better understand what attitudes and behaviours are unacceptable and what we mean by our commitment to treat everyone with respect and dignity. The policy, along with a safe organisational culture, training, protocols, and reporting mechanisms in place, are central to our prevention and response towards any type of sexual misconduct.

Each year we collate and publish annual data for complaints of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse. In 2020, the CARE International confederation received a total of 61 complaints of sexual misconduct. 6 of those complaints are still being investigated which means the cases remain open. 55 complaints have been fully investigated and those cases are now closed. 26 of the closed cases were upheld and disciplinary action included 20 staff dismissals, one employment contract not renewed, and five warnings.

All the complaints received are presented here in two categories to provide more details on the nature of the complaints:

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

- 30 of the overall 61 complaints involved allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, or child abuse, towards program participants and community members. 27 cases were investigated and closed in 2020 of which 11 were upheld. Disciplinary action included 9 employees dismissed and two received a warning. Three cases remain open, which means they are still being investigated.

(2) Sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse *toward CARE employees or related personnel:*

- 31 of the overall 61 reports involved allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse toward CARE employees or related personnel of which 28 were investigated and closed in 2020 of which 15 were upheld. Disciplinary action included 11 employees dismissed, three received a warning and one contract was not extended. Three cases remain open, which means they are still being investigated.

CARE is continuously working on assessing and improving the level of utilization of its global whistleblower hotline, a case management and global reporting system called CARELine available online in five languages. In addition to this, we work with our partners, program participants and community members to find ways to design and adapt, appropriate, safe, and accessible locally based feed-back and complaints mechanisms for reporting sexual misconduct.

2020 was a particularly challenging year because the COVID-19 pandemic increased risks of all types of sexual violence due to greater vulnerability of all, women, children, and vulnerable adults in particular. CARE issued a Guidance Note to help staff prioritise and adapt how we can prevent sexual misconduct in the time of the pandemic. The Guidance informed staff of the need to continue applying rigorous recruitment measures, and to use virtual and online methods rather than the usual face-to-face ways of working when onboarding new staff and raising awareness of all staff about our safeguarding code of conduct. We also introduced a new online training for staff on protection from sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse. We focused on safe programming by applying context-specific risk assessments and 'do no harm' principles and established alternative ways of communicating with communities. CARE's investment into strengthening internal capacities for coordinating and managing complex sensitive investigations has proved beneficial when heavy restrictions are applied during the global pandemic. Our in-country safeguarding teams and investigators have been able to meet the challenges and respond to complaints received.

CARE reaffirmed its survivor and safety-centred approach in the latest iteration of our Safeguarding Policy. This strengthens CARE's position that the safety and privacy, and the wishes and needs of survivors guide our response and action, and emphasises the need to support survivors when they make a report, during an investigation and afterwards.